

Genesis History (Cain & Abel): The First Family Feud

This morning we're going to talk about a very important, sensitive subject. In our series on Genesis we're coming to chapter 4. And the title this morning is The First Family Feud. Now there's an interesting dynamic that the police deal with. What do you think the number one distress call that people send to the police department involves? Traffic accidents? Burglaries? Bank robberies? People driving away without paying for their gas? And you know police dread this kind of call more than any other. It's domestic problems. Domestic violence. Family arguments. Typically between a husband and wife. More times than not it's some relative.

Another interesting fact is that statistically the first person that the police will look at when there is a murder is someone in the family. Because statistically it's usually somebody, relative, kin, who is responsible. Isn't that sad? You know in the Gulf War we had a new dynamic. One of the first times in modern history of warfare that the casualties during the Gulf War, that the joint forces experienced, were higher from friendly fire than from the Iraqis. We killed more of our own than were killed by the enemy. Friendly fire. Incidentally, that's still the biggest problem in the church today. More people get discouraged with church and stop going to church not because of the Pagans attacking from the outside, but it's because of family feuds and friendly fire on the inside.

This is not a new dynamic. You can see it all the way through the Bible history. Joseph is sold by his brothers. Esau plots to murder Jacob. And you might have done it too, if you were living back then after what Jacob did. Abimelech killed virtually all of his 70 brothers, the sons of Gideon. Jephtha was kicked out of the family by his brothers. And you could just go on through the Bible. And you'll find that a lot of the struggles... Absalom killed Amnon who raped Tamar. And then of course Absalom tried to kill his own father. Family feuds. So much of the trouble in the Bible that God's people experienced, it seemed to come from the inside more than the outside.

Now the first family feud doesn't really begin on earth. It begins in heaven. And some people are shocked to discover that the Bible tells us that the first family feud started in heaven. Isn't that a place where everything is bliss and harmony? You can read about this in Revelation chapter 12. And it talks about a war in heaven. Now talk about a conflict of terms. People think of heaven, they don't think of war. But the Bible tells us that there was a war in heaven. Revelation 12:17, "And war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought. But they did not prevail nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world. He was cast out to the earth. And his angels were cast out with him." Satan was cast down to the earth and he has been the instigator of every other family feud from that first family feud in heaven where the highest of the angels, the highest created being just under God Himself, was the leader of the heavenly choir, the leader of the angels. His name was Lucifer. You can read about this in Isaiah chapter 14. "How you are fallen from heaven. Oh Lucifer, son of the morning. How you are cut down to the ground. You who weaken the nations."

Now why did Lucifer fall? Because he wanted his heavenly Father's position. Just like Absalom wanted David's position. Just like Joseph's brothers were jealous of the father's special pampering love for Joseph. So many of the family feuds have sprung from jealousy. And this is what happened with Lucifer. "For you have set in your heart," started out with a heart problem, "I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the Most High." He wanted to be God. And this desire to make himself God led to an open rebellion.

Now did God create a faulty, a defective, angel when He made Lucifer? No, you can read in Ezekiel 28:15, "You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created." God makes all things good.

Every good and perfect gift comes from God. But God creates His creatures free. And someone might wonder, "Why did Lucifer go bad and the other angels were good? Why did one third of the angels follow Lucifer and two thirds stayed in allegiance to the Lord? What was the deciding factor?" Here it is. Choice. A free choice. The same choice that you have been given. The Bible tells us that there were some things that contributed to his rebellion. Not only his desire to be God. The pride, vanity. Verse 17, Ezekiel 28, "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty. You have corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor." And Lucifer enjoyed all these gifts and talents. But instead of giving God glory, he took them to himself. So the Bible tells us he was cast to earth. And he manipulated all kinds of family feuds.

Are you aware that every war is a family feud? Because you and I are all kin. Not only are we all related to Adam, we're all related to Noah. And some of us can track our relations even closer than that. But we're all family. We all share the same planet. We're brothers and sisters. And any war is a family feud, technically. And the devil has inspired all of them. And of course, it reached its climax when Christ met the devil in the wilderness. And three times the devil tried to engage Jesus to join him in his rebellion against the Father. And Christ met all those temptations with the sword of the Word. "It is written, it is written, it is written." Finally at the cross, there at the cross you see in its starkest reality the contrast between the motives of God, love, Jesus saying, "Father forgive them," and the motives of the devil in venom and hatred and jealousy and anger and violence. All of the characteristics of Christ shine the most clearly from the cross. And the characteristics of the devil as well.

By the death of Christ, Satan was hoping to defeat Christ. In reality, Satan was defeated. At the cross, at the cross, is where Jesus really dealt the death blow to the devil. He was smitten there. Like a bee may buzz around after he loses his stinger, but he's doomed. A snake may writhe after its head is cut off, but it's doomed. The devil is still going around with great wrath, but he's doomed. He knows his time is short. He's been mortally wounded.

Now that was the first family feud. Now we're going to take you back to earth and we're going to talk about how the first family feud on earth was inspired by the devil. Going to Genesis, continuing our study in Genesis His Story. Go with me in your Bibles to the book of Genesis, chapter 4. We finished talking about the fall in our last study. Now we're going to examine the beginning of the human race and the first death. Chapter 4, verse 1. Now before I get into this, maybe I should review a little bit for you. After Adam and Eve sinned, the Bible says remember they tried to cover their nakedness with what? Fig leaves. Which are a symbol of what? See if you remember. Self-righteousness. Man's self-righteousness. The fig tree that Jesus cursed had only leaves and no fruit. It was a symbol of the Jewish nation that had all the trappings of religion but not the fruits of the spirit. And He cursed it and He said, "May no man eat fruit of you anymore." Fig leaves represent self-righteousness. God said, "That will not do." And He made them coats of skin. Now keep in mind, up to that point nothing that we know of had died except maybe a fig leaf. And something had to die to provide those skins. This is where, most scholars believe, that God instructed the sacrificial system. That without the shedding of blood there would be no remission. And their nakedness was covered by the death of these innocent lambs. We assume they were lambs. The Bible says in Revelation that Christ is that lamb that was slain, from the foundation of the world, there was a lamb slain. What was that lamb? The lamb that covered the nakedness of Adam and Eve.

So God is the one who established the sacrificial system. That was to typify when Christ was to come to earth in the form of a man, as a human, and He would die as the Lamb of God for the sins of the world. We believe that at that time Adam and Eve probably brought their offerings to the gates of the Garden of Eden because they were excluded, they could not go in, but that's where they met with the Lord. Now you read in chapter 4 verse 1, "Now Adam knew his wife and she conceived and bore Cain. And she says, 'I have gotten,'" or Hebrew is better translated, "'I have acquired a man from the Lord.'" Now in the Hebrew the word from is not there. It reads, "I have

acquired a man the Lord.” Now can you imagine the joy and the marvel of Eve and Adam when the first child is born? You know the Bible says the two of them leave the father and mother, they are joined together, they become one flesh. Not only were they one flesh through the act of intimacy, but it’s very true that a man and woman become one in their offspring. You find the combined genes and DNA of the parents. They are commingled and one. They were hoping, I believe, that this child was going to be the promised seed of the woman. I mean, didn’t the Lord say right to Eve that the seed of the woman would smite the serpent’s head? She thought it was going to be the next generation. She said, “I have acquired a man, the Lord.” She was hoping that Cain was going to be that promised baby. God had not specified how many generations were going to pass. But she was keenly disappointed as he grew. He did not seem to have an inclination towards God or any of the attributes that the promised seed should have.

Then it goes on to say that not only did she have Cain, but it says she bore again, verse 2, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel means mist or vapor. The Bible says our lives are like a vapor, like Abel. We’re here today and gone tomorrow. And that’s how Abel’s life was. It was a mist compared to the nine centuries that most people lived back then. Now these boys were drastically different. The Bible says in verse 2 that Cain was a tiller of the ground, but Able was a keeper of sheep. Isn’t it amazing how the same parents, same environment, can raise two children that could be so drastically different? How many of you that are parents have experience that in your own families? And you wonder, “What did we do differently with this one from this one? How could they turn out so different?” Was it because Adam and Eve failed with Cain and succeeded with Abel?

You’ve got to be careful to remember some children go bad because the parents are bad. That’s just a fact. The influence of the parents can produce ungodly children. But then you can look in the Bible and you can see where even some of the most ungodly kings had godly offspring. And some of the godliest kings, Hezekiah had Menassah. Sometimes it’s not the parents. Sometimes it’s the choice of the children. You must always remember that because who are you going to blame for Adam and Eve going bad? Bad parents? It’s their choice. Ultimately very few are going to be able to stand before God in the judgment, if they’re lost, and point to their parents and say, “It’s not my fault. It’s their fault.” Once you reach the age of accountability, that means you’re responsible. You’re accountable. Amen? And so here they’ve got these children, you know, one of them wants to take care of sheep and the other one wants to till the soil. Just like Esau and Jacob, and they were twins. They were twins. They entered the world at the same time. One was smooth, one was hairy. One was a shepherd, one was a hunter. What a difference. God likes variety.

“And in the process of time,” verse 3, “it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord.” Now it was not inappropriate that he should bring an offering of fruit because we believe they were instructed even then to bring the firstfruits of their harvest. But the firstfruits of the harvest are not to cover sin. And when it says, “in the process of time,” scholars aren’t sure what that means, but it could mean on regular occasions they would bring their offerings and maybe up to a certain point Cain had obeyed. His parents had instructed them, he probably observed what they had instructed them. Adam and Eve came to the Garden of Eden and they taught the boys about the sacrificial system. Cain probably obeyed his parents, but at some point along the way, when it was the appointed time for the sin offering, Cain said, “You know, I don’t really think I need to make an offering to God. I don’t think that the shedding of blood is necessary. That is unpleasant. It’s not desirable. How are we going to market this kind of religion to our posterity with something that’s so gruesome? We need to make it more pleasant, more appealing.” And we can only surmise some of the things that may have been going through his mind. But we do know this, he did not obey the Lord. He did not bring a blood offering for his sin. He brought a fruit offering which was the product of his works. A sacrifice of a life is what we are to offer, and the lamb was a symbol of that.

So we go back to our story. He brought, the Bible says, “Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstlings of his flock and their fat.” And you know, it’s

very hard for a shepherd to slay one of their lambs. That's a real sacrifice. Remember how much David loved his sheep? He put his life on the line and delivered these lambs from the bear and the lion. And Abel is still living back in the age when death was still such a foreign thing. And to take one of these little creatures that he cared for with his own hands, and to cut its throat and watch the blood drain away and the life drain away, was a horrid thought. It was a terrible experience. But you know, they understood the exceeding sinfulness of sin because sacrifice of a life reminded them about how expensive and painful sin was. Cain's offering of pomegranates and artichokes or... Are they a fruit? No, they're a flower. Avocados, that's a fruit. Tomatoes are a fruit. Whatever the fruits were... Zucchini's a fruit. People sometimes don't realize that.

The fruits that he brought, that was not a sacrifice. It was the product of his works. And the Bible says, "The Lord respected Abel and his offering." "The Lord respected Abel and his offering. But He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very wroth, angry." Now this is going to end up jumping all the way from the first part of the Bible, 6,000 years, to the last part of the Bible where it tells that the dragon is wroth with the woman. Why is he wroth with the woman? Because she keeps the commandments of God. Why was Cain wroth with Abel? Because Abel was obeying. He would not join him in his separating from the clear command of God and trying to renovate the worship service. And because he would not do this he became angry with his brother. And the Bible says his countenance fell. So the Lord said to Cain, you know God is so merciful. Here God is going to the effort of trying to reason with this rebellious child. The Lord says to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why has your countenance fallen?" Is God asking because He doesn't know? Any more than He didn't know when Adam ran away and He said, "Where are you?" He's reasoning with him.

You know, sometimes when we're confronted with our guilt we become angry. Isn't that right? The truth hurts. And the fact that he was rebelling against God and that Abel was accepted and he wasn't was a stark reminder, Abel's goodness made his badness stand out in bold relief. And the righteous, being under the approval of God and the obedience of God's people in the last days, is going to be a stinging rebuke to the wicked who disobey God's commands. And it's going to invite their fury. It's just a law of life that you can see. Why was it that King Josiah killed Zachariah the son of Jehoyedah? Because he was confronted with his sins. When that prophet of Judah came to King Jeroboam and pointed and said, "This altar is cursed. Your worship service is not accepted by God. You've been commanded not to make a golden calf." He put out his hand and said, "Seize him." And if his hand hadn't frozen, he would have killed him. You know the story I'm talking about in the Bible? You can go through the whole Bible. Why did the religious leaders hate Jesus so much that they would commit murder? Because of Christ's badness or His goodness? His goodness made their badness stand out. The light of His life revealed the darkness in their characters. And they needed to put the light out. That same characteristic, that same principle is being seen here in what's happening with Cain. He's angry. His countenance has fallen.

Then God goes on, "If you do well will you not be accepted? And if you do not well sin lies at the door. Its desire is for you. But you should rule over it." In other words, sin is waiting to capture us but we should have the mastery of it. God offers that. And the Lord was appealing in this statement to Cain. He's saying, "You're being tempted. That same tempter that tempted your mother and your father is tempting you. Sin is at the door. You're on the borders of the point of no return. But if you submit, if you humble yourself..." The Bible says if we're willing and obedient we'll eat the good of the land. But if we refuse and rebel, we'll be devoured with the sword. The Lord was pleading with Cain for his life. He didn't owe that to Cain. God is a merciful and a gracious God. Can you say, "Amen?"

But instead of listening to the first hand counsel of God, he continued to persist in his rebellion. And the Bible says, "Cain talked with Abel his brother. And it came to pass when they were in the field that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him." Now we believe that Cain was probably initiating the conversation. Cain talked with his brother. And he was saying, "Abel you

really don't have to do it that way. It isn't necessary to be so gory. Isn't it good enough that we already sacrificed a lamb once before? How often do we have to do this? This is absurd." And he was trying to invite his brother into his rebellion. And Abel stood his ground with God. And he said, "No, we need to follow the Lord. We need to obey God. This blood is a symbol of the blood of the Messiah that will come and wash away our sin. Why will you rebel?" And as he pleaded with his brother, his anger rose up in a heat of fury. And he couldn't bear it any more. And it doesn't tell us whether he smote him with a stick. Maybe he snatched his shepherd rod out of his hand and beat him with his own rod. Bludgeoned him to death with stones from the altar. We're not exactly sure how he did it. But he flew into a rage and he killed his brother.

Now I think it's interesting to note... I was reading a commentary just this morning. Seven times in just chapter 4 it says, "Abel his brother," "Abel his brother," "Abel his brother." Seven times. It's as though the author is trying to remind us of the horridness of this crime, that he would kill his younger brother whom he should have protected. He's killed by the older brother. You know I also think, I don't want to take this too far but I think it is significant, that many of the types of Christ in the Bible were the younger brother. David, younger brother. Joseph, younger brother. Moses, the youngest of Mariam and Aaron. And they were types of... It's a symbol I think of the humility and the station, the low station, that Jesus took when He came into this world.

I'd like to read a statement to you that is from the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Bear with me. Whenever I read, people's eyes sort of roll back in their head. I'll try and keep your attention. Concentrate, okay? Cain had the same opportunity of learning and accepting these truths as had Abel. He was not the victim of an arbitrary purpose. God didn't just point to him as something God did with Esau and say, "I love Able, I hate Cain." I'm going to make him a bad buy. I'm going to prewire Judas to deny and to betray Jesus. It wasn't something arbitrary. He made his own choices. One brother was not elected to be accepted of God and the other to be rejected. She's saying that's not the case. Abel chose faith and obedience. Cain chose unbelief and rebellion. Here the whole matter rested. Cain and Abel represent the two classes that will exist in the world till the close of time. One class will avail themselves of the appointed sacrifice for sin, the blood of Jesus the Lamb. The other venture to depend on their own merits. Theirs is a sacrifice without the virtue of divine mediation. And thus it is not able to bring men into favor with God. It is only through the merits of Jesus that our transgressions can be pardoned. Those who feel no need of the blood of Christ, who feel that without divine grace they can by their own works secure the approval of God, are making the same mistake as did Cain. If they do not accept the cleansing blood, they are under condemnation.

There is no other provision made whereby they can be released from the thralldom of sin. The class of worshipers who follow the example of Cain includes by far the greater portion of the world. Salvation by works is the most popular doctrine. For nearly every false religion has been based on the same principle, that man can depend on his own efforts for salvation. It is claimed by some that the human race is in need not of redemption, but in improvement, development. That it can refine, elevate, and regenerate itself. That's modern humanism in North America. She didn't say that, I did. As Cain thought to secure the divine favor by an offering that lacked the blood of a sacrifice, so do these expect to exalt humanity to the divine standard, independent of the atonement. The history of Cain shows what must be the result. It shows what man will become apart from Christ. Instead of worshipping God and being transformed, he became an animal and killed his brother. Humanity has no power to regenerate itself. It does not tend upward toward the divine, but downward towards the satanic. Christ is our only hope. There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. Neither is there salvation in any other. I thought that statement was worthy of review.

Now I want you to know that the Bible tells us the offering that Cain brought was not accepted. Let me see if I can illustrate for you what probably happened. You remember in the Bible when Moses built his altar, fire came down from heaven in the wilderness, divine fire showed favor by accepting

the worship and the sacrifice. When later Solomon built the temple, divine fire came down and accepted the sacrifice. On Mount Carmel, during the showdown between Elijah and the prophets of Baal, God showed His acceptance of the offering and the worship of Elijah by bringing fire down. When they brought their offerings, we believe they built altars. The Bible doesn't say that, but keep in mind the first thing Noah did when he got out of the ark it says he made an altar. Right? So we believe Cain and Abel also had altars for their sacrifices. They built their altars and there they stood before them. I like to believe that Abel was kneeling. Divine fire came down and accepted Abel's sacrifice. Cain's was only gathering fruit flies. And as he waited, and as he watched, he became irritated. It bothered him.

Now why did he not obey? Why did he try to alter the very clear command of God? There could be several reasons. First of all, he was offering his own works. He'd present the fruits of his labor. It represented righteousness by works. Righteousness by works, though it may be harder physically, is appealing to the pride of man. "I am saving myself." When Elisha said to Naaman, "Go, wash, and be clean," he was mad. If he had said, "Go conquer another army," or like Saul he said, "Do you want my daughter? Go collect 200 Philistine foreskins." David said, "I can deal with that." Because then you're saving yourself. But when he said, "Wash and be clean," that angered Naaman. It's too simple. God gets the credit. See righteousness by works, you get to take some of the credit. If you crawl up a mountain on your knees and you're all bloody and you're whipping yourself you can say, "I have earned my salvation by virtue of my works." But when you have to look away from yourself to a bleeding victim, it's not pretty. It does not flatter. It's humiliating. And you know, that's the first step of being saved. We must humble ourselves before the Lord.

Perhaps Cain thought that it would be easier to market to the growing human race a form of worship that would be more pleasing, more attractive, less gruesome and bloody. Now I'm going to park here for a while and talk about this. That philosophy is not only in the Paganistic religions of the world and modern humanism, that philosophy is very prevalent even in Christianity. In my own denomination. The idea that we should try to make worship more interesting to bring the Pagans in and make it more attractive has been the death knell of the church spiritually all through the ages. During the Dark Ages, when some of the religious leaders thought that they would be doing the world a favor by compromising certain doctrines and bringing in the Roman Pagans, they said, "Let's just meet them halfway. Look at how the church is going to grow if we do that."

What they did was, they sold out and it ceased to be the church at all. And that kind of philosophy is still found today. Let's see if we can reach the young people by taking the wild acid rock diabolical music of the world and let's just put some Christian words with it. That will sanctify that music and then it'll create a bridge to bring the children into the church, using diabolical music. That's that same philosophy. Have you heard that before? And people are afraid to make a distinction between what is holy and what is an abomination. Let's try to get more people in the church because the world now, in their spare time, they're used to entertainment. And many of the churches of the world their church services revolve around, "Will I go to church and feel good?" So when they come, let's do everything we can to make them feel good. Here's my question. Are we commanded by God to come to church so we can feel good? Is the purpose of our worship so we can feel good? Or is the purpose of our worship not to get but to give to God?

Are we going to church to see what we're going to get out of it? Or are we going to offer Him worship? What's the purpose of a sacrifice? Is it something you take or something you give? And so, when we come to church and we're saying, "I'm wondering what I'm going to get out of it today? I want to see the deacons and the pastor and everybody about the service to entertain me. I want it to bless me." Well I've got news for you. That is not even supposed to be the criteria. We're not coming to say, "Lord, I'm here so You can bless me." Now I'm not saying it's wrong to receive a blessing from God. But the reason we come to worship Him is to bless the Lord, Oh my soul. We come to worship Him. And this whole mindset, it's like a cancer. This whole mindset, this distorted view of what worship is, that we should make it more pretty, more attractive, more

entertaining, more interesting, it appeals to the pride of man, but it does not work in concert with salvation. For people to really experience salvation, they need to understand that sin is ugly.

When you look at the cross you're going to see blood. You're going to see bruises. You're going to see cursing. You're going to see spit. It is not pretty. And that is not a popular Gospel. And there at the altar of Abel you had a dead and a bleeding victim. It was a type of Christ. There at the altar of Cain it was beautiful. I would like to have seen the arrangement. Probably had all the colors of the rainbow there. It was attractive. It was fragrant. It wasn't writhing in pain. This is what the world is doing. The very same thing that happened back then is going to repeat itself in the last days. Look at... Through the Bible you'll see so many of the battles have to do with worship. I'm getting ahead of myself.

Go with me to 1 John 3:11, 12. Why did Cain kill Abel? 1 John 3:11, 12. "For this is the message that you've heard from the beginning. That we should love one another. Not as Cain, who is of that wicked one, and he murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's were righteous." This is going to be the same pattern in the last days. It's going to be a battle over those who are obeying God, fighting against those who do not obey. Christ was betrayed by His own people. A family feud. Why? Jesus said, "For which of my righteous works do you stone Me?" They couldn't think of one thing. They couldn't think of one thing that He had done wrong. It wasn't His badness, it was His goodness.

As we near the last days there's going to be a polarizing that will become increasingly more distinct, between those who serve God and those who serve Him not. Are you seeing that? There's going to be two religions that will form. One will have the seal of God, one will bear the mark of the beast. Everybody's marked in the last days. You're either marked with the seal of God or you've got the mark of the beast. And this story about Cain and Cain being marked ought to shake up our memories and take us to Revelation. What is it that's going to create this polarization? What's going to be the dividing factor? Well, one group keeps the commandments of God and has the testimony of Jesus. One group is obeying the laws of the beast and worshiping images. That always is just synonymous with like that golden image there in Daniel chapter 3. It's synonymous with Paganism. The religions of the world. Like Jeroboam who set up the golden calves. Or when the people came down the mountain and they made a golden calf. It represents the Paganism. There's going to be those who worship God according to His prescribed manner, and those who worship according to what they want. The worldly manner. It appeals to their works. They made a golden calf. They made their own god. And these are the two choices that everybody has, that we're all faced with.

The war is really a war over worship. On Mount Carmel, let me take you back there again for a second. On Mount Carmel, you've got these two scenarios. You've got the prophets of Baal and Baal worship, and then you've got the prophet of God, Elijah. They both build altars. They both have a worship service. One is very exciting and it's very interesting. They're leaping on the altar and they're chanting and repetition. They're cutting themselves and carrying on. But there's no power. They've got a form of godliness, there's no power. There's no fire. And then you've got Elijah. And he quietly builds it. And he fills it with water. And he prays a simple prayer that takes about 30 seconds. And fire comes down. Why? Because he's obeying God. He does it the way and the time and the means that God says. Isn't it interesting, that altar was covered with water and fire. The Bible says that unless you're born of the water and born of the Spirit, you cannot enter the kingdom of God. The children of Israel were baptized in the sea and the pillar of fire. We need both baptisms, right? The Bible tells us that.

And so here it was a conflict between worship. It was a battle over worship. If you go to the experience of Moses. He goes up the mountain. The people have agreed to serve the Lord. They've promised not to even bring up a chisel upon their altar that was made. Do you know why they said that? God told them, "When you make the altar, make it of twelve stones. Do not bring your tool

upon it or you've polluted it." Why did God tell them that? Because as soon as they got their chisel and their hammer out and began to chisel away at their altar, it became their works. They would start making images and different things and they'd be looking at the altar instead of God. He said, "Don't even lift your tool on it. Just take raw stones and set them there. You start chiseling on it, you've polluted it." It's not to be our works. It's to be our sacrifice to God and trusting in the blood, and His sacrifice in our place.

And all through the Bible you can see these patterns. Not only in the experience of Moses. What about Daniel? In chapter 3 where King Nebuchadnezzar has them all gathered there. He makes a law that everybody's to worship when they hear the sound of the music. And I have a feeling they weren't playing Amazing Grace when the Babylonian band struck up. What do you think? I wonder what kind of music it was. Well, it was Babylonian music. You just imagine what that's like. You know what babbling's like, don't you? It's what Babylonian music's probably like. It was rap. And so they're giving the signal to start worshiping and there are two very clear, distinct, classes that suddenly emerge. There's the majority who bow down to the worship of something Nebuchadnezzar made. It is a man-made religion. And then there are three individuals who will not bow down. Even though it's not only going to cost them their jobs, but their lives. You know whenever people hear the Sabbath truth, I hear them say, "Well surely God doesn't want me to do that because I'd lose my job." They don't read their Bible about people who are willing to lose their lives. Not just their jobs. Willing to lose their lives, rather than disobey. And worship God the way and the day He says.

It's so simple friends. God is wanting us to do things His way, whether we like it or not. Whether it feels good or not. The battle cry of many pastors now is let's make church fun. Is that why we come to church? Are we coming to make it fun, or are we coming to learn how to live forever with Jesus? Coming to learn how to better minister for Him. Now, you know me. And I think that you're sewing that into everything I'm saying. You know that I want our worship services to be joyful. Amen? And I think they should be. And I think there's a time when we can celebrate. For me it's when people get baptized. That to me is a time... I mean when they cross the Red Sea, the Bible says they celebrated. When people commit their lives to Jesus and they're delivered from the slavery of Egypt, I think that we ought to say, "Hallelujah," when people come up out of the baptism. But timing's very important. And there's a time to celebrate and there's a time to be on our knees and to humble ourselves before the Lord. There's a time to be still. There's a time to be quiet and listen to that still small voice. The main issue at stake here is, are we going to do things the way that God prescribes or our own way?

I'll submit to you that I don't believe that Biblical Christianity is ever going to be popular. There is no marketing program. You know, I think a lot about advertising. Before I became a Christian I always thought I'd like to go into advertising. You know, some women cannot talk to their husbands when they're watching TV. My wife can't talk to me when there's a commercial on. The programming I don't care about. I always tune right into the commercials. I think, "Oh, that was good. That was clever." And I always evaluate what the subconscious appeal was in this. You know, there's always something subliminal. You know at Amazing Facts we always have different things we're trying to invite people to participate in, get them to read the book, and we're thinking of book covers. And there's an element of marketing involved. But I've come to realize that we are never going to develop a plan to market genuine Christianity in a way that's going to get the whole world to buy. We want to preach the Gospel to all the world for all witnesses, but do you think that all the world is going to believe?

Or did Christ say, "Few there be that find it?" Christianity is not appealing to the world. And I wish we would stop trying to make it appealing to the world. We ought to make Christianity appealing to those that are searching for Christ. The Lord has His people out there. The harvest is great. And we ought to capitalize on those that are ripe. But for us to try to tailor Christianity to win the world, we will have to become like the world to do that. And that's what terrifies me. Pray for me. I

catch myself being tempted to make little compromises because I think it'll be more attractive to people. And then I hear the still small voice say, "Doug, is that where we're at? Is that what we're supposed to be doing?" Are we supposed to go by the Word or by what everyone else is doing? And I hope you'll pray for the pastoral staff here, that we will be true blue to what the Word of God says. It may not be popular, but if it's Biblical we're going to stand behind it. Amen? And you know, I hope that that means if everybody else leaves, because sometimes Christ said some things and the people said, "That's a hard statement. Drink my flesh?" No, sorry. "Drink my blood and eat my flesh? Who can understand that?" And a lot of people left Him. Did Jesus say, "No, I didn't mean it. Come back. Let me change that. Let me rephrase it. I'll make it more appealing to you." Is that what He said? No. He said to the disciples, "Are you going to leave Me also?" They said, "Where are we going to go? You've got the words of life?" And I think this ought to be the attitude of real Christians. We want to know, what is the truth? And let's do it that way.

These two classes that you see between Cain and Abel, you see all the way through the Bible. There's a division. The children of Israel, divided. The kingdom split. The southern kingdom kept going to the temple and worshiping the way God said. The northern kingdom they set up altars with golden calves at Bethel and Dan. Have you ever read in the Bible... You who have a computer, it's easier. Do a search. How many times in the Bible it says, "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin." "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin." Jeroboam was a servant of Solomon who split away, took ten tribes with him. He became king even though he was not of royal descent. And he made up a man-made worship. You know why? He was afraid the people of the northern kingdom were going to go to Jerusalem and he was going to lose his subjects to the true worship.

So he created a counterfeit worship. This pattern is all the way through the Bible. You can find it during the time of Christ. You know what Jesus began with? His whole ministry, when He first launched it, He was focusing on separating hypocritical worship from genuine worship. The external worship from heart worship. The real thing from the counterfeit. He was always trying to address what real worship is all about. You can read about this when He talked to the woman at the well. This is in your Bibles. John 4:22. The woman at the well was arguing, "What mountain do we worship on? You know, the Samaritan said, 'Let's worship on Mount Gerezim,' and the Jews said, 'Let's worship on Mount Sinai, Jerusalem.' Which is it? Where do we worship?" And Jesus said, "You're missing the whole point." But it was still a debate about worship, wasn't it? Listen to what Jesus said. John 4:22, "You worship what you don't know." Can you imagine that? People who worship and they don't know what they worship.

You know, when I was into the eastern religions... I'm embarrassed to tell you now, looking back, how stupid I really was. Because we believed in reincarnation. And the idea of reincarnation is that you keep coming back until you get good enough to be at one with God. But reincarnation is destroyed by a very simple truth that people try to get around. If you don't know who you were in your former life, what good is it doing you? And I remember all of my friends who believed in reincarnation sitting around wondering who we were, and what our experiences were, in our former life. And I don't remember any of my friends saying, "I was a beggar in England." They were always somebody great. "I was Mark Anthony." "I was Cleopatra." "I was Napoleon." You'll never know. "Guess who I was in my former life?" They always were thinking they were somebody great. But they could never remember anything they did. So what good was it to have lived? You know what separates us from the brute creatures? We've got memories, and we've got minds that can reason, and we can improve. And you advance as a human in this life based on your trying to learn from Christ's example and grow. If you don't know who you were in your last life, what good was it? Suppose the Lord tells you, "Don't worry about what happens to you now. You're going to be resurrected after you die. You won't remember anything about this life, but you're going to be resurrected." You may as well be a whole new person then, right? It just defeats the whole thing.

"You worship you know not what." You know how many people out there have no idea what it is

they worship. How many people you could ask out there and you say, "Do you believe in God?" "Yes." "Who is He?" "I don't know, but I think He's out there somewhere. And I believe Him and I talk to Him. I don't know who He is. I don't know if He's listening." They worship they know not what. "You worship and you do not know what. We know who we worship for salvation is of the Jews." And I stand behind that. I believe to the Jewish people God committed the oracles of truth. They were the chosen people, the seed of Abraham. Now you and I are the seed of Abraham. "But the hour is coming," Jesus said, "and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth." Not only does God want us to worship in spirit. But you know what it means when it says in truth? That means according to His prescribed design. They'll worship Him in spirit and according to His commands. "For the Father is seeking such to worship Him." God is looking for people to worship Him from their heart and with their lives. Both kinds of worship. Not only in word but in deed. Not only in the heart but in their life. Got a lot of people that say, "I'm worshipping the Lord with my heart." Then they walk out of church and they're sure not worshipping God with their life. He wants us not only to be vocal as we pray on the corner, but He wants us to be genuine when nobody's watching, in the closet. God is a spirit. And those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

It's a war over worship. You know what Jesus said when He pronounced His final curse upon Jerusalem? He said, "On this generation all the blood is going to be required." Notice very carefully. Luke 11:51, "From the blood of Abel to the blood of Zachariah who perished between the altar and the temple." Christ mentions two individuals who were slain by the altar of worship. All the way from Abel, the very beginning in the Old Testament, reaching right up to Zachariah, one of the last records of the Old Testament who lived among the time of the minor prophets. He traces these two individuals and all the martyrs in between. But isn't it interesting that they both died by their altars? Are you ready to die for what you believe? You know what's going to separate the saved from the lost in the last days? God is going to have a people, like Daniel, who would rather go to the lion's den than worship the wrong king. God is going to have a people, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who would rather go to the fiery furnace and die than bow to the wrong God. The whole issue is about worship. And I hear pastors saying, even some of my comrades, "It doesn't matter how you worship God, as long as you're worshipping God, He accepts you." I respectfully disagree. I think it does matter how you worship God.

I don't think we're supposed to worship Him the way we feel like worshipping. I think we're supposed to worship the way He tells us to worship. There's a big difference. And this very dangerous, deadly, false doctrine of devils that you're just supposed to worship how you feel like worshipping, that's not Biblical friends. We're supposed to worship the way we are commanded to worship. Have you read in your Bible? Go through Leviticus and you tell me you don't think God is specific about how He wants us to worship. He goes into great detail and takes great care and great extremes to specify how they were to worship. And when they did not worship the way they were told, the sons of Aaron were struck dead. When Uzzah reached out and touched the altar, he died. Don't think for a minute that God is not specific about how we're supposed to worship Him. We forget sometimes who God is. How big He is. What a privilege it is, that we get to worship Him.

If we could get this concept that I'm talking about today clear in our heads why we come to church to worship God, what a privilege it is, it would resolve so many of our difficulties about why we're here. And you know we'd have fewer family feuds if we would remember why we come to worship God, and if we're willing to worship God the way He says that we should worship Him.

What was it that separated the offering of Cain from the offering of Abel? Well, we touched on several things. Cain wanted to do something, maybe, that was of his own devising, his own works, more pleasing, less gruesome. Abel's offering was one of a lamb. It was an offering of blood. The Bible says without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Hebrews 9:22, "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness for sin." Why did God not accept Cain's offering? It was a bloodless offering. The Bible tells us that that's where we're going to find mercy. Matthew 26:28,

Jesus said when He initiated the new covenant, same criteria, He said, "This is my blood of the New Testament, the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Only through the shedding of the blood of the Lamb is there forgiveness. It may not be pretty, it may not be attractive, it may seem horrid. It's not supposed to be pretty. It reminds us how offensive and ugly and detestable sin is to God. And when we worship that way, and we remember what our sins cost, the Bible tells us as we look at Christ on the cross we are drawn to Him. We want to become like Him. When we develop our own worship, we become like the devil. Everybody becomes like either Christ or Satan. There are only two masters.

Now I want to go back, because I don't know when I'll get a chance again, to Genesis 4 and read on. The Bible tells us that Cain was upset, he killed his brother, and then God confronted him. Verse 9, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know." Look at the way he's lying. Adam and Eve at least just fled from God. They did not blatantly lie to the Almighty who sees everything. You could tell Cain did not know God. "I don't know." And then he gets sarcastic with the Almighty, "Am I my brother's keeper, shepherd?" He scorned his brother's occupation. Seven times it said, "Abel your brother," "Abel your brother," "Abel your brother." And he says, "Am I my brother's keeper?" That's a rhetorical question from God to you and me. Are you your brother's keeper? Are we to care for one another? Yes.

Are we to be able to answer when God says, "Where is your brother?" We should care about each other. Now there are those who will rise up and say, "Don't judge me. I'm not supposed to answer to you." But you know what friends? Biblically you are supposed to care about each other. We are to watch out. Don't be meddling and gossiping. But we're to pray for one another. We're to understand something about where we are spiritually, bring each other up. Amen? You are to care for your brother. And God says, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground." The ground that Cain liked to till. "So now you're cursed from the earth which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground it will no longer yield its strength for you. A fugitive and a vagabond you will be on the earth." He's being cursed as a farmer. Can you be a successful farmer? Unless you carry a greenhouse with you and a cart behind your back you can't do much.

You've got to be stationary if you're going to be a farmer. But now he was to be a wanderer, a vagabond. "When you till the ground it will no longer yield its strength to you." The soil was cursed. The vitality was gone. "A fugitive and a vagabond you will be in the earth." Cain said, "Lord, my punishment is greater than I can bear." Cain never says he's sorry he kills his brother. He never repents. He never says, "Lord have mercy." At least David said, "I have sinned." Cain never says, "I shouldn't have killed my brother." He's feeling sorry for himself. "Oh Lord, you're coming down pretty heavy on me. I know I killed my brother, but my flowers won't grow. What am I going to do? How am I going to watch after my garden if I have to travel?" Can you tell how... Maybe Adam and Eve spoiled him, I don't know. But he sure was a selfish creature.

He says, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." It wasn't as bad as the punishment he gave Abel. "Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground and I'll be hidden from Your face. And I'll be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth. And it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me." Now some people think that means there were other people on the world. God had told them to go forth, be fruitful and multiply. They knew that they were going to live hundreds of years. The world was soon to be populated with thousands if not millions. He wasn't dumb. He knew that there would be people and he would be known as the first murderer, which he was. Which he did at the inspiration of the devil because the Bible says, Jesus tells us, Satan was a murderer from the beginning. And the Lord said to him...

Even now God shows mercy to him. "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." God is saying, "Vengeance is mine. I'll take care of you." "And the Lord set a mark on Cain lest any finding him should kill him." Now we don't know what that mark was. The word is

sign. It's used several times in the Old Testament. And it's always a memorial. A sign. I don't think he put a big bar code in Cain's forehead. I don't think he had 666 like some people imagine. Or that Charles Manson, you know he's got a swastika tattooed on his forehead. And people in the prison say, "Don't mess with him, because he belongs to the devil. You mess with him and you're under the devil's curse." You heard about that? The mark of Cain. We don't know what it was. But God did something, probably something not even visual. You ever heard the expression in the Bible, "Mark this man. The end of that man is peace." Doesn't mean go up and put a check on their forehead. It means take note. And everyone who was to live beyond the time of Cain, they knew what he had done. They knew about the declaration of God that if anybody laid a hand on Cain, He was going to sever seven times more vengeance. Nobody messed with Cain. He died of old age evidently.

And then the Bible says he took his wife. And I wanted to touch on that because everybody gets all twitterpated, "Where'd she come from?" Well, if you read in Genesis chapter 5 it tells us that Adam and Eve also had sons and daughters. Back then they were permitted to take their siblings. And people get eeky feelings when they hear about... That's the technical term. Someone marrying their sister. But Biblically, Adam and Eve were brother and sister, weren't they? And if you go a little further in the Bible you'll find that Abraham married his half sister. Same father, different mothers. The Bible tells us that Jacob married his first cousin. Isaac married his cousin. And so it wasn't until the time of Moses, because of the depletion of vitality in our genes, that Moses commanded that brothers and sisters should not marry. But in the beginning that was, you know, man was perfect as he came from the creator's hands.

Point I want to leave you with that I think is the most important lesson in this study on Cain and Abel is what happened there in the very beginning is going to repeat itself. Here you had two brothers. They both worshiped. They both claimed to be worshiping the same God. One kills the other. You get to Revelation. There are two groups. They both claim to worship. The beast is a worshiping beast. He commands the whole world to worship. Doesn't that sound virtuous? But they're worshiping wrong. They're worshiping the image. And those who keep the commandments of God worship Him. So it's an issue of worship in the last days and worshiping the genuine and worshiping the counterfeit. One kills the other. Christ was killed by His own during a family feud. The cross was an altar, you might say, outside Jerusalem. And you know what I think is interesting is, when you look at the story of Abel in my mind I picture that it wasn't very far from the altar that Cain struck down his brother. And there the blood of the shepherd was mingled at the ground with the blood of the lamb. Jesus, when He died on the cross, He was the Shepherd and He was the Lamb. And it's only through the blood of that sacrifice that you and I are going to find acceptance with God.

Now I don't know about you, but everybody in this group either falls in the category of Cain or Abel. Your worship is either accepted or it is rejected. What is the purpose of our worship to be? Isn't it to be to find acceptance? Didn't God say to Cain, "If you do what is right won't you be accepted?" God wants to accept us. But we have to ask are we worshiping in spirit and in truth? Are we applying the blood of the Lamb, the blood of the Shepherd, that our sins might be forgiven? Is that your desire friends, to do it God's way? No matter what the world does and to worship Him in spirit and in truth? To believe in the blood of the Lamb that makes us acceptable to God? Not our works but His sacrifice. If that's your prayer, please take your hymnals. I've changed the hymn from what you saw in your hymnal. We're going to 545. Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us. And let's stand together as we sing. 545, Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us. Don't forget, following our service today we'll have ushers at the door to receive an offering for the NAPS group.

[Singing]

Everybody has an altar, every Christian home. What's on your altar? Is it the fruits of your work? Is it a religion of your devising? Or are you willing to have Jesus at the center of your life? He is the

Lamb on the altar of your life. You are believing in and having faith and trusting in His shed blood to provide both forgiveness, pardon, and power for you. Is that your desire friends? If there are some here today and the Holy Spirit has stirred your heart, and you want to make sure that you're standing by the altar of Abel and not the altar of Cain, we'd like to invite you to come to the front today and to make that decision perhaps for the first time. Maybe some have wandered away. Maybe there's been this rebellion in your heart like Cain. And you'd like to humble and submit to the Lord that you can be accepted. Come as we sing verse two.

[Singing]

Final aspect of my appeal this morning would be this. I believe that the ultimate purpose of our worship is that we might give to God what He wants. We are created for Him. I want to be accepted by Him. Don't you friends? That means that He's promised to receive us if we offer the worship according to His design. Maybe you have been lured or tempted or mesmerized or deceived by the popular trends in the worship of the world and you'd like to say, "Lord I'm going to cast that all aside. My criteria now is going to be Your Word, worship You in a way that is pleasing, in spirit and truth." If you'd like to do that today in maybe a more demonstrative way and come forward and say, "Lord I'm coming as a living sacrifice and placing myself on Your altar," come then as we sing verse three.

[Singing]

Father in heaven, Lord you have spoken to me today through these truths in Your Word. I trust that through Your Spirit You've also addressed the hearts and needs of others. I pray Lord that You will get our attention. I pray that You'll help us shake off the confusion of the world that clouds our thinking about what genuine worship is all about. I pray that we'll look afresh into Your Word and find out what is the worship that pleases You and stop using the criteria of what we want and what blesses us and what's fun for us. Lord I pray that we'll understand that You are a holy God, and we're to worship You in a holy way with honest, pure hearts. Please Lord, help us to have these kind of altars in our church and in our homes that we can offer up worship that You will accept. We want the fire to come down and to cleanse us from sin. We want to be received. We want to, like Elijah, go to heaven when You come again. So please bless this church and each of us, individually, in our families to this end. I pray Lord that You will pour Your Spirit into the lives and hearts of those who have come forward in a special way today. And minister to them according to their needs. We thank You now for meeting with us. We're not trusting that You answer our prayers because we deserve it, but because we do believe You hear us because we're claiming the merits of Jesus and plead His blood. Amen.