

Intro: As we continue our series BE OBEDIENT and start talking about giving, I want to remind you that our giving to God is greater than simply what we put in the offering. For most of us, our financial gifts are what we think of as most significant. That isn't true at all. In fact, in the video we just saw you witnessed an incredible gift being offered to God. A gift of obedience, a gift of pain offered to Him to use for His glory, a gift of praise in the middle of one of the most difficult times in life. Heb 13:1 "let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually..."

So, while our financial gifts are not the most important thing we offer to God...they are important, and something we need to pay attention to. The bible has a LOT to say about giving. This morning we are going to start at the very beginning...Genesis 4, where we see the very first instance of an offering being brought to God. Turn there:

READ PASSAGE Genesis 4:2-7

Ever read a passage and just not understand what is going on? I mean...on the surface it makes sense...but you have this underlying feeling that you aren't really "Getting It" That's how I feel when I read this account. It's the story of Cain and Abel: Both bring an offering. One is accepted...and the other isn't...NO REASON! Sometimes I read that and I think...is God being RANDOM here...I mean...what if What I am giving...isn't acceptable! What if I'm like Cain...bringing my offering to God but He isn't please with what I bring! What if YOUR offering isn't?

What is it about Cain's offering that was NOT pleasing...and What Made God look on Abel's Offering With Favor?

- Abel: Favor: Lit = *to look upon with respect, admiration or acceptance*
- Cain: Not Favor: *to NOT look upon with respect, admiration, or acceptance*

1. First, Look At The Character Of The Offering.

Gen 4:2-7

➤ Cain's Offering:

- >From the Ground: Common offering found later in the OT! (Grain Offering/Thanks Offering in Lev)
- >FROM what Cain had: No mention of first, or best, or anything else!
- >No Recognition of His need for covering/atonement/forgiveness (Simply, God, this is for you!)

➤ Abel's Offering:

- >He Gave the FIRST of what he had! He thought of God BEFORE anything else...even Himself!
Firstlings were the firstborn of the mother, often earliest in season...before the normal birthing season
To give of the firstling means Abel is giving to God BEFORE anything else! The first (maybe ONLY lamb)
This is an act of FAITH! God...I'm not going to hold onto the first for me...and give you the last!
I'm going to GIVE you the first...and TRUST that you will provide All I need in the future!
Applic: What does that mean for us? Think of Typical Budget God is LAST...ABEL...God was FIRST!
- >He Gave the BEST of what he had: Fat Portions were considered the best portions for food and trade!
Abel was giving God the PRIMERIB! Not the left overs that would be made into hotdogs and hamburgers!
Applic: What does that mean for us?
We should be giving God our BEST...not our leftovers! Because God deserves our very Best!
He gave US His best...when He gave us His Son...how could we ever think to give anything less?
It honors Him...and it demonstrates our love for and our commitment to Him as First and Best in our life!

>He Gave A SACRIFICIAL Offering! The Only way to GET the fat portions is to butcher the animal!
When Abel gave the fat portions of the lamb to God as an offering, He was following in the footsteps of what God had done to "cover" the sin of Adam and Eve, his parents when they sinned against God. God had taken an animal, slain them, and covered Adam and Eve nakedness and sin. That act was the very first foreshadow of what God was going to do on the Cross. While the Scripture doesn't give us the detail of the discussions, it appears that Abel understood what God had done, and brought a blood offering long before the institution of the OT sacrificial system. ABEL WAS DOING WHAT GOD HAD ALREADY DONE...MAKING A BLOOD OFFERING

Think about it! What a beautiful picture. Abel brings the firstborn lamb as a sacrificial offering through blood to the Holy God. In doing so he is shedding light on what John the Baptist would ultimately say, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!" Abel understood His sin...and covered it in bringing His offering...Cain evidently had no consideration of that at all!

Applic: Abel brought an offering understanding his sin and his need for forgiveness. Cain brought an offering without a single thought in that direction! In fact...when you consider the NT passages that give insight into the character of Cain...you begin to wonder if Cain thought he was doing God a favor with his gift!

2. Now, Look At The Character Of the Offeror!

Various NT

When you are struggling with a difficult portion of scripture one thing you will want to do is consider the WHOLE counsel of God. You need to look at not just that specific passage in isolation, but you want to examine other complementary passages that might shed light on what you are struggling with. When you do that with Cain and Abel things come clearly into focus. Each of them are mentioned a couple of times in the NT, and we get insight into them

- What the NT says about Abel: Jesus called Abel “righteous” It is a comment on who he was in Jesus eyes
>Mt 23:35: **Righteous Abel:** Lit = *to be just in both character and action* (not perfect) still sinner... being careful to do what God requires in order to come before Him. Abel did that with sacrifice! Cain didn't!
>Heb 11:4: **Faithful Abel:** Lit = Offered a better sacrifice by faith!
When Abel brought his sacrifice to God, he did so as an act of faith:
 - a. Gave first...Believed God was faithful to give him more!
 - b. Gave best...Because the character of God demands nothing less
 - c. Gave right way (blood sacrifice) trusting that God would accept and look with favor upon him HE DID!

- What the NT says about Cain: This is a VERY different story...and brings it all together for us!
1 Jn 3:12: *“Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.”*

Cain Belonged to evil one (devil) Evil: Lit = *to be hurtful, sinful, morally guilty*

That is WHO Cain was. He didn't just get twisted over offering and snap. He was that kind of man! Jesus says, *“Bad tree brings forth bad fruit!”* The offering was bad...because Cain was bad...no covering Cain's **ACTIONS** were (plural) were evil. This isn't the first time Abel has done the wrong thing! So, when his offering wasn't pleasing to God...WHO he was bubbled to the top! Cain murdered his brother because that's who he was. He was a bad man...acting in bad ways

Now ABEL was a sinner as well... BUT...KEY DIFFERENCE: His offering came with sacrifice for sin!

- The second passage that describes Cain in the NT identifies him in a group of evil people...1 of 3
Jude 1:11 *“They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.”*
 - a. Cain: Hate those that love them
 - b. Balaam: Prophet in the OT that sold his office and offered false prophecy for MONEY
 - c. Korah: Priest that led the rebellion against Moses in the desert

In a sense you can lump them all together and get a pretty good picture of what you are dealing with when you are talking about Cain. He is a man full of hatred, focused on money, and rebellious against God and what God expected of him. You see, I believe that Cain knew JUST as much as Abel did that his offering should come with a covering for sin. Yet...in his rebellion...probably because he was more focused on the GIFT than on GOD...he brought his offering the way HE wanted to bring it...And God...knowing His heart...did not look on it with favor.

But: notice something...God offered redemption! VS 7: If you do what is right...will you not be accepted! GRACE!!!
So Cain left...and instead of going to do what was right...and be acceptable...He murdered his brother! Chose SIN!!!
God offered Cain the opportunity to get it RIGHT...and he refused!

CONCL: Jesus said something very important to us about giving one time...Reveals essence of this passage

Lu 12:34 *“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”*

- **Abel's heart**...was with God...and his offering followed
For Abel, giving was about God: The offering was secondary
- **Cain's heart**...was with the offering...his heart NEVER really got past that to God
For Cain, the giving was about the gift...the offering. God was secondary

The next time you give...ask yourself the Questions for The Day

1. Am I giving my first? Do I plan to give to God BEFORE everything else or after
2. Am I giving my best? Does God get my best...or does God get my leftovers
3. Does my HEART make my gift acceptable?
4. Am I giving the with an understanding of my sin and need for God's acceptance of ME...not just my gift!
YOUR HEART MAKES YOUR GIFT ACCEPTABLE TO GOD...YOUR GIFT..NO MATTER WHAT....NEVER MAKE YOUR
HEART ACCEPTABLE!
5. Is my giving about God...or is my giving about the gift?