

The First Worship Service.
Genesis 4:1-16.
Sunday morning, February 3, 2008.

I. The “first mention principle.”

The first mention principle is a hermeneutical principle, that is a principle of Bible interpretation, which teaches us that the first time the Lord addresses any subject in His Word, He gives at that time the heart of matter.

- A. Gen. 1:2. The Holy Spirit hovers (brooded) over the waters and gives order and life. Throughout Scripture He imparts order and life to His people.
- B. Gen. 1:26 The Godhead as a plurality of persons.
- C. Gen 1:28. Labor; rule over the created order.
- D. Gen. 2:18-25 Marriage and the home.
- E. Gen 3:1-5 The subtlety and deceitfulness of the Serpent, Satan as the enemy and destroyer.
- D. Gen. 3:14-19. The curse as a result of sin.
- E. Gen 3:15. The promise of redemption; the gospel.
- F. Gen. 4:1-7 The first worship of fallen man.

II. The first family worships.

- A. At the very least here the two brothers come together at a common place and a common time to bring their offerings to the Lord.
More likely this was a gathering of the first family, God speaking through the first patriarch and prophet, Adam, to Cain the words of instruction given him in vs. 7. This would be the pattern followed by Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- B. At this time the heart and the point of all further worship in Scripture is given us.
“The Lord respected (accepted) Able and his offering.”
“But He did not respect (accept) Cain and his offering.”

Application: It is still the point of the worship of God that you as a person, and the gift you have prepared, will either be accepted or rejected by the Lord. In any given worship service there are still the Cains and the Abels gathered together, and the results are still the same: Acceptance with God resulting in fellowship with Him, or rejection with God resulting in alienation from Him.

- C. The word rendered “respected or accepted” means to look at something intently. The lord does look at our worship intently. He is the discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart Hebr. 4:12.
Sometimes it is rendered “to kindle into flame” and it may be that this is how the Lord showed His approval and disapproval for Cain and Able’s offerings.
This He did on Mount Carmel with Elijah’s worship and that of the priests of Baal. He also did so with the sacrifice at the dedication of the temple.

III. If you do well, will you not be accepted?

- A. Cain’s rejection did not come without instruction or encouragement on the part of the Lord.

B. What encouragement is given in these words.

God is pleased to accept worship from sinful fallen human beings if they would come in a right spirit before Him.

C. What instruction is given as well.

1. If you do not do well then sin lies at your doorstep, and it desires to have you, to control you, and ultimately to destroy you.

2. But you should rule over it.

You should handle it correctly. You should fear it and despise it.

You should humbly take it to the Lord and confess it as sin. You should ask Him to forgive it and to mortify it; that is to kill it.

3. Ruling over sin then does not mean that we have no sin, nor does it mean that we rid ourselves from sin. Rather it means to deal appropriately with sin. That is to hate it; to confess it; and to bring it to the Lord for execution.

4. Even as you struggle to do so, you are given the encouragement: "If you do well, will you not be accepted?"

Application: The second thing we learn here about acceptable worship is a right handling of our sin. Sin lies at each one of our door steps, and its desire is for us. To have us; to control us, and to ruin us; but we should rule over it, that is we should handle it rightly. By handling it with humility, and confessing it, and bringing it to the Lord for execution, we have the assurance that we and our worship shall be accepted.

IV. Where is your brother?

A. The Christian God is not a private deity.

You can't have just Him for yourself. He comes with His people and united to His people.

B. When Cain encounters the Lord, he encounters Him as the God of Abel, that is the God who has united Himself to Abel, and who owns Abel's cause.

C. Cain could not stand before the Lord and be accepted of him until he took his rightful place in relation to the body of God's people. Neither can we.

D. Cain failed both marks of true worship: He did not rule over his sin rightly, and he did not take his rightful place in relation to the Lord's people.

Three things happened to him: He inherited the curse; he went out from the presence of the Lord, and he dwelt in the land of "wanderings" (Nod).

Those are still the results of not taking the worship of God seriously.

Application: The third thing we learn about being accepted of God in worship is that we are not just dealing with the Lord. Rather we are dealing with the Lord as the God of His people. In presenting ourselves to the Lord in worship, we must simultaneously present ourselves to His people. This is why we have an offering as part of worship
"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this..." (true worship)
"To visit orphans and widows in their trouble..." (giving yourself to God's people)
"And to keep oneself unspotted from the world." (Ruling over sin rightly)
James 1:27.