

Elder Vernon Johnson

Numbers

Two

Cain and Abel Witness of False and True Worship

In bible associations, two is associated with the subject of witness. Often times two individuals are paired together to teach us basic bible doctrines. Cain and Abel are two brothers that are paired together in the scriptures to teach us a lesson through contrast about what constitutes true worship before God.

Gen. 4:1 "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. 2 And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. 4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: 5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell."

There are two great questions generated by the above passage of scripture. Why did God have respect unto Abel and not unto Cain? Why did God have respect unto Abel's offering and not unto Cain's offering?

Numerous passages of scripture tell us that God is no respecter of persons:

1. 2 Sam 14:14 "For we must needs die, and are as water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him."

2. 2 Chr 19:7 "Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts."

3. Rom 2:11 "For there is no respect of persons with God."

4. Eph 6:9 "And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him."

5. Col 3:25 "But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons."

6. 1 Pet 1:17 "And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:"

7. Acts 10:34 "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:"

Even though God is no respecter of persons, yet he had respect unto Abel, but not unto Cain. Thus, we ask, "On what basis does God have respect?" The answer is that God has respect unto his covenant:

1. Lev 26:9 "For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you."

2. 2 Ki 13:23 "And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet."

3. Psa 74:20 "Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty."

Thus, God has respect unto his covenant and since God made a covenant of redemption before the foundation of the world and in that covenant he chose who would be his. God's respect for Abel is a covenant respect, for God chose him in Christ before the foundation of the world. God's lack of respect for Cain is because God did not choose Cain before the foundation of the world.

God also had respect unto Abel's offering, but not unto Cain's offering. After Adam had transgressed the law of God in the garden of Eden, God made coats of skin and clothed Adam and Eve. It was necessary that blood be shed in order that Adam and Eve be clothed. This became the pattern for offerings until the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. Abel followed the pattern that had been established and offered a firstling of the flock and of the fat thereof. This offering pointed to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. It gave all the praise, honor, and glory unto Christ.

In contrast, Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto God. God had before cursed the ground, thus Cain brought of that which God had cursed for an offering. He was offering a cursed thing unto God! Furthermore, based on Cain's reaction we can conclude that Cain expected to be praised by God for his offering, yet was rejected. Abel's offering sought to praise God, whereas, Cain's offering sought for praise from God.

Today there are two basic patterns of attempted worship of God. The vast majority attempt to place their effort as the final cause of gaining eternal life. Those who do this are seeking God to praise their efforts. This is unacceptable worship before God. A very small minority attempt to give all the credit for their salvation from sin and

eternal life unto God, reserving no praise for themselves or their efforts. This very small minority seek only to praise God in their worship. This is acceptable unto God.