

THE TWO WAYS¹

"Cain and Able"

Introduction-

Matt 7:13-14

13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. KJV

Jesus made it very plain: there is a broad way and there is a narrow way. If we seek to follow God, we must be prepared to walk the narrow path that leads to the strait gate which gives us entrance into life. This teaching series is all about choice. Choice, freedom of will, is one of the greatest gifts and freedoms that the Lord has given us. But as with all freedoms, there comes responsibility. Every decision leads up the road. We need to realize which way we are traveling on.

Each of these lessons is designed to investigate practical areas of life we all deal with and the choices we often face. We need to decide if the way we are going is leading us to God and life or death and destruction. And should we find out that the going is easy because the way is broad, we should repent and run back to Crossroads and beat feat up the narrow way fast as we can!

Faith Encounters Religion-

Gen 4:1-4

1 Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man."

2 Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.

3 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD.

4 But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, NIV

Abel worshipped the Lord with the firstlings and the fatlings of his flock. His sacrifice was done in faith, for he had learned of his parents the properness of a blood sacrifice for the covering of sin (Gen. 3:21). And the Lord looked with favor not only upon Abel's offering, but upon the man himself.

Gen 4:5-6 NIV

5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face [Strong's Number 6440] was downcast.

6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? [SN 5307]

¹ A note to the reader: This teaching series, *The Two Ways*, was inspired by a felt-graphic set produced by Betty Lukens which goes by the same name.

In contrast to Abel, the Lord had no favor for Cain or his offering. Cain had decided to worship God after the imaginations of his own heart (which is called religion) and became angry when he was not accepted.

Most translations (and commentaries) interpret the words in Genesis 4:5-6 in the same sense as the New International Version, "his countenance was fallen." Yet elsewhere in Scripture, the very same combination of words is translated to fall on one's face, either before an enemy, a king or before God in worship. Job 29:24 is the only other place that they are translated in the sense of countenance falling. In all other places it involves people falling or doing obeisance.

Gen 17:1-3

1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless.

2 I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."

3 Abram **fell facedown**, and God said to him, (NIV)

Gen 44:14

Joseph was still in the house when Judah and his brothers came in, and **they threw themselves to the ground before him.** (NIV)

Gen 50:18 (NIV)

His brothers then came and **threw themselves down before him.** "We are your slaves," they said.

Lev 9:24 (NIV)

Fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted for joy and **fell facedown.**

Num 14:5 (NIV)

Then Moses and Aaron **fell facedown** in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there.

Josh 5:13-15

13 Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"

14 "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua **fell facedown** to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?"

15 The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so. (NIV)

Seeing that the context of Genesis 4 is one of worship (true and false), it seems only logical to see this as Cain on his face before the Lord. It wasn't a matter of him having droopy-lower-lip syndrome! No, Cain was on his face before God and God met him in worship. But He didn't tell Cain what he wanted to hear. He informed him that He had no interest in his posture of worship

so long as his heart was not truly seeking the Lord. A very similar interchange happens between the Lord and Joshua when Joshua was on his face before the Lord.

The children of Israel had just gone after the little city of Ai and thirty-six on them lost their lives and the army was routed. Joshua was distress and brought his prayer and complaint before the Lord.

Josh 7:6-12

- 6 Then Joshua tore his clothes and **fell facedown** to the ground before the ark of the LORD, remaining there till evening. The elders of Israel did the same, and sprinkled dust on their heads.
- 7 And Joshua said, "Ah, Sovereign LORD, why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us? If only we had been content to stay on the other side of the Jordan!
- 8 O Lord, what can I say, now that Israel has been routed by its enemies?
- 9 The Canaanites and the other people of the country will hear about this and they will surround us and wipe out our name from the earth. What then will you do for your own great name?"
- 10 The LORD said to Joshua, "Stand up! What are you doing down on your face?"
- 11 Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions.
- 12 That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction. (NIV)

The developments are strikingly similar.

Event	Cain	Joshua (and Israel)
Not accepted before the Lord	Gen. 4:5 offering not favored	Josh. 7:4-5 defeated in battle
Obeisance before the Lord (in supplication)	Gen. 4:5 face downcast	Josh. 7:6 fell facedown
Questioned by the Lord	Gen. 4:6 why are you downcast?	Josh. 7:10 what are you doing down on your face?
Sin exposed by the Lord	Gen. 4:7 sin crouching at the door	Josh. 7:11 Israel has sinned
Way of escape provided by the Lord	Gen. 4:7 "do well . . . you must master it."	Josh. 7:13 destroy what is devoted to destruction

The Lord revealed the guilty party through the lot. Achan was chosen and his sin exposed. And he and all his family were destroyed for his sin.

By way of these comparisons, we can see that Cain was trying to approach God on his own terms. It is much easier to do what we want instead of doing what He requires. Self-satisfaction and not giving way to the requirements of God takes us on the broad way.

The way of Cain-

I. Unbelief becomes anger over God's approval of those more faithful.

Though his birth speaks to us of the faith of Eve ("I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord."), Cain quickly shows the sorry state of man. In the New Testament, he is pointed out as the archetype of how a believer is not to behave. He is the first "unbeliever" by trade.

I Jn 3:11-12

11 This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.

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. (NIV)

Cain's actions were evil. When? When he murdered Abel? Certainly, but this is contrasting them at the same time. The murder was the result of the evil already present in his heart. We might think that religion is harmless. "I seek God in my own way," people say. And we think, "How nice, they have spirituality." God calls it evil. Cain's actions in bringing to the Lord fruit from the ground instead of a blood sacrifice were evil!

Jude 1:4-13

4 For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

5 Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe.

6 And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home-- these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.

7 In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

8 In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings.

9 But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

10 Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals-- these are the very things that destroy them.

11 Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.

12 These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm-- shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted-- twice dead.

13 They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever. (NIV)

Korah and Balaam aren't exactly good company! The way of Cain (more than likely the center lane of the Broad Way) begins with disregard to the requirements of God in right worship. His

downcast face occurs in a scene of worship. He was self-righteous. He was worshipping God on his own terms. When Abel was blessed above him, his unbelief manifested itself in envy and anger.

II. Unbelief disregards the warnings against sin.

Gen 4:6-8

6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?

7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."

8 Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

Faith demands that we do that which is right. Unlike Cain, Abel was a faithful man.

Hebrews 11:4 KJV

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

Sacrifices must be given in faith. When we apply the ultimate sacrifice of the Lord Jesus to our lives, we must do so in faith. We must have faith that the blood of the Lamb does clean the conscience of the worshiper. Then we will be found righteous in God's sight.

Cain's sacrifice was not offered in faith. He didn't believe the Lord's requirement of blood for the overcoming of sin (Rev. 12:11). After having disregarded God's standard in the sacrifice, he willfully disregarded the Lord's warning against the danger of sin. The deceit of sin is that we think we can involve ourselves in it and control it. But the truth is that once we obey the voice of rebellion, sin (which desires to have us) becomes our master and we serve it (Rom. 6:16).

III. Unbelief repudiates the responsibility for sin.

Gen 4:9

Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" (NIV)

"It's not my problem, God. He's Your accepted one. It wasn't my job to watch him!" Cain's arrogance seems hard to fathom until we consider our own sin. Anything that is not of faith is sin. When we don't believe the standards of God, we tend not to believe His promised punishment of those who break His commandments. But conscience is still with us and lets us know that we are in the wrong. So our soul rises up in unbelief and begins to make justifications. It's not my fault, therefore there is no fault—we try to convince ourselves and God. But the truth is that we are each directly responsible for our own sins.

IV. Unbelief protests the punishment for sin.

Gen 4:10-14

10 The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.

- 11 Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.
- 12 When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."
- 13 Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear.
- 14 Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." (NIV)

When Adam and Eve sinned, the serpent was cursed and the ground was cursed. Now here in verse 11 we have the curse applied to man. For his sin, Cain is cursed. And a cursed man (farmer by trade) will have a hard time getting fruit from cursed ground.

After having refused to heed the Lord's warning, Cain now whines about the consequence of his sin. "My punishment is more than I can bear," he says. Though this cry came from Cain's lips, God answered it in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who bore the punishment of our sins on the cross. We need to understand that because God is holy, sin must be punished. Let us not be faithless as Cain, but recognize what our sin cost the Lord.

V. Unbelief continues under divine protection.

Gen 4:15-16

- 15 But the LORD said to him, "Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him.
- 16 So Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden. (NIV)

After all that has been said and the Lord proved true and all knowing, Cain still flees from Him. Adam and Eve hid for fear. Cain, in rebellion still, "went out from the presence of the Lord." What became of the person who rebelled against God and left the land of blessing in angry defiance of the laws and the sacrifices? He prospered.²

Gen 4:17-22

- 17 Cain lay with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was then building a city, and he named it after his son Enoch.
- 18 To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad was the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael was the father of Methushael, and Methushael was the father of Lamech.
- 19 Lamech married two women, one named Adah and the other Zillah.
- 20 Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock.
- 21 His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all who play the harp and flute.
- 22 Zillah also had a son, Tubal-Cain, who forged [Heb. whetter] all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron. Tubal-Cain's sister was Naamah. (NIV)

The descendants of Cain developed all that we consider to be "advanced culture." They were responsible for cities, musical instruments, weapons, and agricultural implements. The mercy of God is manifest in that not only did He allow Cain to live, He also allowed them to flourish.

² Allen P. Ross, Creation and Blessing, A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1988, p.10

What of Abel?

Gen 4:25-26

25 Adam lay with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, "God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him."

26 Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD. (NIV)

Seth was Abel's replacement. Through his line, true worship of YHWH would continue.

The Blood of Abel-

Luke 11:46-51

46 Jesus replied, "And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.

47 "Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your forefathers who killed them.

48 So you testify that you approve of what your forefathers did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs.

49 Because of this, God in his wisdom said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.'

50 Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world,

51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all. (NIV)

The Lord Jesus proclaimed Abel as the first prophet killed in office. He considered the unbelief of His day no different than that exhibited by Cain. The experts in the law had bound up the people with strict laws. But they didn't realize that they themselves were on the broad way which leads to destruction.

The unfortunate thing about the broad way is that we generally trample others on the way through it. It is a road paved in blood, but not the blood of sacrifice. It is paved in the blood of unjust murder. And the blood speaks.

Heb 12:24-25

24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

25 See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? (NIV)

“...as far as human understanding is concerned, inconceivable and inexplicable is the accusing cry of the blood of our brother Abel, a cry that ascends to God day and night...Abel's blood, even the best and the dearest, never brings salvation in the presence of God.; instead it increases the burden of the curse. But the Christ's blood

‘speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel’ (Heb. 12:24). Thus the Bible speaks of two kinds of blood and their voices before God: one of these is millionfold, and its message is accusation, while the other is the blood of the One, and it brings healing.”³

The millionfold voice of innocent blood can be seen in the Revelation.

Rev 6:9-11

9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.

10 They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"

11 Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed. (NIV)

The Lord has covered the Narrow Way in His own blood. As a matter of fact, one must be washed in the blood to go through the gate of the Narrow way to arrive to the One True God (He said "I AM the Door" John 10:9 and "I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life" John 14:6). Let us not be found in the error of Cain, thinking the fruits of our ground will satisfy a holy God. Let us come to Him through the blood of the spotless Lamb and find favor and be accepted of Him.

³ *ibid.*, p. 162.