



New Covenant

Presbyterian Church

Genesis 4:1-7 Small Group Questions

1. What difference was there between Cain and Abel with regard to the nurture that they received from their parents?

There was absolutely no difference between Cain and Abel with regard to the nurture that they received from their parents. They had the same instruction, as we see from the fact that they were sacrificing.

2. How do we know that Adam and Eve would have taught their sons about sacrifice?

Moses tells us that God clothes Adam and Eve with animal skins. We must conclude that if that pointed to the righteousness of Christ, then sacrifice must have accompanied that act of covering. In turn, Adam and Eve instructed their sons to sacrifice. The writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 11:4 says that “By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain.” In order for something to be done by faith it has to have been revealed by God. We must conclude that God revealed to Cain and Abel through the instruction of their parents the need for a blood sacrifice for the remission of sin.

3. What was the difference between Cain’s sacrifice and Abel’s sacrifice?

Cain brought of the fruit of the ground and Abel brought of the first of his flock and its fat. Cain brought a non-bloody sacrifice. Abel brought a bloody sacrifice.

4. If the Law required grain offerings why did God not accept Cain’s sacrifice?

Because the grain offerings of the Law were always to accompany the blood sacrifices. The writer of Hebrews tells us “without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

5. What important detail does the Genesis account teach us about God accepting Abel and his sacrifice by sovereign grace and not because of what Abel did?

John Calvin explained: “God accepted Abel’s sacrifice and not Cain’s. Moses make special note of that in the succinct comment he makes here. He could have simply said, ‘God had respect for Abel’s sacrifice and did not deign to accept Cain’s. Be he presents the offering differently. He says that God has respect for Abel and his offerings and did not have respect for Cain or his offerings. We see he begins with the person and then moves to his works, as if saying God does not spend time with appearances, but begins with the more important, the persons... We see why Moses puts the person first. Moreover, we see how the person is accepted so God can approve works second and at a lower level. So in order to understand that better, let us note that sacrifices in themselves could never have pleased God, because of the purpose God had in mind when he ordained and established them.” – John Calvin



New Covenant

Presbyterian Church

Genesis 4:1-7 Small Group Questions

6. What contrast is learned from the contrast between Cain and Abel?

Cain was seeking to worship self-righteously. He was seeking to present before God the work of his own hands. He was like the Pharisee in the Temple who prayed, "I thank you Lord that I am not like other men...I fast, I pray, I give." Pharisees talked about "following God," "good works," "worship," "fasting," "praying," "giving" and "holiness," but not about Christ. Abel was broken and knew that he was a sinner. Abel was like the tax collector in the Temple who beat his breast and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Jonathan Edwards summed up the difference when he said:

"Abel, when he comes before God, is sensible of his own unworthiness and sinfulness, as the publican [Luke 18:13], and so is sensible of his need of an atonement, and therefore comes with bloody sacrifices, hereby testifying his faith in the promised great sacrifice. Cain comes with his own righteousness, like the Pharisee who put God in mind that he paid tithes of all that he possessed [Luke 18:12]. He comes without any propitiation, with the fruit of his ground, and produce of his own labors, as though he could add something to the Most High by gifts of his own substance. And therefore he was interested in no atonement, for he was not sensible of his need of any, nor did he trust in any. And so, being a sinner, and not having perfectly kept God's commands, sin lay at His door unremoved; and so his offering could not be accepted, for guilt remained to hinder...the guilt of sin remains to hinder his being accepted. Without an atonement, your righteousness can't be accepted, whatever offerings you bring to me." - Jonathan Edwards

Knowing that God covers our sin with the blood and righteousness of Jesus is the only thing that rightly animates our giving.

7. In what way is God's sovereignty shown in the difference between Cain and Abel?

The only reason that Abel believed and sacrificed in faith is that God had decided to be merciful to Abel and not to Cain. Abel had the same sinful nature as Cain. Grace and grace alone made the difference.

8. In what way is man's responsibility shown in the difference between Cain and Abel?

God confronts Cain after he offered the self-righteous sacrifice and asks him a series of question to encourage repentance. Additionally, after Cain gets angry and downcast about not being accepted the Lord gives him Gospel hope and warning that Cain could have, humanly speaking, responded to in faith.

9. What is the most important application of this account to us?

We must always ask ourselves, "Am I responding to the Gospel with brokenness, admitting that I am a sinner and can only approach God through the sacrifice of Christ by faith alone?" When we come to worship, we should ask, "Am I coming to God conscious that I am only accepted in Christ?" Martyn Lloyd-Jones summed up the account of Cain and Abel by saying, "There is only one way into the holiest of all--by the blood of Jesus. If you acknowledge that, God will acknowledge you." - M. Lloyd-Jones