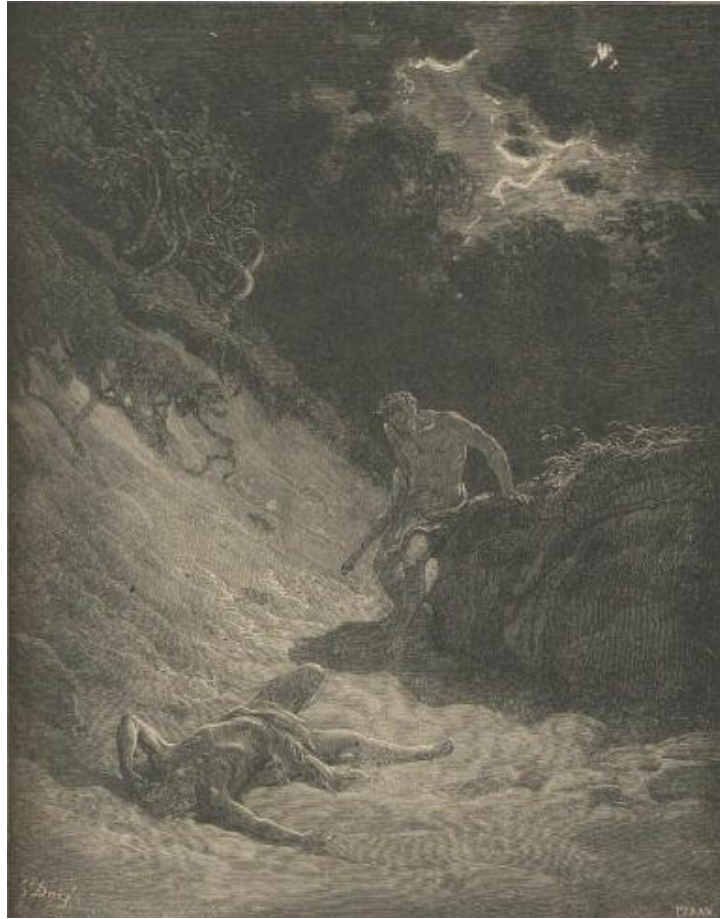


# Cain and Abel



Conflicts: We live in a society inundated with conflicts. Whatever the media, our society is bombarded with information concerning acts of lawlessness. Our homes are not safe, and parents are helpless when it comes to protecting their children while attending school, and/or functions outside of the home.

Our consideration at the moment, concerning Conflict and Resolution has to do with two sons of Adam and Eve.

The scriptures reveal that Eve is the mother of all living,<sup>i</sup> (Genesis 3:20) of which only three are named: Cain, Abel and Seth, for “after he (Adam) begat Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters”<sup>ii</sup> (Genesis 5:4).

When the reader is introduced to the first two, Cain and Abel, they had reached an age of maturity as is evident, in that, they two had brought an “offering unto Jehovah”<sup>iii</sup> (Genesis 4:3). These two men were, as most children are, different in interests: Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain was a tiller of the ground. Thus, “in the process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto Jehovah. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof”<sup>iv</sup> (Genesis 4:4)

Although both of these men had brought forth an offering unto Jehovah, “Jehovah had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect”<sup>v</sup> (Genesis 4:5).

In connection with these two offerings, there are three New Testament passages which shed some light on the character of each: <sup>1</sup> “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect of his gifts: and through it he being dead yet speaketh”<sup>vi</sup> (Hebrews 11:4). The apostle John made a comparison between the children of God, and the children of the devil and uses Cain as an example of the latter, saying, <sup>2</sup> “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message which ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another: not as Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his works were evil, and his brother’s righteous”<sup>vii</sup> (1 John 3:9–12). And then the prophet Jude said, in describing the ungodly, <sup>3</sup> “Woe unto them! For they went in the way of Cain, and ran riotously in the error of Balaam for hire, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah”<sup>viii</sup> (Jude 11). In these instances, as Balaam was disobedient because he “loved the hire of wrong-doing”<sup>ix</sup> (2 Peter 2:15), and Korah rebelled against Moses, and thus against Jehovah, out of pride and haughtiness, so also did Cain.

In regard to Abel, the scriptures identify a strikingly different character of man. Concerning Abel, the Hebrew writer affirms that “By faith Abel offered unto God

a more excellent sacrifice than Cain”<sup>vi</sup> (Hebrews 11:4), and was the first of the prophets to perish “between the altar and the sanctuary”<sup>x</sup> (Luke 11:51). It was a result of these two righteous men, Abel and Zachariah, that God would lay his vengeance at the feet of the Jews.

Defining the difference between the offering of Cain, and that of Abel, Abel’s offering was “By Faith.” In the text, faith is defined as, “assurance of *things* hoped for, a conviction of things not seen.” Further expressed in the phrase, “without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing to *unto him*; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that seek after him”<sup>xi</sup> (Hebrews 11:1, 6).

In the text of Hebrews 11, faith is described as an action, i.e., Enoch “had been well-pleasing unto God,” Noah, “being warned...moved with godly fear,” “Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out,” and “Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.” Although Cain and Abel had “action,” only one was acceptable. So what’s the difference? The difference is found in obedience or disobedience to the commands of God, i.e., faith (belief) comes of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ”<sup>xii</sup> (Romans 10:17). Abel’s offering was acceptable because it was in obedience to the commands of God. Just as Jesus “became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation”<sup>xiii</sup> (Hebrews 5:9).

Within our context of Conflict and Resolution there are five points we want to address:

1. The Principles involved in the conflict:
  - a. Jehovah – the offering was made “unto Jehovah.”
  - b. Abel – Offered an offering of which Jehovah had respect.
  - c. Cain – Offered an offering of which Jehovah did not have respect.
2. The Cause of the Conflict:
  - a. Abel’s offering was the product of faith<sup>xi</sup> (Hebrews 11:1), Cain’s was not.

- b. Abel was righteous<sup>xiv</sup> (Matthew 23:35), Cain was of the evil one<sup>vii</sup> (1 John 3:9–11).
3. How did Cain respond to the conflict? “And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell”<sup>v</sup> (Genesis 4:5).
4. The Result of the Conflict:
  - a. “Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him”<sup>xv</sup> (Genesis 4:8).
  - b. Concerning Cain, “And Jehovah said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now cursed art thou from the ground, which hath opened its mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee its strength; a fugitive and a wanderer shalt thou be in the earth. And Cain said unto Jehovah, My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the ground; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer in the earth; and it will come to pass, that whosoever findeth me will slay me. And Jehovah said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And Jehovah appointed a sign for Cain, lest any finding him should smite him. And Cain went out from the presence of Jehovah, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden”<sup>xvi</sup> (Genesis 4:9–16).
5. What would have accomplished a peaceful end to the conflict? Jehovah said to Cain, “And Jehovah said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shall it not be lifted up? and if thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door: and unto thee shall be its desire, but do thou rule over it”<sup>xvii</sup> (Genesis 4:6–7).

Conflict is, “a: competitive or opposing action of incompatibles: antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons) b: mental struggle

resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands.”

When there is an “antagonistic state or action,” relating to the commands of God, and/or among men, and one or the other’s response to it is motivated by wrath, and accompanied by a hardness of heart, the means of peace requires repentance, i.e., “If thou doest well, shall it not be lifted up?”

The prophet James once said, “the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God,” and again, “Wherefore *the scripture* saith, ‘God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you’”<sup>xviii</sup> (James 1:20; 4:6–7).

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<sup>i</sup> Genesis 3:20

<sup>ii</sup> 5:4

<sup>iii</sup> 4:3

<sup>iv</sup> 4:4

<sup>v</sup> 4:5

<sup>vi</sup> Hebrews 11:4

<sup>vii</sup> 1 John 3:9-12

<sup>viii</sup> Jude 11

<sup>ix</sup> 2 Peter 2:15

<sup>x</sup> Lk. 11:51

<sup>xi</sup> Hebrews 11:1, 6

<sup>xii</sup> Romans 10:17

<sup>xiii</sup> Hebrews 5:9

<sup>xiv</sup> Matthew 23:35

<sup>xv</sup> Genesis 4:8

<sup>xvi</sup> Genesis 4:9-16

<sup>xvii</sup> Genesis 4:6-7

<sup>xviii</sup> James 1:20; 4:6-7