

Christians At Texas State Bible Study—Genesis #7

The Line of Life with Abel

Gen. 4:2 And again she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a tender of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. **3** And in the course of time Cain brought an offering to Jehovah from the fruit of the ground. **4** And Abel also brought an offering from the firstlings of his flock, that is, from their fat portions. And Jehovah had regard for Abel and for his offering. **5** But for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. And Cain became very angry, and his countenance fell. **8** And Cain said to Abel his brother, Let us go into the field. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him.

Heb. 11:4 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying to his gifts; and through faith, though he has died, he still speaks.

1John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin. **9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Rom. 10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him; **13** For “whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” **14** How then shall they call upon *Him* into whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe *into Him* of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without one who proclaims *Him*? **17** So faith *comes* out of hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

John 4:21 Jesus said to her, Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. **23** But an hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truthfulness, for the Father also seeks such to worship Him. **24** God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness.

Abel was a person who was an overcoming martyr living for God's satisfaction. We need to have a prayer within us that the Lord would make us an Abel. The constituents of the New Jerusalem are actually myriads of Abels. The noblest thing in the universe is being an overcomer and a martyr. The best environment in which to live a martyr's life is in fellowship with other believers. There is not just physical martyrdom but also psychological martyrdom and even spiritual martyrdom. We experience this when we reject ourselves and live by another life. According to Revelation 3:14, the One (Christ) who lives in us is the faithful Witness. This can also be translated *the faithful Martyr*. There is a faithful, overcoming Martyr in our spirit. He always renounced Himself, rejected Himself, and lived by the Father's life. Therefore, if we are going to live a martyr's life, we must do everything through the cross and by the spirit to dispense Christ into God's people for the building up of His Body.

Abel cared only for God's purpose, not for his own existence. Abel's name means *vanity* or *like a breath*. This shows us that everything other than God and God's satisfaction is vanity. Before the flood man was permitted to eat only vegetables and fruits, not meat (1 :29; cf. 9:3); thus, Abel's tending of sheep was his working not to produce food for his living but to provide offerings for God's satisfaction (cf. Heb. 10:5-10). Cain and Abel lived before the flood. Only after the flood did God ordain that man eat meat. This indicates that Abel's tending of sheep was not for his living but for God's satisfaction. He raised sheep and offered the firstlings of his flock to God with the blood for his cleansing, with the fat for God's satisfaction, and with the skins for his covering. This means that, in type, he enjoyed the cleansing of Christ's blood, he took care of God's satisfaction, and he enjoyed Christ's covering him as his righteousness. None of these three items was related to his living. Abel labored on something that had nothing to do with his living on this earth. Logically speaking, such a living may have seemed irrational. Cain might have mocked Abel, telling him that his actions were vain. Far from being vain, however, Abel's living a life on this earth purely for God's satisfaction was the noblest occupation.

Abel not only knew God but also took God's way of worshipping God according to God's divine revelation, not

according to his concept. The Lord wants to recover us back to God's way of worshipping God according to His divine revelation in the sixty-six books of the Bible. We do not worship God according to our concept, opinion, thought, desire, or tradition. We have to come back to God's intention. God wants to be worshipped by our enjoying Him, being constituted with Him, and being filled with Him so that He can be our contents and we can be His glorious expression in this universe. This is what the Lord wants to recover, and this is the Lord's recovery. The Lord wants to bring us back to God's way according to His economy. This has nothing to do with our opinion or the contents of any creed. We simply take the way that the Bible says (John 4:21, 23-24).

We must decide in our being that we are going to say amen to whatever the Bible says regardless of what it costs us. If we take this way, we will be persecuted. This has happened throughout church history. George Whitefield and John Wesley were very much used by the Lord to preach the gospel in the eighteenth century. They realized that the Bible said that they could preach the gospel outdoors-that they did not need to be in a chapel or a cathedral in order to speak about God's Word. That was an item of recovery. However, they paid a price to recover this matter. They were persecuted to the uttermost.

Abel's faith came from hearing the word of the gospel from his parents; therefore, what Abel did came out of revelation (Heb. 11:4; Rom. 10:14, 17). Cain and Abel's parents must have preached the gospel to them. We know this because Abel offered the firstlings of the flock to God for God's satisfaction. He knew that he should do that because his parents, Adam and Eve, must have told their children about how they fell, how God promised them a seed, how God slew some sacrificial lambs, and how they experienced the anticipated redemption and put on Christ as their righteousness. They must have told their children that although they should have been slain, the lambs were slain instead of them. Not only so, Adam and Eve began to live by offering in type Christ to God as their Substitute for God's satisfaction and for their enjoyment. This they must have conveyed to their children.

Hebrews 11:4 tells us that by faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. Romans 10 tells us how Abel should have received his faith: "How then shall they call upon Him into whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe into Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without one who proclaims Him? So faith comes out of hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (vv. 14, 17). Abel's faith surely came from his parents' proclaiming something to him. Hence, he offered his sacrifice by faith, which came through hearing, which came through his parents. Hebrews 11:4 goes on to say that although Abel died, he still speaks. In principle, everyone who lives the life of an overcoming martyr speaks throughout all time.

According to God's foreordained redemption, Abel offered to God the firstlings of his flock, with the shedding of blood for his redemption, the burning of the fat for God's satisfaction, and the covering of the coats of skins for him to be justified by God (Gen. 4:4; Heb. 9:22; 11:4). Hebrews 9:22 says that without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Christ shed His blood on the cross for the forgiveness of all of our sins. His blood continually cleanses us from every sin. Hence, we need the blood of Jesus.

We need to appreciate the blood of Jesus. We are here not based upon our merit, success, labor, good works, or character. We are here solely by the blood of Jesus Christ. We need the blood every day. The more we go on with the Lord and the more we are in the light of the Lord's presence, the more we see how corrupt we are (I John 1:7). Sometimes as we progress in the Christian life, it seems that we become more corrupt. It is not that we are getting worse; actually, we were always that bad. The only difference is that the light gets brighter as we progress. George Whitefield said, "Even my tears of repentance need to be repented of." George Whitefield had the realization that everything that proceeds out of us has an element of corruption in it. The more we go on with the Lord, the more we will have the same realization. But at the same time, we will have a deepening appreciation of the cleansing blood of Jesus.

The fat signifies the inward riches of Christ as the abundance of life for God's satisfaction. Every day we need to lay our hands on Christ as the offerings, be identified with Him, and experience His inward riches. This means that every day as we enjoy Him, love Him, and call on Him, we are infused with His inward thoughts, inward feelings, inward intentions, and inward desires, which are His inward riches as the abundance of life, filling and flowing out of our being for God's satisfaction (Rom. 10:12-13).

Not only do we enjoy Christ as the blood and the fat; we also enjoy Christ as our righteousness every day. First, we enjoy Christ as our righteousness to cover us. We are those who are wearing the "best robe," which is Christ as the God-satisfying righteousness to cover us, the penitent sinners (Luke 15:22). Christ covers us. It is in Christ that we are accepted and justified by God. Based upon this objective righteousness—Christ as our covering—we can enjoy Christ and live Him out as our subjective righteousness. By doing so, we can be subjectively justified by God and subjectively become God's satisfaction as we live this holy and righteous person out of our being.

What Abel did corresponds exactly to the gospel in the New Testament, which tells us to receive the cleansing of the blood, to deny ourselves, to put ourselves aside, and to take Christ as our covering that we might live in Christ to become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 1: 19- 21 a). It is a wonderful fact that every day we can receive a fresh cleansing through our confessing of our sins. We do not need to confess our sins to a "clergyman"; we can confess our sins directly to God. If we confess our sins, He is faithful in His Word and righteous in His blood to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). His blood cleanses us from every sin (v. 7). We need to confess our way into the kingdom. Every morning we need to "take a shower" in the sin offering by opening up our being, allowing Him to shine in us, and confessing according to His leading and His shining. Then throughout the day we continually need to confess. Confessing our sins is like washing our hands-it keeps us clean and pure for God's move within us .

Abel's action of offering the firstlings to God signifies the reality of denying ourselves and putting ourselves aside. It means that we do not trust in what we are and what we can do. Our faith and our trust are in Christ as our offering. Thus, we put ourselves aside, reject ourselves, renounce ourselves, and take Christ as the reality of all our offerings.

We take Christ as our covering that we might live in Christ to become the righteousness of God. Everything in our being that originates with us is ugly. The only real beauty in this universe is Christ. Exodus 28:2 says that the priests were clothed for glory and for beauty. These garments typify Christ as our covering. Abel enjoyed the covering of the skins of the sacrificial lambs just like his parents had. In the same way, we enjoy the covering of Christ, who is our God-satisfying righteousness, to be our glory and beauty. In Philippians 1:20 Paul speaks of not being put to shame. When we are put to shame, the Lord is dishonored. Being put to shame means that we do not magnify Christ, that we do not live Christ for His magnification. Every day we need to have an aspiration and a prayer within us: "Lord, don't let me be put to shame in anything today. I pray that You would fill me with the bountiful supply of the Spirit so that I can live You for Your magnification. I want You to be enlarged in me. I want You to be extolled in me. I want You to be made great in me. I want You to shine out of me. I want You to be my subjective clothing for glory and for beauty for Your satisfaction."

Abel was not only redeemed but also brought back to God to contact God and fellowship with God. The primary reason for Abel's sacrifice was not so that he would be judicially redeemed but that he would be brought back to God to contact God. In this entire universe, nothing is better than contacting God. Abel offered up the sacrifice so that he could enjoy judicial redemption with the cleansing of the blood, the covering of the skin, and acceptance by God, but he did this with a view to being brought back to God to have fellowship with Him and contact Him. Although it may seem like an impossible dream, we all can contact God. We can fellowship with God! Nothing is greater than this. We contact God and fellowship with Him so that we can be organically saved in His life.. This is the goal of our redemption and contacting of God (1 Cor. 1:9; John 4:23-24)..

Abel is the representative of all the overcoming martyrs. Because Abel presented offerings with the shedding of blood according to God's revelation and was accepted by God, he incurred Cain's hatred and religious jealousy and was killed by Cain (Gen. 4:4-8; Matt. 23:34-35; John 16:2; Rev. 17:6). The worst jealousy is religious jealousy. In Matthew 23 the Lord told the Jewish religionists that the blood of all the prophets from Abel, the righteous one, to Zachariah, the son of Barachiah, was upon them. Zachariah was killed between the temple and the altar-in a religious place. This is why the Lord told the disciples in John 16 that there would come a time when people would kill them, thinking that they were offering service to God. Revelation 17:6 says that Babylon is drunk with the blood of the saints. That religious system is against God's economy and hates those who are for God's economy.

All those who take God's way of redemption and life will suffer persecution. Christ's love of affection constrains us to live and to die for Him (2 Tim. 3:12; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Rom. 14:7-9). Christ's love makes the believers martyrs for Him (Rev. 2:10; 12:11; Rom. 8:35-37). His love constrains us to live to Him. We love Him because He has poured His love into our hearts (5:5). This love makes us want to renounce everything for His satisfaction.

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