

## Justifying Cain

Happy Sabbath to all.

The topic of tonight's study is "Justifying Cain," and it is an idea, a principle, or a practice, for which Yah's people need to be watchful. While the idea here is an eternal one, and certainly one that we have touched on to one extent or another before, as the road of sanctification narrows – and steepens – we have been told to expect the temptations to become more cunning, and more dangerous, even for the elect.

It is our faith, which we declare openly and often, that we who are born again, and born of the Spirit, do not commit sin. We do not transgress the known requirements of our Father's will, nor do we knowingly leave our obligations unmet or duties undone. Nevertheless, the apostles, and later Adventist writers, saw fit to leave warnings for the Churches against transgressions and sin.

This is not a contradiction. It is a matter of education. History and our own experiences show that even those who are sincere can do terrible things, and further the plans of the Enemy, because their consciences are untrained, and their principles are not in harmony with the character of Christ. Even those who have committed to persecuting us in this generation, bringing the Beast of Revelation to bear in seeking to destroy the conviction of the saints, believe that they are a people chosen by Yahweh. Consider how that came to be.

Those who are seeking to use human laws to accomplish their ecclesiastical purposes inherited a pure (if not perfectly complete) tradition from our pioneers in the faith. Yet gently, gradually, with no bold signposts, they slipped further and further away from their commitment to righteousness. Eventually – unawares – they became agents of the very one from whom they believe they are seeking to rescue others. This is a fearful condition, and its true nature will be the greatest of shocks to those who have been taught that if they stay in the Church, and pay their tithe, and live according to all the light that has been delivered to them by their pastors and preachers, they will be accepted into the Inheritance of the Saints.

The majority are expecting, it seems, to passively be led into Heaven. Oh, perhaps one day they may have to run into some mountains to escape the Sunday Law... and no doubt the decision would try their convictions should it ever arise, but what about the daily work of preparing the soul for a sinless environment? What about drawing nearer to Christ daily in character, and putting away all that would be a barrier to His perfection of spirit? What about being watchful lest, by either actions or agreement, they become the source of the very troubles that they are expecting for some other group? In some of the better congregations these things may still be said, although that last one in particular would surprise me, but it will have no effect in the long run, if they are also taught what the majority of the nominal churches are learning – to justify Cain.

We all know the story well, that "in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto Yahweh. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And Yahweh had respect unto Abel and to his offering, but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell." (Gen 4:3-5)

We also know the reason why this distinction was made, for immediately after sin Yahweh did two things for mankind. First, He gave them a promise, delivered in the form of a curse to Satan who had used the snake as his agent of temptation, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy

seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” (Gen 3:15) Humanity would suffer temporarily because of the serpent’s bite, but through humanity would come the permanent destruction of the fallen angel. Second, Yahweh sealed His covenant with mankind through the slaying of an animal. We do not know exactly which, but we do know that its skin was used to make a covering for the first couple, who were now aware that they were naked before the universe. (Gen 3:21) I believe it was a sheep for reasons that I will mention momentarily.

The death of whichever animal provided the “skins” for Adam and Eve was the first physical death. The Bible actually says very little about this enormous occasion, the first example of death for both humanity and the on looking intelligences, but its significance can be seen in the rite of animal sacrifices that became integral to the worshippers of Yahweh all the way up until that final Old Covenant Passover on which Yahshua the Messiah was sacrificed for the sins of the world.

The very beginning of the very next chapter contains the passage I quoted above. Cain, who was a tiller of the soil, brought the best of his harvest as a sacrifice to Yahweh, and Abel brought the best of his flock and offered that. Now, the reason that I believe the first sacrifice was a sheep was because Abel, whatever other livestock he raised, is specifically called a keeper of sheep in Genesis 4:2, and the tradition seems to have begun of offering sheep at some point before this.

Neither the fruits nor the sheep were specified in any written instructions that we have received in Genesis; nevertheless, Yahweh clearly expected the brothers to know what He required. He said to Cain, who was upset at the rejection of his sacrifice, “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.” (Gen 4:7)

This is the first mention in the Bible of the word “sin.” Many things had been declared “good” and some “very good” before, but here we have a mention of something that is decidedly NOT good. Further, there is the strong indication that these brothers ought to have already been familiar with the requirements, because Yahweh began the conversation by asking, “Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen?” (Gen 4:6) This is a close parallel to the chapter before, in which He began a conversation with Adam asking, “Where art thou?” and then, “Who told thee that thou wast naked?” and then, “Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?” (Gen 3:9-11)

I believe it is true in every case, that when Yah asks a human being a question, that individual already knows the answer that Yah is looking to obtain. Our Father will ask questions in an attempt to bring realization, and sometimes conviction, as Yahshua also did when faced with challengers.

So, to both Adam and Cain, when Yah asked a question, He was seeking not information for Himself – of course – but to bring to the human’s attention something that ought to have been a driving factor in avoiding a recent, poor decision.

In asking Cain, “Why are you angry?” Yah is indicating that Cain already knows the reasons for his current state of unrest. He knew the Father’s requirements, and what constituted an “offering.” Consider this, if you haven’t before... where did Cain get the idea in the first place that the fruit of the ground would be an acceptable offering?

The only Biblical example of offerings before this was the animal that clothed his parents – and presumably others since then to clothe their children – and no mention is made of the elaborate

ceremonies that attended Israelite worship under Moses, with first-fruits and wave sheaves. These things were later added as a means of celebrating the nation's seasonal harvest in the promised land, (Lev 23:10-14) and as a means of using the feast days to foreshadow the more detailed elements of the Plan of Salvation. (1Cor 15:20, 23) But none of these applied to the first human settlement, and were used only – so far as we know – for human consumption.

Our Father is merciful, and loving, and kind; He is also precise in His requirements, and clear in His instructions. His motives are always for our best good, but Satan has ever sought to cast Him as an arbitrary, demanding and selfish god who uses human efforts to satisfy His own desires and needs. This is why just about every pagan deity is, to one extent or another, exactly as described here. That is Satan's conception of what a "god" actually IS.

For Satan, the efforts set forth by Yahweh's creations have always been the focus. He says, "Look at my beauty, my cleverness, and the things that I can do." "For thou hast said in thine heart, 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.'" (Isa 14:13, 14) Even in rebellion against Yah he said, "Believe in me because of the works I can accomplish. I will do all these amazing things; therefore, I am worthy of respect and reverence."

Based on his own character, and his history of tempting mankind, and the fact that Yah reacted to both Adam and Cain in precisely the same way, it becomes clear that the idea behind Cain's sacrifice came from Satan himself.

It was the best of the work of his hands, this is true... but if Yah had accepted it, He would have done irreversible damage to Cain's character. Yes, even in rejecting his sacrifice, our Father was seeking to win Cain to Himself, to counteract the spiritual poison he had digested, allowing him to see Yah as some divine being to be appeased, rather than a wise Teacher seeking to prepare them – even then – for the coming of His Son.

"Why are you angry?" If Cain has answered honestly, "Because I thought that you were the kind of god who would be pleased by my works, by my efforts," then there would have been an opportunity for him to be educated about the nature of his deception, (as I began by saying, spiritual education is key) and thus saved. The debate between faith and works is not something that sprang up recently within the Protestant Churches, or even with Christ vs. the Pharisees during His earthly ministry. Cain and Abel both did "works," but the works of Abel were mingled with faith, and thus his were accepted. Yahweh, who changes not, desires the same things from His children in this last generation as He did from His children in the very first.

The problem is that Satan has become a lot better at teaching men how to justify the sacrifice of Cain.

Sincerity, sentiment, emotion, and innovation have become substitutes for faith, for trust in Yahweh, and for intelligent obedience to His instructions. Now, none of those things are necessarily bad in themselves – just as nothing that Cain did to grow those crops was bad. None of the works that Cain accomplished in the tilling of the soil was in any way defective, and I am confident that the best of his fruits were immeasurably better in quality than anything that any of us have ever expected to see. But, for all their wonderful goodness, they were not suitable as a sacrifice to Yahweh. That was not their purpose.

Sincerity, sentiment, emotion, and certainly innovation have a very real place in the human experience. Under the right circumstances they teach us the proper way to react to situations, to coexist peacefully with our fellow men, to make art, and music, and to learn through our own experiments. But none of these things can replace the Law, or the life that comes forth from the faith of Yahshua. That is not their purpose. They exist to enrich a life lived in faith, but they have no meaning, and only become harmful, in a life that is already out of harmony with Heaven.

Sincerity, sentiment, innovation and emotion have been, in the hands of Satan, the tools behind every false doctrine and deviation from righteousness. They have led to men choosing their own holy days, making their own religious laws, and imposing their will and convictions upon others... because these things seemed right, or felt right, at the time. They have, coupled with a lack of the true faith, led to millions being misled into thinking they are serving Yahweh, when in reality they are only presenting Him with the best work of their hands.

Men may build beautiful churches, and construct impressive ceremonies. They may write books, compose hymns, and present sermons... but if they do not have victory over the sins in their lives, and are not faithfully obeying what has been set before us as saints, they are merely justifying Cain's sacrifice. They may, in some cases, do precisely what Yah has instructed them NOT to do; but because they are dazzled by the sweetness of their own fruits, and the firmness of their grains, they cannot imagine that their efforts will be rejected.

"I am doing it for the best interests of God's Church," or, "I have to protect the reputation of my religion," these are justifications of the sacrifice of Cain. "The ends justify the means," they say.

On a more personal level, the saints must watch their own actions. Inspiration has told us that there is an angel leading the people of Yahweh. We are not to move too quickly, nor too slowly, but to unite in harmony with that guiding angel, who is the one that speaks about the Mark of The Beast, warning men in new language about an old, old sin... "Do not justify the sacrifice of Cain." Do not make your own laws and works become a substitute for the Law of Yah and the Faith of Yahshua.

Do not erect your own standards of righteousness, and then rejoice when you meet them. Yah does not respect human standards of right and wrong; He has His own, and has been pleased to share them with us. Every saint must feel it is his or her duty to learn all that may be learned about agape love, and to learn from the examples (both good and bad) that have been set before us.

If we wish to learn what Yah expects from His people, that we may offer the right sacrifices of Abel, we must spend time in prayer, in meditation, in conversation with the brethren, in unity with the Spirit. Then, and through these means, our consciences will be educated, so that when the serpent comes and says, "Yahweh will surely be pleased with these, the works of thy hands," we will know the voice that speaks to us, and we will say, "Not so, for I have been given a faith that has endured from the foundation of the world."

We know the sacrifices that Yah has asked of His people: reasonable service, (Rom 12:1) continuous praise, (Heb 13:15) and that we take up our crosses and follow after His Son. (Luke 9:23) We know the life of victory that we have been given, and which, through invincible and unwavering faith, we ever maintain.

May Yah, through His Spirit, show us each where we may each grow more Christ-like daily, perfecting the Savior's character, learning the principles of His Kingdom, and turning resolutely away from all temptations that we may encounter, including the temptation to justify "self" and human efforts separate from faith in Yahweh. This is how we will advance along the path of sanctification, and avoid offering merely our own works in place of Christ's perfect work in us – itself the hope of glory.