

Cain's Homemade Religion

CAIN'S SAD STORY:

Genesis 4/ Jude 11/ Hebrews 11:4/ 1 John 3:12-13

THE BIG QUESTION:

What was wrong with Cain's Sacrifice?

- ① It was **bloodless**
Romans 6:23/ Hebrews 9:22 & 10:1-10/ Hebrews 11:4-6
- ② It was **less than his best**
Proverbs 3:9-10/ Malachi 1:6-14/ Haggai 1:9

WHAT GOD WANTS TODAY:

Hebrews 11:6/ John 14:6/ Galatians 2:21/ 1 John 3:16/ 1 John 2:3-5 & Ephesians 2:8-10

Faith in Christ = **Trusting God enough to do what He says**

OUR OWN HOMEMADE RELIGIONS:

Six Substitutes God Won't Accept

- ① Good **morals** & good **deeds**
Romans 3:23/ Galatians 2:21/ Isaiah 64:6
- ② A clear **conscience**
1 Corinthians 4:4/ Jeremiah 17:9/ Proverbs 3:5-6
- ③ **Sincerity**
John 4:23/ 1 Corinthians 10:20
- ④ Great **theology**
1 Corinthians 13:1-4/ John 5:37-42/ Revelation 2:1-5
- ⑤ Religious **rituals**
Amos 5:21-24/ 1 Samuel 15:22 & Micah 6:6-8 & Psalm 51:16-17
- ⑥ Cut & paste **obedience**
Matthew 28:20/ John 14:15 & 23-24/ Hebrews 5:8-9/ 1 John 2:3-5/ Proverbs 3:5-17

Food for Thought

For the week of June 21, 2009

(Questions and Scriptures for further personal study)

1. This week we saw how Abel got caught in the backwash of Cain's sin and "homemade religion." It can be quite disheartening in our pursuit to follow Jesus when we see the wicked succeed and the righteous being maligned. In Psalm 73, how did Asaph maintain his hope in his pursuit to follow God even when the wicked looked to be having "all" the success?

Psalm 73:1-28

A psalm of Asaph.

- Surely God is good to Israel,
to those who are pure in heart.
- [2] But as for me, my feet had almost slipped;
I had nearly lost my foothold.
- [3] For I envied the arrogant
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
- [4] They have no struggles;
their bodies are healthy and strong.
- [5] They are free from the burdens common to man;
they are not plagued by human ills.
- [6] Therefore pride is their necklace;
they clothe themselves with violence.
- [7] From their callous hearts comes iniquity;
the evil conceits of their minds know no limits.
- [8] They scoff, and speak with malice;
in their arrogance they threaten oppression.
- [9] Their mouths lay claim to heaven,
and their tongues take possession of the earth.
- [10] Therefore their people turn to them
and drink up waters in abundance.
- [11] They say, "How can God know?
Does the Most High have knowledge?"
- [12] This is what the wicked are like--
always carefree, they increase in wealth.
- [13] Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure;
in vain have I washed my hands in innocence.
- [14] All day long I have been plagued;
I have been punished every morning.
- [15] If I had said, "I will speak thus,"
I would have betrayed your children.
- [16] When I tried to understand all this,
it was oppressive to me
- [17] till I entered the sanctuary of God;
then I understood their final destiny.
- [18] Surely you place them on slippery ground;
you cast them down to ruin.
- [19] How suddenly are they destroyed,
completely swept away by terrors!
- [20] As a dream when one awakes,
so when you arise, O Lord,
you will despise them as fantasies.
- [21] When my heart was grieved
and my spirit embittered,
- [22] I was senseless and ignorant;
I was a brute beast before you.
- [23] Yet I am always with you;
you hold me by my right hand.
- [24] You guide me with your counsel,

and afterward you will take me into glory.
[25] Whom have I in heaven but you?
And earth has nothing I desire besides you.
[26] My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion forever.
[27] Those who are far from you will perish;
you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.
[28] But as for me, it is good to be near God.
I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge;
I will tell of all your deeds. [NIV]

How do you maintain a healthy connection to God that weathers the tough patches of life?

2. Larry gave us six examples of how people fall into the trap of creating their “own homemade religion.” In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus makes some pointed statements about how we can focus on one aspect of God’s law, but miss the big picture of what God means. As you read each topic Jesus addresses, write down the law referred to, and what Jesus says they missed. Can you think of a specific modern-day example for each one? Is there one you need to be aware of in your own life?

Matthew 5:21-26

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' [22] But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

[23] "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, [24] leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

[25] "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. [26] I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny. [NIV]

Matthew 5:27-29

"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' [28] But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. [29] If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. [NIV] (also see Philippians 4:8-9)

Philippians 4:8-9

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. [9] Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. [NIV]

Matthew 5:31-32

"It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' [32] But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery. [NIV]

Matthew 5:33-37

"Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.' [34] But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; [35] or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. [36] And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. [37] Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one. [NIV]

Matthew 5:38-42

"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' [39] But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. [40] And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. [41] If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. [42] Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. [NIV]

Matthew 5:43-48

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' [44] But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, [45] that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. [46] If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? [47] And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? [48] Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. [NIV]

3. We saw this weekend that “trusting God enough to do what He says” is how we steer clear of creating our own religion. How does applying the following verses help you to put this into action?

2 Corinthians 3:1-6

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? [2] You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. [3] You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

[4] Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. [5] Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. [6] He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant--not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. [NIV]

Hebrews 10:24-25

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. [25] Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching. [NIV]

Hebrews 12:1-2

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. [2] Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. [NIV]