

Cain- His World and His Worship

by John Nelson Darby

Man's hopelessness and sin are evident in his attempts to worship God without faith and recognition of his sinful condition.

Scripture: Genesis 4:1

Topics: "Sin and Redemption", "Worship"

Description

John Nelson Darby explores the story of Cain, emphasizing the hopelessness of humanity's condition after the fall and the futility of trying to worship God without recognizing one's sinfulness. He contrasts Cain's insincere worship, which stemmed from a lack of faith and acknowledgment of his estrangement from God, with Abel's genuine faith that recognized the need for a blood sacrifice. Darby warns that like Cain, many today attempt to build a life apart from God, seeking comfort in worldly pleasures while ignoring the reality of sin and judgment. He calls for a return to understanding the necessity of Christ's sacrifice for true worship and reconciliation with God.

Transcript

CAIN, HIS WORLD, AND HIS WORSHIP

Genesis 4

It is a terrible history of man's hopelessness, the history God has given us in His word (I say history, because we have a setting forth of his sins and failures from the beginning) ; but then the blessed grace of God is shewn forth in it, because it tells of Christ.

It is not simply that man's heart is evil-that is true ; but it has been proved evil in the presence of everything that ought to have restrained its evil. God has given us the history of man's ways, and of His dealings with man (not merely stated certain dogmas) ; and in whatever way He has dealt with man, we find the evil of man's heart breaking out, and following its course, spite of all.

Man, having sinned against God, is turned out of paradise; Gen. 3. The next thing we read of is the outrageous wickedness of man against his brother-Cain, Adam's first-born, slaying Abel; Gen4. Then comes the flood sweeping away a whole generation of evil-doers ; Gen. 7. Mercy shewn to Noah (he and his house saved through the judgment), immediately afterwards we find him drunk in his tent, and Ham, his son, mocking and dishonouring him; Gen. 9.

God speaks to Israel at Sinai, thundering with His voice His righteous demands on man; yet, awful as the presence of God is (and even " Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake "), before Moses comes down from the mount, 'the people have made the golden calf, and broken the first link that binds them to the service of Jehovah ; Ex. 32. In the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ we see God visiting the Jew, and dealing with sinners in grace in the Person of His Son him they slay and hang on a tree ; Acts 5 : 30. Israel's history (man's under the most favourable circumstances) is one scene of violence and evil all the way through; so that Stephen (in testifying to them after their rejection of Christ and the descent of the Holy Ghost in witness of Christ's glory) says they were but doing as their fathers had ever done. " Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye," Acts 7: 51.

Notwithstanding all the dealings of God with man-the voice of God and the judgments of God-man is so hopelessly

bad, that the nearer he is brought to God-the more culture there is bestowed upon him by God-only the more is manifested, and that in darker characters, the sin and desperate wickedness of his heart, working spite of all in sight even of God's judgments.

In the sin in the garden we get the character of man's evil as against God; Cain's sin is sin against a neighbour.* Of course both are sins against God (all sin is against God) ; but whilst in the sin of Adam and Eve we see lust and disobedience, in Cain's there is something more-it is sin as exhibited against a neighbour.

* What is written in the law ? how readest thou ? And he answering said, Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind : and thy neighbour as thyself." (Luke 10 : 26, 27.)

Man (as to his actual condition) is a sinner cast out of paradise, already out of the presence of God ; and he ought to have the consciousness of being out, and that the only way of getting back to God is through His Son. We are not in paradise. We have got out of it some way or other; and we are in a world which is under judgment, and where death is staring us in the face. Adam had just been driven out of paradise, and Cain must have had (through Adam) the remembrance that there was a time when man was not out of paradise, when he heard God's voice in the garden without fear, when he had not a bad conscience, and when he was without toil. Saints or sinners (in our own eyes), we have been driven out of Eden, and we are in the wilderness utterly excluded from God's presence. We ought to have the consciousness of being out, and of the misery of our condition ; but alas! we have lost all remembrance of the place in which we once were, and have become familiarised to the ruin and desolation consequent upon sin. Still it is true, and we cannot deny it, that we have got out of paradise, and are in a world constantly under judgment. We may try to make the best of the world ; but we must all feel that something has come in, something that has brought in death and judgment. Happiness cannot be associated with sin, any more than sin can be associated with God. As for man, though he seeks to buoy himself up with his sins, and to delude himself with the lie of Satan, sink he must, sooner or later, under the power of the sin and death that has come in. He is just spending his energies to make the world pleasant without God, and himself comfortable and rich in it, to die out of it.

The world he cannot keep. He may build a city for himself, as Cain did (v. 17), and call it after his own name (Cain called his city after the name of his son); but it will be with him as David speaks, " Their inward

thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations ; they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not ; he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly ; yet their posterity approve their saying. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them," Psa. 49.

Cain did not like the sense of the wrath of God lying upon him.* Gone out from the presence of Jehovah (v. 16), he had become so great in the earth that he could build a city. Man never likes to be in the truth of his condition. Cain likes not to be " a fugitive and a vagabond," and he tries to build a city, and he does build a city, in the endeavour to make the world as pleasant as he can without God. It might be said, What harm was there in building a city ? In the first place there would never have been the necessity for this in paradise. Moreover it was a proof of insensibility as to this sin against God ; it shewed quiet contentment under the effect of that punishment which at first he had felt was greater than he could bear ; it was the last expression of total alienation of heart and affection from God. Driven out from the presence of God, he sets about to establish himself. He seeks for himself a home, not with God in heaven, but on the earth, from which God had pronounced him " cursed." He makes himself master of a city, where God had made him " a vagabond."

* " 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 art thou cursed from the earth [not merely, " Cursed is the ground for thy sake," etc. as to Adam], which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand: when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength ; a fugitive and a vagabond 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 earth ; and from thy face shall I be hid ; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth," etc. (v. 9-14).

And mark further the faculty man has of making himself happy in his estrangement from God. We find amongst the family of Cain not only " the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle " (v. 20), but " the father of such as handle the harp and the organ " (v. 21), and " the instructor of ever artificer in brass and iron " (v. 22). Now there is nothing wrong in working brass and iron; neither is there any harm in sweet sounds (we read in the book of Revelation of harpers in heaven) ; but what Cain was doing was this-he was making the world pleasant without God.

These are the efforts of man, who has settled himself down in a world where judgment has placed him, and who is trying to make himself as happy and the world as pleasant as he can without God, till death and judgment overtake him. If I saw a man who had committed some wicked crime against his father, the next day playing on musical instruments, should I say there was no harm in that ? Such was Cain's world. And is it not like your* world ? Is there any difference between your soul and Cain's world ? Is it a better world because God's Son has been crucified in it ? Has that act on the part of man made it more acceptable to God ? (because that has happened since the days of Cain). Where is the difference? They had their " harps and organs " ; and so have you. They had their " artificers in brass and iron " ; and so have you. It was Cain's world then away from God ? and it is Cain's world still. The like tree produces like fruit. Man is carrying on the world by himself, and for himself, endeavouring to keep God out of sight, as much as possible to do without Him, lest He should get at his conscience and make him miserable.

* The believer is " not of the world "; his home and citizenship are in heaven, and his walk down here on the earth should be in the distinct consciousness, and in the distinct confession, that he " seeks a country "

(Heb. 11 : 14). This is of the last importance: anything of the earth is of that which rejected Christ.

Can you find any difference between Cain's world without God and your world without God ? You may object that you are not without God, that you are called by the name of Christ -are Christians, and have a religion also. Cain had a religion. He was a religious man, as religious as Abel. But he had no love to God; he had no faith. He was a religious man, but not a godly man.

It is a strange introduction to this picture, the setting forth of Cain as a worshipper, and a worshipper moreover of the true God. We read, " And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto Jehovah," 7). 2, 3.

There is no mention made of false gods before the flood. Cain was a worshipper of the one living and true God. Soon after the flood there were idolaters ; and then God called out a separate people as witnesses of His character to make good His name and grace. But there is not any mention made of false gods before Joshua 24 : 6-8, " Your fathers worshipped other gods " : a fresh crime, a fresh snare of the enemy, which called for new measures on the part of God. Satan had come and slipped himself in between man and God, and was the one that was really worshipped, though under the name of gods ; and the call of Abram was the call and witness of " the most high God."

Your " artificers in brass and iron " are worshippers of the true God. So was Cain. And he took some pains too. He offered that which he had been toiling for in " the sweat of his brow." He was a " tiller of the ground," and he " brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto Jehovah." He did not bring that which cost him nothing (2 Sam. 24 : 24) ; nay, his worship cost more of toil than that of Abel. He came in the way of nature, offering the fruit of his toil and labour ; and you have done the same. This is ever the character of false worship. Religiousness does not take a man out of the character of Cain ; it the rather brings him into it. So that you have not got one step in that way out of the character God has marked as that of Cain.

Observe, I do not charge you with being hypocrites, for I do not say that Cain was not sincere. There is no doubt indeed of his sincerity ; but then his sincerity only evidenced the blind hardness of his heart. Human sincerity means nothing ; it is often but the greatest proof of the desperate darkness in which a man is. Those were sincere of whom Christ said, " He that killeth you will think he doeth God service." Saul of Tarsus was thoroughly sincere when he thought he " ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." He consulted moreover the chief priests and elders, the religious authorities of the day. He was zealous for his religion, and thoroughly sincere as a man, but totally blind as to God and the things of Christ, thinking to do God service by fighting against and slaying His saints. Cain in his sincerity brought to the Lord that which cost him something, that which was the fruit of his toil. He came to God as a worshipper, and in so doing offered to God that which he had brought honestly as a man, but which proved him to be ignorant of his state as a sinner .

What then is man to hope for ? you will say. He is to hope for nothing. Did he not get out of paradise because of sin? what possible ground can he have as a sinner for hoping to get into heaven?

What ground had Cain for hoping that God would accept either himself or his offering ? God had driven man out of paradise because of sin : what ground had he to expect by the works of his hands to get back into the presence of God ? You may say, It was not the works of his hands, but the fruits of God's creation. But what would you think of the man who was hoping to get into heaven by offering his corn and his wine to God, supposing, like Simon Magus (Acts 8), that the gift of God may be bought ? Why, it would shew

that his conscience was as hard as the nether millstone, utterly insensible to the condition he was in, as well as to the character of God. The very worship of Cain proved the desperate utter insensibility of his heart to the judgment of God against sin, and to those mighty things which had just happened, the effects and consequences of which he was now experiencing.

How came man to be toiling there in the sweat of his brow ? Their very toil told the tale of the curse. They had been driven out of Eden for sin. But in Cain we see utter recklessness to the judgment of God. He had forgotten the very nature and being of that God who had set man perfectly happy in the garden at the first, to keep it and to enjoy its fruits (fruits yielded to his hand without toil or labour) ; and supposed that by toil and labour (the judicial consequences of sin) he could produce something that God would accept. There was utter desperate recklessness to the judgment of God.

Cain's worship was the worst thing he did. It was in fact the denying that he had sinned ; such blindness to what he had been, such hardness of conscience in supposing that he could get into the presence of God in his sins as if nothing at all had happened! such wretched assumption that because he was a " tiller of the ground," tilling of the ground was all right! But how came it to be all right ? Because God had cursed the ground. He, a defiled sinner driven out of paradise, brings of the fruit of the ground which the Lord had cursed, an offering unto Jehovah " that is, he brings into the presence of God the sign and seal of the sin that had driven him out from God!

And how comes a man to be going Sunday after Sunday, as he says, to ' worship God ' ? What is all this toil ? To ' make peace with God ? ' God is " the God of peace " ; He " preaches peace "-a made peace through " the blood of the cross " ; yet man goes on seeking to carry something into God's presence as ' a duty,' ' to make peace ' without once asking about God's way of peace.

Cain was a worshipper of God ; but there was no faith in Cain. There was no faith to recognise his own ruin and sin, no faith to apprehend the judgment of God against sin : he had no business in the presence of God as he was, no title to be a worshipper of God. He had not a bit of faith to recognise his own condition as driven out of paradise, his sin and estrangement from God, or, that blood-death-was necessary, in order for him to approach God. That is just the world's worship ; and are you any the better for it ? Are you any the nearer to God ? Tell me, dear friends, what if God does not receive your worship ? Suppose that, after all your well doing and toil for God, God rejects it, for that is what Cain's toiling met with from God-" Unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect " (v. 5)-would you be content ?

How was it with Cain ? " Cain was very wrath, and his countenance fell." And it is ever thus. The moment God puts man on the true ground of his condition before Him, the enmity of the natural heart breaks out against God. Cain was " very wrath," exceeding angry ; and why ? Because his heart was opposed to grace. He had not owned the first principle of sin in the presence of God.

And you, when the sovereign grace of the gospel comes to you, are " very wrath." What! a man do his best, you exclaim, and not be accepted! So thought Cain. And so thinks every man naturally ; that is, he thinks that God must accept him Just as well as he accepts God, bringing down God to his own measure of holiness. And then the wrath of man breaks out, and he rejects the righteousness that God holds out to him; he will not have His Son.

There is not a principle in Cain that is not found in you. There is no evil in brass and iron, nor is there any harm in sweet sounds ; the evil and the sin are in this, that men are using these things to hide God from them. If you are worshippers of the true God, so was Cain. We may put a terrible name on that which we

see in Cain, and yet approve of the same thing in ourselves ; the light tells us that was sin in Cain which the spirit of self-love tells us is not sin in our own case. What difference is there between you and Cain ? Take the Bible and see if you can make out any difference. The only real difference is this, that you have a further and more developed knowledge of " the Seed of the woman " (Christ), and therefore that of the two you are the more guilty.

Having sinned against God, abused His goodness, and refused His Son, man turns to please himself as if nothing had happened. It is more terrible to a spiritual eye to see insensibility after sin has been committed, it is a far deeper shade of sin than even the commission of the crime. The returning of a soul to God is just in the being awakened to a sense of the awfulness of this state.

There is yet another feature in the Cain character-open hostility to those who know God's principle of grace, to those whom God does accept. See what follows : " And Cain talked with Abel his brother : and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him," v. 8. Abel as a poor helpless man should have demanded Cain's sympathy, but Cain hates the one whom God delights in.

And so it is now. Why is it that you are so angry at a fault in a Christian which you readily excuse in a man of the world, if it be not hatred to the name he bears ? If it ought to produce better fruits in him, why not adopt it yourselves ? If you are expecting better from him than from the world, why not follow that which you profess to believe will produce the better fruit ?

But you have not merely hated the name of Christ, you have been guilty of hating that which God has established in Christ. And here is the same principle that crucified Christ, the desperate recklessness of sin.

You cannot deny that the world has crucified Christ; God's Son is not now in the world. He has been in the world. He became a man amongst men (" the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," John i : 14)-our neighbour. Man saw and hated Him, and summed up his evil in killing Him. I ask you therefore, Has God no such question with you as He had with Cain, " Where is thy brother ? " (v. 9). Christ has become man's " brother " (it is not the question of God's purpose and counsel here) ; and is not God demanding of the world, Where is Christ? Cain replied, " I know not: am I my brother's keeper ? "

Here is a much worse character of sin than Adam's. It is the haughtiness and recklessness of sin. " Am I my brother's keeper ? " Not only has there been sin against God, sin that has exiled man from Eden and separated him from the presence of God in peace, but there has been sin also that has led to the hatred and destruction of a brother (blessed and perfect in His ways) whom man has seen. Your disclaiming this displays, and is the proof of, the recklessness of your hearts. " If I had not come and spoken unto them," said Jesus, " they had not had sin ; but now they have no cloke for their sin He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin : but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause," John 15 : 22-25.

The coming of the Son of man into the world has shewn the real state it is in. Why was Christ rejected by man, except that man hated God ? That was the only reason that Christ was slain in this world. They hated God, and therefore they hated Him. They hated the light-" Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God," John 3 : 20, 21. " They loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil " ; and this is their sin, that they have put the

Light out of the world. Like Cain, they were " of that wicked one," and slew their brother ; 1 John 3 : 12.* Like him too in the motive-" And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." " Which of you convinceth me of sin ? " (John 8 : 46). Even Pilate said, " I find no fault in him," John 18 : 38 ; chap. 19 : 4, 6. The world** has sinned against God in crucifying and slaying Jesus. They hated God, and therefore turned God's Son out of the world, when sent to it in love.

* See John 8:40-47.

** Not merely Jews are in question here; the world has done it, man has done it. " He was despised and rejected of men."

But there is another thing. It is not simply a question of man's having killed the Lord Jesus Christ ; the world has now to answer for its resistance of the Holy Ghost. " Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost," etc. The testimony of the Holy Ghost, present in the world as witness of the glory of Christ, is a conviction of the world of sin; John 16 : 7-15. He has been sent down because Christ has been killed. The necessary testimony of His very presence in the world is this : He would not have been here on earth if Christ had not been killed. He is come in condemnation of the whole world before God. ' I am here,' He says, as it were, ' because you have killed your Abel.' It is not a question about particular sins ; you have killed God's Son, you are a sinner because you have not believed on Him.

Well then, dear friends, are you the daily companions of those who have rejected Christ, who have killed Christ? Are you of that world, and found with that world in its pleasures and profits, its religion and its lusts, which has done this, and which is still against God and against His Christ, vainly trying to make yourselves pleasant without God ? Or have you taken your stand with those who are " of God," who have God with them and God for them, though the whole world that lieth in the wicked one be against them ? The efforts that are being made merely to improve the world are but the sign of the insensibility of Cain. The Spirit of God is come into the world to awaken us to a sense of what has happened in the world, and of the truth of our condition as men.

How came poor Abel to be an accepted worshipper ? " And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And Jehovah had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain," etc. (v. 4). He was accepted by blood. There was this testimony in his offering: I cannot go to God as I am; I am driven out of paradise, sin has come in between me and God, and death, " the wages of sin," must come in between me and God, or I cannot go to God-I cannot go as I am. He took the place of a sinner, and put in faith between himself and God the blood of a victim that had been slain. Unless in his going to God he had owned his necessity that he could not get into the presence of God at all but by blood, he would not have been accepted any more than Cain. But he knew and owned that he could not get to God without blood : he was of faith, and faith ever sees that without shedding of blood there is no remission," Heb. 9 22. He put death-judicially inflicted death (by slaying the victim)between himself and God, and then he comes into the presence of God as an accepted worshipper. " By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts : and by it he being dead yet speaketh," Heb. 11:4.

But further, Abel suffered with Christ. Having owned that he could not come into the presence of God without the blood of the lamb slain, he takes his place and portion with Christ in rejection. He is a sufferer from the wicked of the world. That is how it must end. That is all that the Christian is to expect at the hands of a world departed from God. " Marvel not if the world hate you," i John 3 : 13.

" Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest," says the apostle, " by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh ; and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near," etc. (Heb. 10 : 19, 22). All who come not through Him are rejected, because they do not know that they are so utterly sinful that they cannot come into God's presence except through the blood of His Son. And on the other hand, all who say, I cannot draw near except through blood, see that it is the perfectness of love-God's own perfect blessed love-that to meet man's need spared nothing, not even His only-begotten Son. " He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him 2 Cor. 5 : 21. This is the language of faith. He is the only God who, when I was the chief of sinners, gave His Son to die for me. I know of no God but a God of perfect love, bringing me out of all my vileness, hanging on my neck in my vileness, as did the father to the returning prodigal (Luke 15), and bringing me into His house to rejoice with Him in the exceeding riches of His grace.

We get perfect blessed peace through the blood of Christ, without one pang of conscience left. " The worshipper once purged has no more conscience of sin." Heb. 10. The apostle does not say that he is not a sinner, that he is not vile ; but that God has so loved the vile and sinful as to give His Son unto death to wash away their vileness and their sin.

[Go to Table of Contents](#)

[Return to the Main Page](#)

CAIN, HIS WORLD, AND HIS WORSHIP

Genesis 4

It is a terrible history of man's hopelessness, the history God has given us in His word (I say history, because we have a setting forth of his sins and failures from the beginning) ; but then the blessed grace of God is shewn forth in it, because it tells of Christ.

It is not simply that man's heart is evil-that is true ; but it has been proved evil in the presence of everything that ought to have restrained its evil. God has given us the history of man's ways, and of His dealings with man (not merely stated certain dogmas) ; and in whatever way He has dealt with man, we find the evil of man's heart breaking out, and following its course, spite of all.

Man, having sinned against God, is turned out of paradise; Gen. 3. The next thing we read of is the outrageous wickedness of man against his brother-Cain, Adam's first-born, slaying Abel; Gen4. Then comes the flood sweeping away a whole generation of evil-doers ; Gen. 7. Mercy shewn to Noah (he and his house saved through the judgment), immediately afterwards we find him drunk in his tent, and Ham, his son, mocking and dishonouring him; Gen. 9.

God speaks to Israel at Sinai, thundering with His voice His righteous demands on man; yet, awful as the presence of God is (and even " Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake "), before Moses comes down from the mount, 'the people have made the golden calf, and broken the first link that binds them to the service of Jehovah ; Ex. 32. In the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ we see God visiting the Jew, and dealing with sinners in grace in the Person of His Son him they slay and hang on a tree ; Acts 5 : 30. Israel's history (man's under the most favourable circumstances) is one scene of violence and evil all the

way through; so that Stephen (in testifying to them after their rejection of Christ and the descent of the Holy Ghost in witness of Christ's glory) says they were but doing as their fathers had ever done. " Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye," Acts 7: 51.

Notwithstanding all the dealings of God with man-the voice of God and the judgments of God-man is so hopelessly

bad, that the nearer he is brought to God-the more culture there is bestowed upon him by God-only the more is manifested, and that in darker characters, the sin and desperate wickedness of his heart, working spite of all in sight even of God's judgments.

In the sin in the garden we get the character of man's evil as against God; Cain's sin is sin against a neighbour.* Of course both are sins against God (all sin is against God) ; but whilst in the sin of Adam and Eve we see lust and disobedience, in Cain's there is something more-it is sin as exhibited against a neighbour.

* What is written in the law ? how readest thou ? And he answering said, Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind : and thy neighbour as thyself." (Luke 10 : 26, 27.)

Man (as to his actual condition) is a sinner cast out of paradise, already out of the presence of God ; and he ought to have the consciousness of being out, and that the only way of getting back to God is through His Son. We are not in paradise. We have got out of it some way or other; and we are in a world which is under judgment, and where death is staring us in the face. Adam had just been driven out of paradise, and Cain must have had (through Adam) the remembrance that there was a time when man was not out of paradise, when he heard God's voice in the garden without fear, when he had not a bad conscience, and when he was without toil. Saints or sinners (in our own eyes), we have been driven out of Eden, and we are in the wilderness utterly excluded from God's presence. We ought to have the consciousness of being out, and of the misery of our condition ; but alas! we have lost all remembrance of the place in which we once were, and have become familiarised to the ruin and desolation consequent upon sin. Still it is true, and we cannot deny it, that we have got out of paradise, and are in a world constantly under judgment. We may try to make the best of the world ; but we must all feel that something has come in, something that has brought in death and judgment. Happiness cannot be associated with sin, any more than sin can be associated with God. As for man, though he seeks to buoy himself up with his sins, and to delude himself with the lie of Satan, sink he must, sooner or later, under the power of the sin and death that has come in. He is just spending his energies to make the world pleasant without God, and himself comfortable and rich in it, to die out of it.

The world he cannot keep. He may build a city for himself, as Cain did (v. 17), and call it after his own name (Cain called his city after the name of his son); but it will be with him as David speaks, " Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations ; they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not ; he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly ; yet their posterity approve their saying. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them," Psa. 49.

Cain did not like the sense of the wrath of God lying upon him.* Gone out from the presence of Jehovah (v. 16), he had become so great in the earth that he could build a city. Man never likes to be in the truth of

his condition. Cain likes not to be " a fugitive and a vagabond," and he tries to build a city, and he does build a city, in the endeavour to make the world as pleasant as he can without God. It might be said, What harm was there in building a city ? In the first place there would never have been the necessity for this in paradise. Moreover it was a proof of insensibility as to this sin against God ; it shewed quiet contentment under the effect of that punishment which at first he had felt was greater than he could bear ; it was the last expression of total alienation of heart and affection from God. Driven out from the presence of God, he sets about to establish himself. He seeks for himself a home, not with God in heaven, but on the earth, from which God had pronounced him " cursed." He makes himself master of a city, where God had made him " a vagabond."

* " 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 art thou cursed from the earth [not merely, " Cursed is the ground for thy sake," etc. as to Adam], which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand: when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength ; a fugitive and a vagabond 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 earth ; and from thy face shall I be hid ; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth," etc. (v. 9-14).

And mark further the faculty man has of making himself happy in his estrangement from God. We find amongst the family of Cain not only " the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle " (v. 20), but " the father of such as handle the harp and the organ " (v. 21), and " the instructor of ever artificer in brass and iron " (v. 22). Now there is nothing wrong in working brass and iron; neither is there any harm in sweet sounds (we read in the book of Revelation of harpers in heaven) ; but what Cain was doing was this-he was making the world pleasant without God.

These are the efforts of man, who has settled himself down in a world where judgment has placed him, and who is trying to make himself as happy and the world as pleasant as he can without God, till death and judgment overtake him. If I saw a man who had committed some wicked crime against his father, the next day playing on musical instruments, should I say there was no harm in that ? Such was Cain's world. And is it not like your* world ? Is there any difference between your soul and Cain's world ? Is it a better world because God's Son has been crucified in it ? Has that act on the part of man made it more acceptable to God ? (because that has happened since the days of Cain). Where is the difference? They had their " harps and organs " ; and so have you. They had their " artificers in brass and iron " ; and so have you. It was Cain's world then away from God ? and it is Cain's world still. The like tree produces like fruit. Man is carrying on the world by himself, and for himself, endeavouring to keep God out of sight, as much as possible to do without Him, lest He should get at his conscience and make him miserable.

* The believer is " not of the world " ; his home and citizenship are in heaven, and his walk down here on the earth should be in the distinct consciousness, and in the distinct confession, that he " seeks a country " (Heb. 11 : 14). This is of the last importance: anything of the earth is of that which rejected Christ.

Can you find any difference between Cain's world without God and your world without God ? You may object that you are not without God, that you are called by the name of Christ -are Christians, and have a religion also. Cain had a religion. He was a religious man, as religious as Abel. But he had no love to God; he had no faith. He was a religious man, but not a godly man.

It is a strange introduction to this picture, the setting forth of Cain as a worshipper, and a worshipper moreover of the true God. We read, " And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto Jehovah," 7). 2, 3.

There is no mention made of false gods before the flood. Cain was a worshipper of the one living and true God. Soon after the flood there were idolaters ; and then God called out a separate people as witnesses of His character to make good His name and grace. But there is not any mention made of false gods before Joshua 24 : 6-8, " Your fathers worshipped other gods " : a fresh crime, a fresh snare of the enemy, which called for new measures on the part of God. Satan had come and slipped himself in between man and God, and was the one that was really worshipped, though under the name of gods ; and the call of Abram was the call and witness of " the most high God."

Your " artificers in brass and iron " are worshippers of the true God. So was Cain. And he took some pains too. He offered that which he had been toiling for in " the sweat of his brow." He was a " tiller of the ground," and he " brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto Jehovah." He did not bring that which cost him nothing (2 Sam. 24 : 24) ; nay, his worship cost more of toil than that of Abel. He came in the way of nature, offering the fruit of his toil and labour ; and you have done the same. This is ever the character of false worship. Religiousness does not take a man out of the character of Cain ; it the rather brings him into it. So that you have not got one step in that way out of the character God has marked as that of Cain.

Observe, I do not charge you with being hypocrites, for I do not say that Cain was not sincere. There is no doubt indeed of his sincerity ; but then his sincerity only evidenced the blind hardness of his heart. Human sincerity means nothing ; it is often but the greatest proof of the desperate darkness in which a man is. Those were sincere of whom Christ said, " He that killeth you will think he doeth God service." Saul of Tarsus was thoroughly sincere when he thought he " ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." He consulted moreover the chief priests and elders, the religious authorities of the day. He was zealous for his religion, and thoroughly sincere as a man, but totally blind as to God and the things of Christ, thinking to do God service by fighting against and slaying His saints. Cain in his sincerity brought to the Lord that which cost him something, that which was the fruit of his toil. He came to God as a worshipper, and in so doing offered to God that which he had brought honestly as a man, but which proved him to be ignorant of his state as a sinner .

What then is man to hope for ? you will say. He is to hope for nothing. Did he not get out of paradise because of sin? what possible ground can he have as a sinner for hoping to get into heaven?

What ground had Cain for hoping that God would accept either himself or his offering ? God had driven man out of paradise because of sin : what ground had he to expect by the works of his hands to get back into the presence of God ? You may say, It was not the works of his hands, but the fruits of God's creation. But what would you think of the man who was hoping to get into heaven by offering his corn and his wine to God, supposing, like Simon Magus (Acts 8), that the gift of God may be bought ? Why, it would shew that his conscience was as hard as the nether millstone, utterly insensible to the condition he was in, as well as to the character of God. The very worship of Cain proved the desperate utter insensibility of his heart to the judgment of God against sin, and to those mighty things which had just happened, the effects and consequences of which he was now experiencing.

How came man to be toiling there in the sweat of his brow ? Their very toil told the tale of the curse. They had been driven out of Eden for sin. But in Cain we see utter recklessness to the judgment of God. He had forgotten the very nature and being of that God who had set man perfectly happy in the garden at the first, to keep it and to enjoy its fruits (fruits yielded to his hand without toil or labour) ; and supposed that by toil and labour (the judicial consequences of sin) he could produce something that God would accept. There was utter desperate recklessness to the judgment of God.

Cain's worship was the worst thing he did. It was in fact the denying that he had sinned ; such blindness to what he had been, such hardness of conscience in supposing that he could get into the presence of God in his sins as if nothing at all had happened! such wretched assumption that because he was a " tiller of the ground," tilling of the ground was all right! But how came it to be all right ? Because God had cursed the ground. He, a defiled sinner driven out of paradise, brings of the fruit of the ground which the Lord had cursed, an offering unto Jehovah " that is, he brings into the presence of God the sign and seal of the sin that had driven him out from God!

And how comes a man to be going Sunday after Sunday, as he says, to ' worship God ' ? What is all this toil ? To ' make peace with God ? ' God is " the God of peace " ; He " preaches peace "-a made peace through " the blood of the cross " ; yet man goes on seeking to carry something into God's presence as ' a duty,' ' to make peace ' without once asking about God's way of peace.

Cain was a worshipper of God ; but there was no faith in Cain. There was no faith to recognise his own ruin and sin, no faith to apprehend the judgment of God against sin : he had no business in the presence of God as he was, no title to be a worshipper of God. He had not a bit of faith to recognise his own condition as driven out of paradise, his sin and estrangement from God, or, that blood-death-was necessary, in order for him to approach God. That is just the world's worship ; and are you any the better for it ? Are you any the nearer to God ? Tell me, dear friends, what if God does not receive your worship ? Suppose that, after all your well doing and toil for God, God rejects it, for that is what Cain's toiling met with from God-" Unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect " (v. 5)-would you be content ?

How was it with Cain ? " Cain was very wrath, and his countenance fell." And it is ever thus. The moment God puts man on the true ground of his condition before Him, the enmity of the natural heart breaks out against God. Cain was " very wrath," exceeding angry ; and why ? Because his heart was opposed to grace. He had not owned the first principle of sin in the presence of God.

And you, when the sovereign grace of the gospel comes to you, are " very wrath." What! a man do his best, you exclaim, and not be accepted! So thought Cain. And so thinks every man naturally ; that is, he thinks that God must accept him Just as well as he accepts God, bringing down God to his own measure of holiness. And then the wrath of man breaks out, and he rejects the righteousness that God holds out to him; he will not have His Son.

There is not a principle in Cain that is not found in you. There is no evil in brass and iron, nor is there any harm in sweet sounds ; the evil and the sin are in this, that men are using these things to hide God from them. If you are worshippers of the true God, so was Cain. We may put a terrible name on that which we see in Cain, and yet approve of the same thing in ourselves ; the light tells us that was sin in Cain which the spirit of self-love tells us is not sin in our own case. What difference is there between you and Cain ? Take the Bible and see if you can make out any difference. The only real difference is this, that you have a further and more developed knowledge of " the Seed of the woman " (Christ), and therefore that of the two

you are the more guilty.

Having sinned against God, abused His goodness, and refused His Son, man turns to please himself as if nothing had happened. It is more terrible to a spiritual eye to see insensibility after sin has been committed, it is a far deeper shade of sin than even the commission of the crime. The returning of a soul to God is just in the being awakened to a sense of the awfulness of this state.

There is yet another feature in the Cain character-open hostility to those who know God's principle of grace, to those whom God does accept. See what follows : " And Cain talked with Abel his brother : and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him," v. 8. Abel as a poor helpless man should have demanded Cain's sympathy, but Cain hates the one whom God delights in.

And so it is now. Why is it that you are so angry at a fault in a Christian which you readily excuse in a man of the world, if it be not hatred to the name he bears ? If it ought to produce better fruits in him, why not adopt it yourselves ? If you are expecting better from him than from the world, why not follow that which you profess to believe will produce the better fruit ?

But you have not merely hated the name of Christ, you have been guilty of hating that which God has established in Christ. And here is the same principle that crucified Christ, the desperate recklessness of sin.

You cannot deny that the world has crucified Christ; God's Son is not now in the world. He has been in the world. He became a man amongst men (" the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," John i : 14)-our neighbour. Man saw and hated Him, and summed up his evil in killing Him. I ask you therefore, Has God no such question with you as He had with Cain, " Where is thy brother ? " (v. 9). Christ has become man's " brother " (it is not the question of God's purpose and counsel here) ; and is not God demanding of the world, Where is Christ? Cain replied, " I know not: am I my brother's keeper ? "

Here is a much worse character of sin than Adam's. It is the haughtiness and recklessness of sin. " Am I my brother's keeper ? " Not only has there been sin against God, sin that has exiled man from Eden and separated him from the presence of God in peace, but there has been sin also that has led to the hatred and destruction of a brother (blessed and perfect in His ways) whom man has seen. Your disclaiming this displays, and is the proof of, the recklessness of your hearts. " If I had not come and spoken unto them," said Jesus, " they had not had sin ; but now they have no cloke for their sin He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin : but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause," John 15 : 22-25.

The coming of the Son of man into the world has shewn the real state it is in. Why was Christ rejected by man, except that man hated God ? That was the only reason that Christ was slain in this world. They hated God, and therefore they hated Him. They hated the light-" Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God," John 3 : 20, 21. " They loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil " ; and this is their sin, that they have put the Light out of the world. Like Cain, they were " of that wicked one," and slew their brother ; 1 John 3 : 12.* Like him too in the motive-" And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." " Which of you convinceth me of sin ? " (John 8 : 46). Even Pilate said, " I find no fault in him," John 18 : 38 ; chap. 19 : 4, 6. The world** has sinned against God in crucifying and slaying Jesus.

They hated God, and therefore turned God's Son out of the world, when sent to it in love.

* See John 8:40-47.

** Not merely Jews are in question here; the world has done it, man has done it. " He was despised and rejected of men."

But there is another thing. It is not simply a question of man's having killed the Lord Jesus Christ ; the world has now to answer for its resistance of the Holy Ghost. " Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost," etc. The testimony of the Holy Ghost, present in the world as witness of the glory of Christ, is a conviction of the world of sin; John 16 : 7-15. He has been sent down because Christ has been killed. The necessary testimony of His very presence in the world is this : He would not have been here on earth if Christ had not been killed. He is come in condemnation of the whole world before God. ' I am here,' He says, as it were, ' because you have killed your Abel.' It is not a question about particular sins ; you have killed God's Son, you are a sinner because you have not believed on Him.

Well then, dear friends, are you the daily companions of those who have rejected Christ, who have killed Christ? Are you of that world, and found with that world in its pleasures and profits, its religion and its lusts, which has done this, and which is still against God and against His Christ, vainly trying to make yourselves pleasant without God ? Or have you taken your stand with those who are " of God," who have God with them and God for them, though the whole world that lieth in the wicked one be against them ? The efforts that are being made merely to improve the world are but the sign of the insensibility of Cain. The Spirit of God is come into the world to awaken us to a sense of what has happened in the world, and of the truth of our condition as men.

How came poor Abel to be an accepted worshipper ? " And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And Jehovah had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain," etc. (v. 4). He was accepted by blood. There was this testimony in his offering: I cannot go to God as I am; I am driven out of paradise, sin has come in between me and God, and death, " the wages of sin," must come in between me and God, or I cannot go to God-I cannot go as I am. He took the place of a sinner, and put in faith between himself and God the blood of a victim that had been slain. Unless in his going to God he had owned his necessity that he could not get into the presence of God at all but by blood, he would not have been accepted any more than Cain. But he knew and owned that he could not get to God without blood : he was of faith, and faith ever sees that without shedding of blood there is no remission," Heb. 9 22. He put death-judicially inflicted death (by slaying the victim)between himself and God, and then he comes into the presence of God as an accepted worshipper. " By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts : and by it he being dead yet speaketh," Heb. 11:4.

But further, Abel suffered with Christ. Having owned that he could not come into the presence of God without the blood of the lamb slain, he takes his place and portion with Christ in rejection. He is a sufferer from the wicked of the world. That is how it must end. That is all that the Christian is to expect at the hands of a world departed from God. " Marvel not if the world hate you," i John 3 : 13.

" Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest," says the apostle, " by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh ; and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near," etc. (Heb. 10 : 19, 22). All who come not through Him are rejected, because they do not know that they are so utterly sinful that they cannot come

into God's presence except through the blood of His Son. And on the other hand, all who say, I cannot draw near except through blood, see that it is the perfectness of love-God's own perfect blessed love-that to meet man's need spared nothing, not even His only-begotten Son. " He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him 2 Cor. 5 : 21. This is the language of faith. He is the only God who, when I was the chief of sinners, gave His Son to die for me. I know of no God but a God of perfect love, bringing me out of all my vileness, hanging on my neck in my vileness, as did the father to the returning prodigal (Luke 15), and bringing me into His house to rejoice with Him in the exceeding riches of His grace.

We get perfect blessed peace through the blood of Christ, without one pang of conscience left. " The worshipper once purged has no more conscience of sin." Heb. 10. The apostle does not say that he is not a sinner, that he is not vile ; but that God has so loved the vile and sinful as to give His Son unto death to wash away their vileness and their sin.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-nelson-darby/cain-his-world-and-his-worship/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net