

## My Way or God's Way

(Genesis 4:1-26)

Frank Sinatra's popular song begins with these lyrics:

*And now the end is near, and so I face the final curtain  
My friend I'll say it clear, I'll state my case of which I'm certain  
I've lived a life that's full, I traveled each and every highway  
And more much more than this, I did it my way.*

(Paul Anka, "I Did It My Way", 1967)

In **Genesis 3:15**, God promised mankind a Redeemer, the 'seed of the woman'. Eve understood this and gave her firstborn the name "**Cain**" which means "**Acquisition**" or colloquially, "**Here he is!**" The Hebrew literally says, 'I have gotten a man: YHWH', or 'I have received a man, namely Jehovah', as Martin Luther put it.<sup>1</sup>

Eve gave her second born the name "**Abel**" which means "**vanity**". It seems she realized that her children would not be the promised redeemer.

Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*, right after introducing Cain and Abel, noted that Adam and Eve "had also daughters." A footnote to the *Whiston translation* of Josephus states, "The number of Adam's children, as says the old tradition, was 33 sons and 23 daughters."<sup>2</sup>

### 1. The **Religion** of Going Our Own Way (4:1-6)

What sin was Cain guilty of? **The sin of rebellion against God**; the sin of pride; the sin of substituted humanism for God's revelation. This is the sin of modern mankind, which is **the sin of going our own way**. The sin of humanism rather than that of divine revelation.

Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way which seems right to man, but the end thereof is the way of death."

Isaiah 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Cain came to God the way he wanted to. Abel came to God the way God had instructed. John Phillips called **Genesis 4** "The First False Religion".

<sup>1</sup> Luther, cited in: Hamilton, V.P., *The Book of Genesis, chapters 1-17*, p. 221, 1990. [In his commentary, Luther translates, "I have gotten a Man of the Lord," that is the Redeemer. In his Bible Luther translates more correctly, "I have the Man, the Lord."]

<sup>2</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities* 1(2). As quoted in Sarfati, *The Genesis Account: A Theological, Historical, and Scientific Commentary on Genesis 1-11* (Powder Springs, GA: Creation Book Publishers, 2015), 409.

### 3 reasons Abel's sacrifice was better than Cain's:

1) The **kind** of offering. Abel's was a blood sacrifice. Cain's was not.

See [Colossians 2:17](#) and [Hebrews 9:22](#).

2) The **quality** of the offering. Abel's offering was his best. Cain's quality is not mentioned.

See [Hebrews 11:4](#)

3) The **character** behind the offering. Abel's heart was pure. Cain's was not.

See [Jude 11](#)

## 2. The **Results** of Going Our Own Way (4:7-24)

4:7 – Sin lies at the door (or, “ready to pounce”). And its desire is for you (or, “Your sin has the desire to control you or manipulate you.” (See the same word as in [Gen. 3:16](#))... but you should rule over it (or you must master it).

- a. Cain murders Abel ([4:5-8](#))
- b. Cain lies to God ([4:9](#)) – “I don't know!”
- c. Cain loses the joy and success of his work ([4:11-12a](#))
- d. Cain wanders restlessly throughout the earth ([4:12](#))

Cain deserved death ([see Gen. 9:6](#)), but God, in His mercy, did not do that.

Augustine, in his book *Confessions* (400 AD), writes, “Thou hast formed us for thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee.”<sup>2</sup>

- e. Cain loses his fellowship with God ([4:16](#))
- f. Without God's help, society gets worse, not better ([4:17-24](#))

## 3. The **Redemption** from Going Our Own Way (4:25-26)

God's plan can never be thwarted by man. God's redemption will still come through the seed of Adam and Eve.

### Application for Today:

**There is the way of Cain and the way of the Cross.** The way of Cain is self-effort (the work of my hands). The way of the Cross is by the blood of Jesus alone (represented by Abel's animal sacrifice). Every other religion is represented by the word “do” – we are acceptable based on what we do. Christianity is represented by the word “done” – we are acceptable based on what Christ has done. Go the way of the Cross!

***Don't come to God the way you think best. God's way is the only way!***

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<sup>2</sup> Saint Augustine, “Confessions,” in *Basic Writings of Saint Augustine*, vol. 1, ed. Whitney J. Oates (New York: Random House, 1948), 3.