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WHY CAIN KILLED ABEL

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS
NUMBER 90
HEBREWS 11:4

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Let us get a corrected translation of the first three verses.

Verse 1

In fact, doctrine resident in the soul is the reality from which we keep on receiving confidence, the proof of matters not being seen.

Verse 2

For by means of doctrine resident in the soul of men of old gained approval (They reached the super grace life).

Verse 3

By means of doctrine resident in the soul, we learn that the ages (dispensations) have been put together by the decree from God, with the result that what is being seen (The unfolding of history) has not come to pass from things that are visible. (In other words, Jesus Christ controls history, and the key to understanding history is doctrine in the soul of the believer.)

Verse 4

Verses 4-40 form a parenthesis in which we have a roster of Old Testament super grace believers, heroes of the past. This list is given to encourage believers down to the end of time. In verses 4-7 we have a roster of super grace believers from the age of the Gentiles, a roster of anti-deluvian civilization super grace believers. The Holy Spirit picked out three of these to emphasize this era prior to the time of the flood.

All through this chapter we will have the words "by faith" and this is from the word pistis and every time it means that which is believed, doctrine, or "doctrine resident in the soul." This one idea will transform this chapter and will help us to realize that this is a chapter about the true greatness of God as God lives in the lives of men through doctrine. So this word "faith" from pistis means "that which is believed."

Next we have the word "Abel," from habel and it is brought over into Greek as "Abel." It means vanity, nothingness, vapor. This name reveals the mental attitude of those first parents when they named their second son. He is the first man to be born physically and then to be born again. His parents were born again also, but they were created and did not have human birth as Abel did. His name is an illustration of grace and he is the first person in history to reach the super grace status and he did so by means of doctrine.

Next we have "Abel offered." This is an aorist, active, indicative of prosphero. It is a constative aorist and gathers into one act all the times he offered animal sacrifices to God. This ritual really pictures for us what was really in the soul of Abel. This is the picture of Abel's submission to authority and his obedience to the voice of God. This is precisely what Cain would not do. The active voice of this verb means that Abel offered these sacrifices himself and this was not the work of his father or mother for him. This suggests to us that someone had taught Abel quite well. The indicative mood means

the reality of this doctrine in his soul. This doctrine didn't jump into his soul by accident. He had been well taught. This ritual was not a means whereby he could gain the approbation of God, but rather was an expression of doctrine that was resident in his soul. Next we have "unto God" and this is the object of his faith and it means "unto the God." "A more excellent sacrifice" means a sacrifice that was meaningful. Cain too offered a sacrifice, but there was no meaning to it. There was no doctrine in his soul and he had no faith in the blood of Christ. Cain was trying to contact God through a means apart from the blood of Christ, and there is no such way to get to God. This word "greater" is a comparative adjective pleion and this is from polus. The word for "sacrifice" is from thusia.

The sacrifice was greater for two reasons--

1. ABEL WAS A BELIEVER AND CAIN WAS NOT.

It is impossible for an unbeliever to enter into any kind of worship that is acceptable to God. The worship of an unbeliever is meaningless. All worship is based on faith in Christ. Worship is not a means toward salvation, but is a result of it. Attitude toward Christ determines acceptability in worship.

2. ABEL WAS A GROWING BELIEVER CONSTANTLY TAKING IN DOCTRINE.

The doctrine resident in the soul of Abel caused him to understand the meaning of his animal sacrifices. Ritual is nothing unless it leads you to the truth that lies behind it. Ritual is a means to challenge you to get with doctrine which stands behind the ritual.

(The key to the Lord's Supper is not eating the bread and drinking the wine. Any idiot can do that. But it is the reality behind the ritual that is important. Ritual without reality is meaningless.)

Next we have the words "More excellent than Cain" and the words "than Cain" come from para kain. It sets one acceptable son over against another son who was not acceptable to God.

Next we have "By which" and this is dia and hos and it should be translated "Through which ritual." Next we have "He obtained witness" and this is the aorist, passive, indicative of martureo. It means to receive approval. This is a culminative aorist and it adds up all the approval he received from God from all the animal sacrifices he ever offered up in his many acts of worship.

Next we have "That he was righteous" and the word "was" is a present, active, infinitive of eimi and it means he just kept on being righteous. His worship was so dynamic that it kept on being an issue for all future time. So this verse lets us know that this man Abel was a fantastic man, worshipping God on the basis of doctrine in his soul. He had ritual but he also knew the reality that was behind it. The word for "righteous" is the predicate nominative of dikaios and this refers to the righteousness that was imputed to him by God.

ABEL - A FIRST

Abel was the first man who was born with an old sin nature to become a believer. His Mother and Father became believers, but they were created, not born. In this regard, Abel is a picture of every man in the human race since Adam and Eve. Cain went negative and would not believe. His negative volition produces two things--human good (The vegetable offering he brought to the Lord) and sin, the product of his old sin nature. Cain tried to bribe God and show God just how good he was. Abel also was a sinner, but he went positive when he heard doctrine and he believed. The righteousness of God was imputed to him.

THE DOCTRINE OF IMPUTATION

1. ABRAHAM IS THE PATTERN FOR IMPUTATION IN THE WORD OF GOD.
Abraham received divine righteousness at the point of his salvation. Genesis 15:6 says, "Abraham believed in the Lord." This belief was the basis of the imputation to him of God's righteousness. Now we are all born in the red--born with an old sin nature. When Jesus Christ went to the cross, he cancelled this debt. But he did more. He credited to our account God's righteousness. Abel fell into the category of one who cashed in on what God had credited to him.
2. Divine righteousness is only imputed on the basis of faith in Christ. (Romans 3:22)
3. Many Gentiles in Old Testament times found this divine righteousness by having faith in Christ, while at the same time many Jews got hung up on the Law of Moses and thereby missed this imputation. (Romans 9:30-33)
4. This imputation is based on justification. (Romans 4:22 and 5:1) Justification is the means whereby God is able to keep his character in tact and also save us in the process without any compromise.
5. Imputation encourages faith in Christ. (Romans 4:24-25)
6. Imputation also becomes a motivator for the understanding of what is called grace. (Phil. 3:8-9, Hebrews 11:4)
7. Imputation is based on the work of Christ on the cross. (2 Cor. 5:21)

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

Justification is the result of imputation and is based on it. The debt has been cancelled out and salvation by grace credited to our account. God's book has your record and it says, "Vindicated--Justified."

1. Justification means vindication. (The sin has been paid for and God is satisfied.)
2. There are various categories of justification.
 - a. Justification in salvation. (Romans 3:28 and 5:1)
 - b. Then we are justified as we live the Christian life. (Galatians 3:24)
 - c. When we move into heaven we will be justified for all eternity.
3. Justification is based on grace. It can't be bought. It can't be achieved. (Romans 3:24, Titus 3:7)
4. Therefore salvation justification does not come from the Mosaic Law or from keeping the Mosaic Law. (Romans 3:20 and 28, Galatians 2:16)
5. The mechanics of justification is that God's righteousness was imputed to us at the moment of salvation. (Genesis 15:6, Romans 3:22, Romans 4:4-5 and 11.)

6. The work of justification was accomplished by what Christ did on the cross. (Romans 5:8-9)
7. Since Christ won the victory on the cross, he was raised up to relate justification to the strategic victory of the Angelic Conflict. (Romans 4:25)
8. This brings us now to the believer as he lives out his Christian life and shows how justification applies to his daily Christian living. (Hebrews 11:4 and James 2:21-25) In James we have justification by works. But this is a justification that comes after the justification by salvation. You get to the cross without any work on your part. Then you work from the cross. Justification by faith leads to salvation. Justification by works is the result of faith working out its accomplishment in your life.
9. Justification expands in your life after salvation by means of taking in doctrine every day. This leads us to the high ground of super grace. (Matthew 11:19 and Luke 7:35)

So we have the words here "He (Abel) received confirmation that he kept on being righteous." He kept on possessing God's perfect righteousness. Next we have "The God testifying of his gifts." The word for "testifying" is a present, active, participle of martureo, it means to make a disposition of or to testify in a courtroom. In Genesis 4:4 we have the Hebrew word shaah and it means "The Lord approved of Abel and his offering." When God approves of you, he approves of your offering. So this word martureo is used here to translate this word shaal in the kal imperfect of Genesis 4:4. So this should be "The God approving." God stood by that altar and was pleased because Abel's doctrinal attitude toward him was right. This man Abel was a fantastic believer and God approved "of his gifts." This is epi and doron and it means "Because of his gifts."

Next we have dia autos and this means "Through the same gifts." Next we have "he being dead" and this is an aorist, active, participle of apothnesko and it means his violent death. This is a dramatic aorist and it means he died in a violent way. He is a permanent monument to the grace of God and to the importance of doctrine resident in the soul. God used the first murder to testify to the whole world of the importance of Bible doctrine.

A Cruel Murder

We know how this murder was committed by the language we have in 1 John 3. The Greek tells us how it happened. Cain came up and said, "Brother, let me see that knife you have been using to sacrifice those animals." Cain took it and jerked Abel's head back and cut his throat. Next we have the words "While having died." This is a temporal participle. The word "yet" is from eti. He still speaks is the present, active, indicative of laleo. He still keeps on speaking, he still keeps on communicating. That doctrine in the soul of Abel will keep on communicating as long as time lasts.

Now get a corrected translation of this verse--"By means of doctrine resident in the soul, Abel had offered to the God a greater sacrifice than Cain. Through which offering he received confirmation or approval, that he kept on being righteous (justified) and through the same (doctrine shown by these sacrifices) while he had died he still keeps on communicating to us the importance of Bible doctrine.

SUMMARY OF THIS ACT OF OVER 5,000 YEARS AGO

1. What does Abel communicate? What is he still saying to you and to me? The answer--THE IMPORTANCE OF BIBLE DOCTRINE RESIDENT IN THE SOUL. The soul determines the man.
2. Abel illustrates that the path that leads to the super grace life is the path of doctrine. Cain and Abel picture two paths that lead in opposite directions. One, the path of victory and justification, the other, the path of rejection and destruction.
3. Abel has been gone over 6,000 years but his life testifies to the great importance of persistence.
4. Doctrine in the soul glorifies God and perpetuates the dynamics of God's plan for man.
5. Please note the mental attitude of Cain toward Abel--he was jealous. (Jude 11) But jealousy did not destroy the super grace life of Abel. (The same is true of David. The jealousy of his brothers did not destroy the super grace life of David.)
6. Cain rejected Bible doctrine. (John 8:44) The negative volition of Cain was not powerful enough to destroy the positive volition of Abel.
7. Cain murdered his brother Abel--1 John 3:12. But he did not hinder the onward march of Bible truth.
8. Doctrine can never be stopped by jealousy or murder. Doctrinal truth moves on in spite of all the Devil's opposition to it.

THE DOCTRINE OF MURDER

1. The Devil was a murderer from the beginning. (John 8:44) This means that the Devil after the fall was guilty of mental attitude sins--murder always involves two other mental attitude sins, jealousy and anger.
2. The Devil motivated Cain (an unbeliever) to murder his brother Abel (a believer). (1 John 3:12) Act done with a sacrificial knife.
3. Hatred, a mental attitude sin, was the motivation for the first murder in the human race. (Genesis 4:5)
4. Murder is prohibited in the Word of God. (Ex. 20:13) "Thou shalt not murder." (Deut. 5:17, Matt. 5:21)

5. Capital punishment is the penalty for murder according to Numbers 35:30-31. And this is true from the time of Genesis 9:6. Also check Romans 13:4.
6. Murder is one of the seven worst sins, and the only one in the overt category. (Proverbs 6:16-19)
7. Both anger and hatred are considered to be mental murder. (Matt. 5:21-22, 1 John 3:12)
8. A person can be a believer and commit murder. (1 Peter 4:15)
9. However, every murderer does not have eternal life abiding in him. (1 John 3:15)
10. First Degree murder (premeditated) involves mental attitude sins. (Romans 1:29, Gal. 5:12). Envy (or jealousy) precedes murder.
11. Murder is a part of crime. The approach of any nation to the fifth cycle of discipline also has a rise in crime of this type. (Jeremiah 4:31)