
What Difference Does It Make ?

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By Dr. Robert C. Darnell

"We're all heading for the same place. What difference does it make which road we follow--which assembly we attend--which doctrines we believe? The important thing is to lead a good life--the other things make no difference."

That is a nice, comfortable philosophy. It saves a lot of inconvenience. One can do just about as he pleases with such a theory, since he himself becomes the sole judge of what "a good life" is. As long as he can keep his eyes and his ears closed to all else, his conscience can't trouble him.

Unfortunately, however, for the happiness of those who hold to this philosophy (and there are millions who do), there are metaphysical laws which the theory violates, and violation of any metaphysical law brings "punishment," a restoring of the balance which the violation has upset. There must come a time in the lives of those people when it will become apparent that a "good" life (restrained only by the individual's definition of good) has brought about undesirable consequences.

This happened to Cain. Cain was a "good" man, howbeit a self-righteous man. Let us consider him for a moment.

Our world came from the Creator's hand in perfection. We all know how that perfection was lost, and death came into the world. Not only did death come to man. It came to every living thing. Even the dying leaves began to fall from the trees. Perfection for both man and the world was lost; but not hopelessly lost. A Redeemer was promised, who would shed His blood for the remission of sin; a Messiah who would die to save that which was lost.

To show their faith in the coming of this Messiah, men were called upon to offer a blood sacrifice. Abel did this, bringing a lamb from his own flock as an offering.

But Cain was not a shepherd, and it was inconvenient for him to bring a lamb. It was just as real a sacrifice for him to bring an offering of the things which he had toiled hard to raise. Perhaps it was a greater sacrifice than it was for Abel to offer a lamb. It may have been much harder work to till the soil than to tend a flock of sheep.

Cain believed the promise just as Abel did, else he would not have brought any offering. What difference did it make?

It doesn't take a theologian to see what the trouble was, why it made a difference to Yahweh. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." If it had been possible to save the world without Yahshua dying upon the torture stake, then Cain's offering would have been acceptable.

Do you know why Cain killed his brother? "Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (I John 3:12). Even today, evil men's hearts are filled with hatred when they see the works of a righteous man, because those works condemn the evil doers and emphasize his sins. I know men who have felt the force of that hatred because they preached the righteousness of Yahweh. Only as the holy Spirit touches the heart of the sinner will he accept truth joyfully. If the spirit of Satan is in possession of his heart, he wants to kill anyone who sheds light upon his sin.

No man can define for himself what is "right" or "wrong," "good" or "evil." Each of us would make definitions which were easy and convenient for ourselves--just as Cain did. It is necessary that there be one supreme standard which will apply to all men. And in His love and wisdom Yahweh has given us that standard of righteousness in the divine Law of Ten Commandments.

No man determined that standard himself or other men. It was spoken by the Creator Himself, and written by His own hand upon tables of stone. It represents in words what He is; it is a declaration of His character. It is also the standard which He has set for us; it is what He wants us to be.

Moreover, there is sound reason for this Law. It is not merely an arbitrary set of rules laid down which we must obey because the Almighty says so. Yahweh knows that the only possibility of a happy, peaceful life lies in that Law. It was given to us in love, because it is good for us.

Take a look, for example, at the Tenth Commandment: "You shall not covet." Do you think it hurts you if you wish that the nice car which your neighbor has belonged to you instead? Does it make a difference, really? You wouldn't *actually* take his car away from him, even if you had the power to do so. Or would you? Maybe you're just a little jealous, and you can't see why he deserves something you can't have.

But that commandment is based upon sound psychology and upon metaphysical laws. As you think in your heart, you are. The first covetous thought may not mean much; repeated over and over through passing time, such thoughts will make you into a character so different from that of your Creator that you would be dismally unhappy in the new earth if you were granted eternal life.

We can take each commandment and examine it, and find the truth. For that is the purpose of the Law: to prepare us for citizenship in the eternal kingdom by developing in us characters which will be compatible with conditions in that kingdom. It does make a difference whether or not we have such a character, because without it eternal life would be eternal frustration and torment.

The petitioner who bows before the image of a saint isn't really praying to the saint, or worshipping the saint, is he? One can kneel before a crucifix and not pray to the crucifix, or before statue and not pray to the statue. These things just put him in a proper atmosphere for prayer, we are told. His intentions are the best. He comes in all sincerity-just as Cain did.

What difference does it make if one goes to church on Sunday instead of the seventh day? The worship is just as sincere, isn't it? Besides, it is much more convenient to do what the majority of people are doing-just as it was more convenient for Cain to bring an offering from the fields, instead of a lamb.

Maybe it is true that the scholars are right and that the name of the Creator is Yahweh. But everyone knows that when one prays to the Lord or to God, he isn't *really* worshipping Baal. It is the good intention that counts-the name used isn't important. Or is it? Does Yahweh really care about these "little things?" Does He really expect us to obey Him to the letter, in this day and age when almost no one does? Well, He required exact obedience from Cain.

If we ever live in the new earth, we will not covet. We will not kill nor destroy. We will not lie or steal. From one Sabbath to another we will gather together to worship. And His people shall know His name-they will not worship Him in the name of pagan gods.

Unless that is the kind of life we desire, we certainly don't want to live in the new earth. It would be cruel to compel a person to worship on Sabbath then if he would despise doing such a thing now. If you don't want what the Law provides now, you wouldn't enjoy having to obey it in the world to come. If you are ashamed of your Father's name now, will you love it any more then?

We are all heading for the same place-but there is only one road that goes through to the destination.

"Remove from me the way of lying (the false way): and grant me they Law graciously. I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me, I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O Yahweh, put me not to shame. I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart....Make me to go in the path of thy commandments: for therein do I delight" (Psalm 119:29).

Men spend much time in trying to invent spurious reasons for not obeying the Law, and, for convenience sake, build their hopes upon flimsy excuses. Why should you want to dodge around and seek for reasons why you should not do what Yahweh asks of you? That's what Cain did. And if you keep on in rebellion against your Creator, refusing to obey Him, you will reach the same point that Cain reached: you will some day desire to kill those who do obey.

Won't you respond to that great love which provided for you a standard of righteousness to fit you for the kingdom? Won't you follow the way to eternal life: the path of obedience? Weigh carefully which is more important to you-to do these pagan things of which the world approves, or to accept the plain and simple statements of Scripture and follow the Saviour to the home He has gone to prepare for you?

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