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THE SIN OF CAIN

The story of the brothers Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:1-5 is a well-known story of the first recorded murder. Cain was a farmer who raised crops. Abel was a husbandman, one who raised livestock. A time came when they both brought an offering of the fruit of their labors to the LORD. The LORD accepted Abel's offering from the first-born animals of his flock. God rejected Cain's offering of his grains and fruit of the harvest. This greatly angered Cain and he was visibly agitated.

God confronted Cain about his anger in Genesis 4:6. In verse 7, God told Cain that if he did well, he would be accepted, but if he did not do well, then sin was controlling him.

The KJV does not clearly express what God was saying to Cain. The NKJV and other translations give it more accurately. It says, ***"If you do well (righteously), will you not be accepted? And if you do not well, sin lies at the door. And (sin's) desire is for you (to yield to it) but you should rule over it."***

The original Hebrew word for sin in verse 7 is "chatta'ah" (khat-taw-aw') (Strong's 2403). It means an offense or habitual sinfulness, and the punishment for it. The KJV says ***"Sin lieth at the door."*** "Lieth" (Strong's 7257) means "crouching" and "the door" (Strong's 6607) means an opening, door, or entrance gate. "His desire" (Strong's 8669) in the sense of stretching out after, a longing, or a desire. Cain's desire was to sin. The KJV "thou shalt rule" (rule Strong's 4910) means to have dominion over., to govern, or reign, have power. "Over him" means over the desire for sin.

God was telling Cain that he was letting sin control him, rather than his controlling his sinful desires. He had opened the gate to sin.

However, God offered Cain an opportunity to get his heart right, even though his offering had been rejected. The word for sin (chatta'ah) in verse 7, is ***"sin lieth at the door."*** God was pointing out his sinfulness and offering Cain an opportunity of a sin sacrifice for purification from sin, or an expiation.

What is expiation? It is making amends (repenting) for sin. It is atonement. God was ready to pardon Cain for his sin.

Cain did not accept the opportunity for atonement. Instead, he allowed envy and hatred to wax strong against Abel. Eventually this led to Abel's murder and Cain's condemnation.

The opportunity God had given Cain showed God's great mercy. He gives everyone a chance to repent. Cain spurned God's offer, just like many people today also spurn God's offer of mercy. It was only after Cain rejected God's offer of expiation (atonement) that Cain's heart became so hardened that he killed his brother.

God loved Cain and wanted to save him, but Cain rejected God's love. This shows how God loves every sinner and wishes to see none condemned. Cain's ultimate sin was the rejection of God's desire to forgive.

Envy and hatred were Cain's initial sins. Rejection of God's mercy was his ultimate sin.