

Hewn Stone

God demands unaltered worship. He tells us that nothing should come between us and Him, *“Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God...”* (Exodus 20:5). In other words we are not to place our spiritual trust and loyalty in anything or in anybody other than in God. Nor should our faith be attached to the understanding of anyone else, no matter how true they may sound. Jesus warns us that it matters not with whom we align ourselves within this life for their faith will not save us, *“Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left”* (Matthew 24:40). He brings it so close to us as to say that we must even hate our own families! Does this mean that we should despise others, even our own family? If we do not use scripture to explain scripture we easily could come to this conclusion but the Bible instructs otherwise, *“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me”* (Matthew 10:37). Thus, ‘hate’ is not the emotion that we might have toward another but the position of importance that God plays in our life. Jesus amplifies all of the foregoing when He states, *“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these* (Mark 12:30-31).

So how is one to worship God? The Bible, given to mankind by God, provides the answer about the way of salvation to those who honestly avail themselves of the Word. It is, however, man’s nature not to believe every ‘jot and tittle’ written in the Bible; instead we tend to pick and choose those parts of the Bible which fit our way of thinking. This ought not to be for, *“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Proverbs 14:12). Clearly, God expected a certain form of worship from man when He instructed the Israelites on the preferred method of worship, *“An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace*

offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee” (Exodus 20:24). Granted the observable portions of this prescription are of the earth, but it is worship of the heart that interests God. Cain and Abel both offered prescribed earthly sacrifices unto God, but it was Abel’s sacrifice that God favored. God did not favor Cain’s sacrifice because of sin that was still on his heart, *“If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door...”* (Genesis 4:7). Moses codified various sacrifices requiring individuals to acknowledge and to confess sin whenever sin became known, *“Or if a soul swear, pronouncing with his lips to do evil, or to do good, whatsoever it be that a man shall pronounce with an oath, and it be hid from him; when he knoweth of it, then he shall be guilty in one of these. And it shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that he hath sinned in that thing”* (Leviticus 5:4-5). Obviously sin has a name. Although God demands confession of the sin that troubles our conscience, it is only when done voluntarily that the confession is accepted, *“If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD”* (Leviticus 1:3). It is at the door of the Kingdom of heaven that a servant of God, the priest in this case, accepts the sacrifice from the penitent soul for his atonement and sprinkles the blood round about and flays the sacrifice in a prescribed manner before completely burning it on the altar. Cain, as just mentioned, also made a God-sanctioned sacrifice, most likely following all precepts, but when he became aware that he had sin on his conscience he became so angry and so jealous of Abel, who had a clean conscience, that he eventually slew Abel.

Cain would have been well-advised to immediately confess that he had sinned, as did David when Nathan spoke to him, *“And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin...”* (2 Samuel 12:13). Rather than agree with God and confess his sin, Cain stubbornly, arrogantly and violently stuck with his understanding of the Word and tried to

suppress or hide his sin in spite of his troubled conscience. These same tendencies exist to this day, *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth”* (1 Timothy 4:1-3). As with Cain we also seek for ways to hide our deeds so that confession seemingly becomes unnecessary—to what end? Tailoring God’s Word to fit our thinking has consequence, *“And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it”* (Exodus 20:25). If one does not accept God’s word as it is but seeks for other explanations to satisfy His righteous demands, all good intentions on our part will be unacceptable as ‘hewn stone’ before God.
 God’s Peace, Charles Korhonen

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June 15	Sunday School Picnic	10:00	
June 22	Jim Johnson	10:00	
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