

In The Beginning: Session 07 – Cain and Abel

בראשית

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Review of Genesis 3, and the Fall of Man

- The origin of the Devil
- The Temptation
- Eve’s handling of the Word: changing it, adding to it, and subtracting from it.
- The results of sin when Adam and Eve fell
- Painful lessons about the cost of sin.
- A new world, a very different life

Overview of Genesis 4 and Beyond

The beginnings of the *antediluvian* human civilization

- Adam and Eve begin to have offspring.
- The beginnings of religion and the story of Cain and Abel.
- Moses will then lay out for us the further development of human culture, and its downward spiral into wickedness.
- The generation of the line of Cain, and the godly line of Seth which culminates in the birth of Noah.
- By the time we get to Chapter 6, God decides to send the Flood.

Cain is born (Gen. 4:1)

1 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the LORD.”

- *Adam knew Eve* is a euphemism for marital relations. This may seem prudish to us, but it is also quite profound.

- Cain was the first person born as a baby.
 - The name **Cain** means a possession. Eve said in Hebrew, *kanithi ish*, meaning *I have gotten a man*.
 - In the Old Testament a person’s name often arises from the circumstances of his or her birth, or from what his parents were experiencing at the time.
- A mysterious thing in the birth of Cain: In Hebrew Eve said, “I have gotten a man, the Lord.”
 - Did she see Cain as being the fulfillment of God’s promise to send a Redeemer?
 - Some wonder if Eve thought that the child actually was YHWH.

Abel is born (Gen. 4:2)

2 Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

- Adam and Eve had many sons and daughters, possibly a huge number. Some rabbis taught that these two boys were born with twin sisters.
- It would have been necessary for people to marry their close relations so that the human race could be propagated. However, with the degradation of the human race over time, marriage in a close degree of kinship has of course become very risky. A first cousin marriage approximately doubles genetic complications.
- When God gave the Law to Moses, He was very clear about what degrees of kindred could not marry.
- The name Abel is *Hevel*, and it signifies a *breath*. It is used in the Bible to mean anything that passes away quickly, or that is a passing thing of vanity.
- Prophetic names: Abel had a brief life, and Cain (“possession”), needed to hold on to his place.
- Moses describes their employment, but without comment.

The Offerings (Genesis 4:3-5)

3 And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. 4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, 5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

- **In the process of time:** this happened *at the end of days*.
- They **brought their offerings to the Lord**. Men were invited to come to the presence of the Lord. Perhaps at the Tree of Life?
- Notice that even then, worship was always at a **special designated place**.

Contrast in the Offerings: Works or Faith?

- Cain brought the fruit of the ground: flour, oil, spices, and fruit. It represents Cain's own labors. It's an acknowledgment that God is the Creator.
- Abel's offered a blood sacrifice, even the best portions. This was costly.
- We also see that Abel brought the firstborn of his flock: we give to God first, and not from what is left over. We give to Him the best, not what is inferior.
- By sacrificing a lamb, Abel recognized and honored the important principle that a death was required. Each one of us must either pay that price ourselves or else offer in our place a Substitute that is acceptable to God.
- In the New Testament, we are told that Abel was offering his sacrifice by faith. Hebrews 11:14 says, *"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts..."*
 - Moses says God had respect to Abel's offering.
 - Abel trusted God to redeem him, and God honored that.

These sacrifices say different things about what these men thought about themselves, what they thought they needed, who they thought God was, and what they thought God expected of them. Cain knew that God had been good to him. Abel knew that, too, but he also knew that God was holy.

- Abel was looking for a Redeemer, and so God was pleased.
- Cain reacts with childish and jealous behavior.

God Addresses Cain (Genesis 4:6-7)

6 So the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”

- Notice first the graciousness of God.
- Notice how much personal contact God still has with people, and yet they do not seem to be impressed.
- He tries to encourage Cain to do well, and “Choose life!”
- God gives him a picture of sin crouching at his door, as a predator or a seductress.

The First Murder (Genesis 4:8-9)

8 Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. 9 Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?”

- We don't know if this was a planned assault.
- This is commonly shown as a blow to the head, but it says he slew him.
- Cain gives one of the most insolent answers ever. Maybe a dig at Abel?

The Punishment of Cain (Genesis 4:10-15)

10 And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground. 11 So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12 When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth."

13 And Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear! 14 Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me."

15 And the LORD said to him, "Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him.

- Cain shows no real contrition, and only thinks about his punishment. No regrets.
- Outrage and pain from YHWH: "What have you done?"
- Abel's blood cried for vengeance, but Jesus' Blood speaks peace and wholeness.
- Now cursed, Cain would wander, no longer able to approach the place of worship.
- Cain is also in fear that he will be slain. We don't know what the mark was, only that people could recognize it. God would punish severely (sevenfold) someone who killed Cain, because that would be defeating God's own sentence.
- This is a warning and a frightening picture of judgment on unrepentant sinners.
- 1 John 3:11-12a says: *...this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother.*

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