

Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church
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DHW
Bible Study Class

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Lesson 3

Genesis 4

INTRODUCTION

The opening statement of this chapter connects the chapters preceding it. In chapter one, the account of the creation of the heaven and the earth, and all living things is given. In chapter two, the first man and woman were placed in the Garden of Eden, living happily and harmoniously, enjoying the presence and fellowship of God Himself. Then in chapter three, man was tempted by Satan. He fell by disobeying God and was driven out of Eden. The phrase, *And Adam* (Hebrew, literally, and the man), logically connects the preceding chapter three. Moreover the linguistic style is Hebrew prose and the narrative should be understood as actual historical events.

This chapter presents some significant elements. The moral state of fallen man is shown. The proper attitude of heart in knowing and approaching God is given. Abel's offering to God was accepted whereas Cain's was rejected. The struggle of brother against brother resulting in the first murder foreshadows the perennial struggle a man poses against his own kind.

The chapter naturally divides into three parts: the early development of the fallen sinful nature of the human race (vv.1-16); the account of the family estrangement from God (vv.17-24); and the line of the godly family (vv.25-26).

STUDY THE WORD

Cain and Abel

And Adam knew Eve his wife; this is the biblical idiom for a husband and his wife having a sexual relationship. The word *knew* (Hebrew, *yada*) which is used to describe the marital act is rich in meaning. It describes the partners fully know each other. One partner does not exploit the other. The marital act is not an end itself, but rather a means to an end, and that end is a deeper, more intimate knowledge of each other. For other illicit sexual relationship the writer used the phrase *go into* (Hebrew, *bo*; Genesis 16:2, 4; 38:16,)¹ or *lie with* (Hebrew,

¹ Genesis 16:2 And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

Genesis 16:4 And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.

Genesis 38:16 And he turned unto her by the way, and said, Go to, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee; (for he knew not that she *was* his daughter in law.) And she said, What wilt thou give me, that thou mayest come in unto me?

shakab; Genesis 39:7,² when reciprocal intimacy is not the emphasis.³

Cain, the name means “I have acquired or gotten,” was the first man-child of Adam and Eve. After the birth of Cain, Eve remarked, *I have gotten a man from the Lord*, remembering the promise God made when He spoke to the serpent (Genesis 3:15). But she was mistaken that Cain was the deliverer. The deliverer would come later in the person of the divine Messiah, Christ Jesus the Lord, the son of Abraham and David (Luke 2:11, Matthew 1:1).

Cain is a tiller of the ground just like his father Adam (Genesis 2:15; 3:23). But Abel was a *keeper of sheep*, a shepherd and this at least informs us that there were animals which had been domesticated. Some of the famous people who followed after him as shepherds were Jacob (Genesis 30:36), Joseph (Genesis 37:2), Moses (Exodus 3:1), and David (1 Samuel 16:11; 17:34).

As a farmer, Cain provided the family with food by tilling the ground. Abel on the other hand was a shepherd, tending the sheep, providing milk and clothing. Both occupations are honourable.

Offerings of Cain and Abel

When Abel and Cain worshipped the LORD, Cain offered the *fruit of the*

² Genesis 39:7 And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.

³ Hamilton, 219-220.

ground. Abel offered *the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof*. It was natural for them to bring an offering to the LORD appropriate to their work. The LORD accepted Abel's offering but rejected Cain's. Externally, there is not anything that is different. The text does not mention any other differences in their offerings. Therefore there was nothing inferior or superior in the physical nature of their offerings. The Law of Moses did specify some kinds of vegetable offerings (Leviticus 2:1).

Cain was angry because his offering was rejected. Why was Cain's offering not accepted by God? If the rejection was not external then it must be internal. If it was not the physical nature of the offering, then the reason must concern the heart attitude of the one who offered. The Law of Moses teaches that God will reject even the most perfect sacrifice if that sacrifice is offered by an apostate, one who has an unbelieving heart.⁴ The divine commentary on

⁴ The OT references: Isaiah 1:11 To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. 12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? 13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; *it is* iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

Micah 6:6 Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, *and* bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? 7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, *or* with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn *for* my transgression, the fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul? 8 He hath showed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the

Abel's offering is that he presents by faith.⁵

Another suggestion why Cain did not *do well* is because he did not offer an animal sacrifice. This view is based on the assumption that God could have told Adam how to make offerings to Him. Adam in turn could have taught Cain and Abel. Abel obeyed but Cain refused to obey. Hence, Cain's offering was rejected. The text however does not say that these things took place. It is an argument which is based on a later revelation when God instructed Moses the proper way to approach and worship Him (Leviticus 1 – 7). In this case it is best to keep to the text which is revealed here and accept the fact that God was not pleased with Cain's offering because he did not do well. As discussed, the rejection of Cain's offering by God is a matter of the heart attitude rather than the kind of offerings made at that time.

God was gracious to Cain and told him to examine himself, that if he had done rightly his offering too would have been equally accepted. There was no course for him to be angry. And if Cain still resisted God's grace, *sin lieth at the door*—lying at the door of his heart. And sin desired to utterly control him. Cain should not yield to this lurking sin but to rule over it. Fallen man still has

LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

⁵ Hebrews 11:4 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: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

a choice to obey or not to obey God. The point here is not about his total depravity but his free choice.⁶

First Murder

Cain looked out for Abel and had a meeting with him. He took the opportunity to slay his very own brother. The word used here for killing is the common word, which means, "to kill intentionally," (premeditated killing.). This is the first murder.

Why did Cain slay his own brother? It is quite obvious that Cain was jealous and his action in killing Abel shows his rebellion and refusal to repent. The LORD dealt with him and asked him, *Where is thy brother?* Cain lied that he did not know. Then he retorted back to God, *Am I my brother's keeper?* (4:9).⁷ Cain's second response was inappropriate and sarcastic. Cain was a liar, evasive and indifferent.

God now sentenced him for murdering Abel. Sin had to be paid for. First Cain was cursed. When Adam and Eve sinned, only the ground was cursed. But now Cain was cursed. He could work on the soil, but it was not going to produce in such a manner as to give him enjoyment and satisfaction. Moreover he was banished to be a wandering fugitive. He could not enjoy the pleasure of

⁶ Hamilton, 228.

⁷ Ibid., 230-231. The word "keeper" (*somer*) as suggested is a legal term for a person entrusted with the custody and care of an object. This verb is used in the OT to describe God's relationship with Israel. In Psalm 121:4-8 the word is used 5 times that God is the keeper of Israel.

settling down at a place and enjoying the produce of the soil (vv.11-12).

Cain complained that his punishment was more than he could bear (really?). His hard labour in tilling the ground would bring little returns. He would be cast out from God's face. He was compelled to lead a nomadic life. Lastly, he was afraid that other people might kill him. This last remark suggests that there were other people living besides Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel.

Who were these people who would want to kill him? Apparently they were his relatives, the other children of Adam and Eve. Their names were not mentioned in the book. Only the names of Cain, Abel and Seth, the children of Adam and Eve, were mentioned. These other people were obviously the children of Adam and Eve. So the others, who could hurt Cain, were his relatives.

However, God promised that he would leave a mark on him so that he was protected from being murdered by others. The nature of the mark is not described. Why would God give Cain divine protection for his wicked deed? It is difficult to answer. The only answer is that God is sovereign and He does everything according to His counsel. At the same time, God is also full of grace. Some suggest that God protected him to prevent further criminal acts of violence.⁸ However, man did not change. Later,

⁸ Hamilton, 235.

God imposed capital punishment for premeditated murder (Genesis 9:5-6).⁹

Family of Cain

Cain then settled in the land of Nod which was east of Eden. The word "Nod" means "wandering, flight, or exile." It probably refers to an area rather than a specific site.¹⁰ Cain married one of the other daughters of Adam (Genesis 5:4).¹¹ Such a relationship would not be wrong and unnatural at this stage of human history. God had permitted it. Eventually this kind of relationship was forbidden by God when He gave the Law to Moses (Leviticus 18:6-18).

What God has promised God will perform. No one touched Cain. In fact he was blessed with a family and descendants: Enoch, Irad, Mehujael, Methusael and Lamech, who had two wives and who bore him three sons and a daughter – Jabal a cattle rancher, Jubal a maker of musical instruments, and Tubalcain a mechanic in metals (vv. 19-22). Cain built a city. His action seems to contradict God's curse on him to be a wandering fugitive. His building of the city could be seen as an attempt on his part to neutralise the curse upon him,¹² or

⁹ Genesis 9:5 And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the **life** of man. 6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: **for** in the image of God made he man.

¹⁰ John Davis, *Paradise to Prison*, 101.

¹¹ Genesis 5:4 And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters:

¹² Davis, 102.

that his action is one of defiance.¹³ The text does not indicate that God was displeased with Cain's act of building a city. If Cain was trying to correct the situation he had created, he should know that he was dependent on God's grace.¹⁴

For the first time in the Bible monogamous marriage broke down. Lamech had two wives, Adah and Zillah. This violated the original marriage pattern of God, one man one woman. God's rebuke of Lamech is silent. But subsequent Old Testament polygamous marriages resulted in the "most unpleasant and shattering experiences."¹⁵ Lamech had four children. The fourth was a daughter, Naamah, which means "pleasant, graceful, gorgeous." His three sons, Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-cain, were occupied with three different cultural occupations.

Jabal was a tent dweller and a keeper of "cattle" (Hebrew, *miqneh*, literally means large animals like camels and donkeys, whereas Abel's flock, *so'n* refers to the smaller animals, cattle, sheep, and goats).

Jubal was the father of all those who play the harp and organ. The Hebrew word for "harp" is more accurately translated "lyre" a musical instrument depicted in Egyptian, Palestinian, and Mesopotamian paintings, and consisting of a sounding board across which strings were strung. The word

¹³ Hamilton, 238.

¹⁴ Ibid., 238.

¹⁵ Take the cases of Abraham cohabiting with Sarah and Hagar; Jacob marrying Leah and Rachel; David's many wives.

"organ" refers to an early form of flute, and instrument used by shepherds throughout the Near East.¹⁶

Tubal-cain was a tin smith, one who hammered brass and iron to make every cutting instrument and utensils. There are archaeological evidences, which show such artefacts were found between the 6th and 3rd millennium before Christ (B.C.).¹⁷ This account tells of the contribution of the sons of Cain. Herein is proof of the grace of God working even through the disobedient line. Although mankind has fallen, yet by the grace of God, man is not made so incapable that life on earth is so intolerable and uninteresting. Man can handle all these, but he is found to be deficient in handling himself.

In the midst of these cultural developments and inventions, Lamech boasted of his having killed a man who tried to wound him. He was vindictive. He prides himself of keeping his own security. He had no hesitation to take the law into his hands. He had the mind-set of his forefather, Cain.

Birth of Seth

Eve gave birth again to a son whom they named Seth, meaning "the appointed one," "the compensation," or "the substitute." The first son Cain she called a man from the Lord. Now Seth she called another seed in place of Abel whom Cain slew. The birth of Seth was important because Cain could not fulfil

¹⁶ Davis. 102-103.

¹⁷ For details refer Hamilton (p.239) and Davis' (p. 103-104) commentaries.

the promise of Genesis 3:15, the *protevangelium*. Seth married and had a son, whom they named Enos. Observe that Eve had grown in spiritual maturity. When Cain was born she said, *I have gotten a man from the Lord* (4:1). But when Seth was born, she said, *For God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel* (4:25). In her latter remarks the focus was on God, whereas the former was on herself. Seth and his descendants began to call upon the name of the LORD (Hebrew, *Y^hW^eH*) the Covenant Name of God. It is revealed to all people for He is not only the God of Israel, but of the whole human race. The phrase, to *call upon the name of the LORD* was frequently used to signify public corporate worship.¹⁸

PRACTICAL VALUE

There are apparently true and false worshippers in the church. Both present their things to the Lord and it is natural for each to bring what they have or possess. Men of great intellect will present to God their splendid literature, men of great emotion will offer to God an enthusiastic prayer, men of great

¹⁸Psalm 79:6 Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms *that have not called upon thy name*.

Jeremiah 10:25 Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families *that call not on thy name*: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate.

Zephaniah 3:9 For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that *they may all call upon the name of the LORD*, to serve him with one consent.

wealth will give their silver and gold, men of leisure will give of their time, men of genius will give of their originality, men who are poor will give of themselves. Yet these are externals though good as they are, but the true worshipper must have a right heart attitude towards God. So-called Christian privileges will not in themselves make a true Christian. A believer must worship God in purity and sincerity in his heart.

Christians should not avoid their social responsibility, particularly, to their members of the house of God. All born-again Christians belong to the family of God. We are all our brothers' keepers. Cain's question to the LORD: *Am I my brother's keeper* is defiant. Of course, we are. We should share our brothers' burdens as much as we share their joys. We should not just accept some things that are beneficial to us and avoid those that are not. How unreasonable and irresponsible we all are when we claim liberty for ourselves and cause misery to others. This should not be so. Christian love accepts both the good things and the bad ones.

Eve's over-estimation of the birth of Cain should be a warning to all mothers. Parents tend to favour the eldest and place too much hope and expectation from him against the other siblings. Surely, Eve was disappointed with Cain who murdered his brother Abel because he was jealous of him on account that Abel performed better than he. So it is best for parents to be fair and avoid showing favouritism in their treatment of their children.

GOD BLESS YOU.