

CAIN AND ABEL

Genesis 4:1-17

Intro: The fourth chapter of Genesis is a very important chapter in the Bible because it is the first chapter to show us the effect of sin upon the first family. Before Adam and Eve sinned they were told that they were going to have a family. In Gen. 1:28 we read that God told them, “Be fruitful, and multiply. After they sinned, the Lord told Eve, “I will multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children.” We are not told how difficult the births of Cain and Abel were, but we can be sure that neither was easy. Eve would not have known how to compare having children before they sinned with having children after they sinned because they had no children before they sinned. But if these were especially painful to her, nothing is said about it. Perhaps we are seeing here in chapter 4 what the Lord said in words recorded for us in John 16:21:

21 A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world .

This is evidence of the grace of God.

I. ADAM AND EVE’S TWO SONS (Gen. 4:1-2a).

Cain was born first, and then later his little brother came along, and they named him Abel. It seems to have been a time of special joy for Eve when Cain was born, and she believed that the Lord had given her a son. And then the Lord gave her a second son. According to Gen. 5:3 and 4 Adam and Eve had Seth later, as really a replacement for Abel, but then Moses added concerning Adam that, after Seth was born, lived for another eight hundred year, “and he begat sons and daughters.” So they had more children than Cain, Abel, and Seth, but these are the three that are mentioned in Scripture.

Some expositors feel that Eve may have believed that Cain was the one who was going to bruise the serpent’s head, and they may be right. But we can’t say for sure. However, the birth of Cain, and then of Abel, gave Eve special joy – and probably Adam was very happy over the birth of two sons also.

We are not told anything about their childhood, but, as they became men,

it was very apparent that they had different interests. Abel became a shepherd, but Cain was a farmer. However, that was not the only difference between the two. The other difference showed up in their relationship with God. And it had to do with the offerings that they brought to the Lord.

It must have pleased Adam and Eve that both of their sons were inclined to worship God, but apparently they did not notice that even in their worship there was a major difference between their two boys.

Now at this point I want to take you to the NT where we have information given about both Cain and Abel that Adam and Eve did not know at this point in their family life.

In Hebrews 11: 4 we have this information about Abel:

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.

We are told here that Abel was a man of faith, that he really knew the Lord, and by giving a blood sacrifice he demonstrated that he was righteous before God. We would say that Abel showed by the sacrifice that he brought to the Lord that he was truly saved.

But what about Cain? He brought a part of the harvest of his crops. I want to call your attention to a little word in Gen. 4:4, the word “also.” This seems that Abel was also a farmer on a more limited scale than Cain, and that he had brought from his harvest, but along with that he offered a blood sacrifice. The verse I read to you a moment ago from the book of Hebrews says that “Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” Those words “more excellent” can be translated *more complete*. Cain’s sacrifice needed a blood sacrifice to cover it. But apparently Cain didn’t think that a blood sacrifice was necessary in approaching God. It is like those modern theologians among us who scoff at the idea that even the shedding of Christ’s blood is irrelevant as far as our relationship with God is concerned. Their idea is that people can go to God any way they want to go.

When you see someone like Cain, you hope that he will be able to see the error of his way, and change. But what does the NT tell us about Cain. For this I ask you to turn to 1 John 3, verses 11 and 12. And as we read these verses let’s remember that Adam and Eve did not know this. What

does the Apostle John tell us about Cain? Follow in your Bibles as I read 1 John 3:11-12:

11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

12 Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

Now we are getting ahead of our story when we read these verses, but I want you to see what the Bible says about Cain. Instead of saying that he was righteous like Abel was, and could have been changed, the Spirit of God tells us through the Apostle John that Cain “was of that wicked one.”

What does this mean? This means that Cain was *not* saved, and that he was not going to be saved. Biblically we would say that he was not of God's elect! Now you and I don't know this about people, but the truth is that in the same family you can have one appointed to salvation, and another who is not! But we don't know which is which. And as long as we live, and others we are concerned about even though they may not be related to us, we are to pray for them, and witness to them (if they will let us), because there are always those like the Apostle Paul who before he was saved was the church's enemy #1, but he obviously was one of God's elect, but people in his day knew that only after he was saved.

I know that this doctrine of election is a big hurdle which even many of the Lord's people are never able to over. Before we move on in our text let me give you two passages from Scripture, one from Peter, the other from Paul, where they discuss people like Cain.

First, from 1 Peter 2, beginning with verse 7 and reading down through verse 10:

7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed .

9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained

mercy (1 Peter 2:7-10).

And from the Apostle Paul we have these words:

20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

22 What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? (Rom. 9:20-24).

Even Solomon said,

4 The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil (Prov. 16:4).

There are many things about the ways of the Lord that we cannot understand, but let us always remember that God would have been perfectly righteous if He had decided not to save anyone! We can also say that He would have been perfectly righteous if He had determined to save everyone! And so we must agree that He is perfectly righteous in saving some, but not in saving all.

So God accepted Abel's sacrifice, but he rejected Cain's.

Now let us notice:

III. CAIN'S RESPONSE (Gen. 4:5b).

Did he seek help from Abel? No! Did he go to get an animal to offer to the Lord? No! Did he seek help from the Lord? No! What did he do? He got mad! The Bible says that "Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell." It is hard for us to realize even from the words of Scripture how angry Cain was. He was out of control.

Then notice before you get angry with the Lord,

IV. THE GRACE OF GOD TOWARD CAIN (Gen. 4:6-7).

Notice that although Cain did not go to the Lord, the Lord came to him and gave him divine counsel. Notice the Lord's words in verses 6 and 7 – two questions first, and then He told Cain what he needed to do. Cain just needed to do well, which meant coming to God in the way God had shown them that they were to come. And God told him if he would do that, he would be accepted. He told Cain what his problem was; it was sin, sin in his heart, crouching like a wild animal to destroy him, but that Cain must get the victory over him, victory by obeying God.

I can imagine how sullen Cain was. He wouldn't talk to the Lord, and he was not about to do what the Lord wanted him to do. But what did he do?

V. CAIN, THE MURDERER (Gen. 4:8).

He went to talk to Abel. He probably asked him to go out in the field with him. He may have pretended like he was ready to listen to his brother. But he deceived him. And when Cain got him away from their home, he suddenly attacked him, and killed him.

Then what happened?

VI. THE LORD'S RETURN (Gen. 4:9-15).

The Lord asked him where Abel was. Cain said that he did not know, which was a lie. He knew that it was a lie, and so did the Lord. And then we noticed how insolently he responded to the Lord: "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Cain had deceived Abel, and now he was trying to deceive the Lord. But the Lord was not deceived, and He told Cain that He knew exactly what Cain had done.

And then the Lord, the righteous Judge, pronounced judgment upon him. Read verses 11 and 12. The Lord told him that Cain was going to spend the rest of his life fleeing from those who supposedly would make him pay the supreme price for murdering his brother.

Did Cain repent? Did he fall down before the Lord, asking for His forgiveness? No, he did neither. All he did was to complain about the judgment that the Lord had imposed upon him. So what did the Lord do? Again we see that God is a God of mercy and of grace. See verse 15.

Why is it that we aren't totally amazed at the goodness of the Lord toward sinners instead of complaining to Him for choosing some, but not choosing everybody. Cain didn't want the Lord. After the Lord put a protecting mark on Cain, even then Cain did not thank him. Instead, he went out from the presence of the Lord, totally content to live his life and to raise his family totally without God.

Concl: What are we seeing here in this chapter? We are seeing Cain's sinful nature in action. This is the first exhibition in Scripture of what sin has done to man. Cain was thoroughly rebellious against God. He was determined to worship God the way he wanted to, and when God rejected his religion, he got mad, was envious of Abel, but not willing to change, and so exercising the same kind of deception that the Devil had used against his mother, he killed his brother, and then lied about it, and told the Lord in so many words that he felt absolutely no responsibility toward his brother. He was an unrepentant sinner, unmoved by God's grace toward him, and was content to live his life without God.

The story of Cain is a story of man's total depravity, the rapid effect, and the deep effect, that sin in his heart had upon his life, and upon his eternal destiny.

Now the alarming thing about Cain is that by nature we are all just like him. If you haven't done what he did (the long list of his sins), then give glory to God. Each one of us has the potential to commit any sin that has ever been committed. But how thankful we can be that the Lord showed us our sin, and how helpless we are to change ourselves so as to be acceptable to God, and how disinterested. But God for His own reasons and purposes, chose us in eternity past, sent His Son to die for us, called us to Himself, drew us by the Holy Spirit, and has made us new creatures in Christ. As we read about Cain, and realize how easily we could have been like he was, how endlessly thankful we should be for God's grace to us, and that He gave us ears to hear and hearts to understand how much we needed Him, and, most amazing of all, how much He wanted us. The glory does not belong to us, but to God, and to His Son Who died for us, and to His Spirit Who sought us and brought us to the Savior.

The Lord may be speaking to some today who do not know Him, nor have you come to Him. Come today. Trust Him in your heart. You can never make yourself acceptable to God, but the Lord Jesus Christ can. He died to save sinners. If you know that you are a sinner, then go to Him in faith and He will save you.