

Lesson 20

Cain And Abel

Genesis 4:1-15

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Adam and Eve never fully understood the impact their one sin would have upon the human race. In this chapter, we see the entrance of hatred and murder into society. When Eve held the bleeding and dead body of her Son Abel to her breast, and her son Cain was the murderer, she got glimpse of the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

B. Cain's diabolical act of murder is just a miniature picture of the history of the world. History, as we know it, is the story of the wars, battles and bloodshed of mankind. History is the space in which Cain's axe becomes ultimately machine guns, napalm, hydrogen bombs and space rockets. NOTE. War began in Genesis 4.

II. THE BIRTH OF CAIN AND ABEL 4:1-2

A. **"... and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord."** The first child of Adam and Eve was Cain. This story in Genesis 4:1-15 is a highly condensed account, covering a span of many years; perhaps as much as a hundred years. Cain and Abel were undoubtedly in their twenties or thirties when this murder took place.

1. "Cain" means "gotten" or "possession" and the surface meaning is that Eve had gotten a physical man through the help of the Lord.

2. There may be a deeper meaning to Cain, for Eve thought that in him would be fulfilled the promise to her seed. Some have translated this, "I have gotten a man, even the Lord." She thought that this would be the seed to bruise the serpent's head. NOTE. She was wrong, but she clearly understood God's promise in Genesis 3:15.

B. **"And she again bare his brother Abel."** The second child was Abel, which means "nothingness" or "vanity." Eve's high hopes about life were soon vanished, being deceived about life. She had become disappointed in her hopes of her first-born son.

C. "And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of becomes shepherd and the other an agriculturist. NOTE:

earliest history mankind has understood and been involved pastoral pursuits. He was not, as evolutionists tell us,

III. THE REJECTION OF CAIN 4:3-5

A. **"And in process of time it came to pass."** This literally means, "At the end of days." Perhaps there was a prescribed period for sacrifice, indicating that sacrifice was practiced by Adam and Eve and taught to their children. This is the first sacrifice recorded in Scripture but it may not have been the first sacrifice offered by mankind. NOTE. Adam and Eve trained their children to worship God. Mankind began worshipping the one true God but because of sin worship deteriorated into idolatry, polytheism and other degrading practices. (cf. Rom. 1:18-32). Man has not evolved from many gods to one God, but de-evolved from one God to many gods because of sin.

B. **"... Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect."** Why was Cain's sacrifice rejected? Perhaps those two clearly understood that approach to God was through a sacrifice of an animal (cf. Gen. 3:21). Cain's vegetables were not acceptable to God, for God was teaching them then "that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." This of course all looked forward to Christ who would be slain for the sins of men (John 1:29). NOTE. Sacrifice teaches us that the problem of sin is very serious. It cannot be handled by good resolution or an earnest resolve. It is not settled by turning over a new leaf or to change one's attitude. Sin is something that is embedded in the human race and touches the springs of life. It can only be solved by death. NOTE. However, the problem was much deeper than the type of sacrifice, for it was one of attitude. Cain did not offer his offering in faith (cf. Heb. 11:4).

C. **"And Cain was very wrath, and his countenance fell."** The rejection of the offering caused Cain to get angry and resentful. He became so jealous that his whole countenance changed. He was put out with God's choice of Abel and he takes it out in hatred and jealousy with his brother. He became angry with God and with man because he did not get his way. But the real problem was his heart attitude. NOTE: When anger, hatred and jealousy grip the human heart, they change the whole personality of the individual and even the outward appearance. He gets a hard and bitter countenance.

IV. THE PATIENCE OF GOD WITH CAIN 4:6-7

A. **"Why are thou wrath? and why is thy countenance fallen?"** God patiently asks Cain this question in order to bring him to repentance, for anger is a serious thing and can have devastating results if not curbed.

B. **"If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?"** The Lord is not talking about trying harder, but about bringing a proper sacrifice offering to the Lord. It was not too late for Cain if he would go and trade some grain for a lamb and bring that lamb for an offering; he would be accepted just like Abel.

C. **"And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him."** But if Cain refuses to repent and accept God's way of sacrifice for sin, then sin will grip him, for it couches at the door of one's life like a lion, ready to jump, seize and destroy. NOTE. If hatred and jealousy fester, soon a person will find himself controlled by a power greater than he can handle. He will say and do things he never thought he could do.

V. THE MURDER OF ABEL BY CAIN 4:8

A. **"And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field,"** Cain apparently coached Abel into a field away from Adam and Eve to do his diabolical act of murder. Yet, he could not hide from God who saw it all.

B. **"That Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him."** Cain refused to repent, he nursed his hatred and conceives diabolic plot to murder his brother. This, he thinks, is a way to get even. He lets his murderous axe fall, and Abel becomes the victim of his brother's hand. NOTE. This murder began with hatred, for every outward act of sin has first found lodging in the human heart (Matt. 5:21-22). NOTE. All war is the result of hatred, jealousy, envy and strife that is in every man's heart. Only Christ can calm and control the war going on inside of individuals.

C. POINT: Cain's act of murder placed him in the ungodly line of seed that would oppose the godly line of seed of Messiah. According to Gen. 3:15, there would be these two lines. Abel represents the godly line. Cain was of the devil for his act of murder (cf. 1 John 3:11-12).

VI. THE CONTINUED PATIENCE OF GOD WITH CAIN 4:9

A. **“Where is Abel thy Brother?”** God knew the whole situation but asks this question to make Cain confess his guilt before God. God still wants to bring him to repentance.

B. **“Am I my brother’s keeper?”** Cain, knowing that he is guilty, refuses to accept responsibility for his brother. While he denied it, he was totally responsible for his brother. NOTE. Guilty men run from acknowledging the truth. They shove it down on the inside or pretend like it is not there, but men cannot run from God who knows all things.

“And now art thou cursed from the earth. . .

VII. THE JUDGMENT OF CAIN 4:9-15

A. **“The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground.”** The ground shrieked for vengeance, for justice, for the righting of this wrong. This is vengeance from God, not from man.

B. **And now art thou cursed from the earth. . .When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength;**” Cain was a farmer of great pride and success but now he will not be able to get any ground to produce. There will be nothing but frustration, sweat, tears and toil for him. Cain lost his “green thumb.”

C. **“Fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.”** Due to his fruitless labor, Cain shall be banished and homeless. He will become a wanderer on the earth. He will become a fugitive, vainly seeking to find something satisfying. He will be lonely, empty and restless all the days that he lives.

D. **“My punishment is greater than I can bear.”** Cain was cursed to a meaningless existence, which is fate far worse than death. Notice that he was hardened to his sin but was only concerned about his punishment. There was no repentance. He did not care about God but he did care about himself in a selfish way.

E. **“That every one that findeth me shall slay me.”** Cain is obsessed and haunted by his guilt. Wherever he goes in society, he will be a marked man, hunted and haunted.

F. **“And the Lord said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.”** God makes a promise to protect Cain from society. What does the mark mean?

1. Some think it was a type of physical mark placed on his body to indicate that he was set out by God. There are different views on the subject. It may be a pitiful look, skin disease, paralysis, mental affliction or a ferocious manner, which made him a wild man. Some think that his skin was made colored and this began the Negro race, which is quite unlikely. We just do not know what this mark was, if it was of physical nature.
2. Others feel the mark was a sign from God. In the Hebrew it is not necessarily “upon Cain” but “for Cain.” It was some sign that God allowed to appear for Cain’s reassurance, a sign of guaranty or a pledge of token that he would be protected.
3. Theological Problem: Why did God permit Cain to live rather than requiring his death for taking the life of another? Perhaps God showed His mercy on Cain that He might lengthen his days so he would repent. Perhaps his punishment was more severe than death, for he was forced to live a meaningless existence. Perhaps God saw fit to let the tares and the wheat grow up side by side, so as to have the evil run its full course until it is judged completely by God.