

genesis

God's Book of Beginnings

Chapter 4

^{4.1} Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." ² Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. ³ In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. ⁴ But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, ⁵ but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. ⁶ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? ⁷ If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."

⁸ Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. ⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" ¹⁰ The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. ¹¹ Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹² When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

¹³ Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear. ¹⁴ Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." ¹⁵ But the LORD said to him, "Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. ¹⁶ So Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

¹⁷ Cain lay with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was then building a city, and he named it after his son Enoch. ¹⁸ To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad was the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael was the father of Methushael, and Methushael was the father of Lamech. ¹⁹ Lamech married two women, one named Adah and the other Zillah. ²⁰ Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock. ²¹ His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all who play the harp and flute. ²² Zillah also had a son, Tubal-Cain, who forged all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron. Tubal-Cain's sister was Naamah. ²³ Lamech said to his wives, "Adah and Zillah, listen to me; wives of Lamech, hear my words. I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me. ²⁴ If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times."

²⁵ Adam lay with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, "God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him." ²⁶ Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD.

Adam & Eve ⇒ Cain and Abel

4:1-2 Adam lay with (*yāda'*: to know intimately) his wife, Eve, and God gave them two sons, Cain (a farmer) was born and then Abel (a shepherd) (some say they may have been twins).

According to the Gospels, Jesus proclaimed Abel as the first prophet Matthew 23:33-35, Luke 11:49-51.

Eve's statement "with the help of the LORD" was a confirmation of the Biblical principle: everything "good" accomplished by mankind requires the LORD's help Psalms 85:12, Ecclesiastes 3:1-15, James 1:17.

3-7 Cain brought "some" of the produce he grew as an offering to the LORD, "but" Abel brought the best ("fat portions" Leviticus 3:16 and "the firstborn" Leviticus 27:26, Luke 2:23) of what he had. Abel and his offering were favored by the LORD Hebrews 11:4; however, Cain's offering was not, and this made him very angry (an entitlement mentality). The LORD questioned Cain in a way that implied Cain knew the right thing to do, so he had no right to be angry. In His mercy, the LORD gave Cain the path to reconciliation: he must "master" his sinful attitude v.7.

Note the awareness of thankful offerings to God before the "Law" was given to Moses Leviticus 7:37-38.

Most scholars believe the LORD's disdain was not for Cain's vocation or even his produce's quality. Although not recorded in Genesis, God must have revealed to Adam and his family what and how He wanted offerings to be brought to Him Genesis 7:2, 8:20, because the LORD's response to Cain v.6-7 made it plain that His issue with Cain was his disobedience to and inappropriate anger toward Him. An appropriate response by Cain would have been repentance, but he chose rage toward God.

Abel's offering was given in faith Hebrews 11:4, while Cain's was a religious act (a work) Amos 5:21-24.

8 However, Cain refused to listen to the LORD's wisdom and allowed his great anger to develop into an evil hatred for his brother, leading to the first murder noted in Scripture 1 John 3:10-12.

Cain's killing Abel was the first physical murder in history Luke 11:50-51. Cain murdered, because he "belonged to the evil one" 1 John 3:10-12, and the devil "was a murderer from the beginning" John 8:44.

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- 9** For a second time, the LORD asked a question concerning where someone was ^{Genesis 3:9}. Cain's response to the LORD was a lie that was offered both disrespectfully and sarcastically. In a play on words, Cain said: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Abel was a keeper of sheep.)
- Cain was ruled by sin: (1) disobedient/unacceptable worship, (2) anger/murder, (3) disrespect/lying.**
- 10-12** The LORD questioned Cain in order to encourage him to think about what he had done. The LORD's next statement was a figure of speech indicating He knew exactly what happened. The LORD then placed a second curse on the soil, worsening the first curse ^{Genesis 3:17-19}, so that the soil would produce nothing for Cain. As a result, Cain was required to give up his beloved vocation of farming and was forced into a life of "restless" wandering ^{Numbers 32:13}.
- Abel's blood cried out for accountability** ^{Revelation 6:9-10}; **later Jesus' blood cried out for grace** ^{1 John 1:7}.
- 13-14** Cain's response showed anguish over his punishments: no farming, isolated from the LORD's presence and becoming a "restless wanderer" who was a prime target for murder.
- Verse 14 is the first indication of the growing population of the earth. The other people had to be other sons and daughters of Adam & Eve, or sons and daughters of Abel and/or Cain, etc.**
- 15-16** The LORD gave Cain a mark of an unknown nature, as a sign of divine protection. God decreed "anyone [killing] Cain" would "suffer" a far greater (x7) "vengeance" ^{Leviticus 26:21}. Cain then went to live in the unknown land of Nod ('wander'), "east of Eden" ^{Genesis 3:24}.
- While God placed a mark on Cain to indicate His divine protection during Cain's life on earth, since that time, people have referred to "the mark of Cain" as a universal symbol of a curse.**
- Why didn't God take Cain's life?** ^{Acts 5:1-10} (*lex taliones*: law of retaliation ^{Leviticus 24:19-20}) **His mercy?**

The Genealogy of Cain

- 17-18** Cain and his (unnamed) wife (his sister? ^{Genesis 5:4}) gave birth to Enoch ('initiation'), also giving this name to the city he was building (possibly indicating a new start for Cain's family). Moses listed the descendants of Cain as: Enoch, Irad, Mehujael ('who proclaims God?'), Methushael ('man of God?') and Lamech.

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Cain's early history of sin prompts some scholars to wonder why his genealogy is even listed. However, there are indications in the information in verse 18 (see above) possibly revealing that Cain and/or his descendants may have turned their lives toward God.

God allowed inter-family marriage at this time, because it was necessary, but later, He outlawed these types of relationships ^{Leviticus 18:7-17}, because of the inevitable resulting genetic decay.

19 The story of Lamech and his family: Lamech was the first named example of a bigamist. Lamech rebelled against the LORD's definition of marriage: one man & one woman ^{Genesis 2:24}.

20-22 Lamech & Adah had 2 named sons (1) Jabal, an inventor of tents and originator of the nomadic herdsman lifestyle and (2) Jubal, inventor of both stringed and wind instruments. Lamech & Zillah had a named son and a named daughter: their son, Tubal-Cain, invented metal (bronze and iron) tools (and weapons?) and their daughter was Naamah ('pleasant').

23-24 Lamech admitted to both of his wives he had killed a man, apparently in self-defense. Because the killing was unintentional, Lamech believed (in his arrogance) that the LORD would (should) protect him eleven times more intensely than his ancestor Cain.

Adam & Eve ⇒ Seth

25-26 Adam & Eve gave birth to another son named Seth (šēt: restitution?). Eve stated that Seth was God's replacement for Abel, producing a rebirth of the Godly line ^{Genesis 3:15, Luke 3:38}. Most likely under Seth's influence, people recognized their inability to appease God's righteous indignation on their own, so many began to "call on the name of the LORD", which helped them obtain the mercy and grace of God in order to restore a personal relationship with Him.

Some scholars believe that the second half of verse 26 has been mistranslated, and should read: "Men began to profane the name of the LORD.", thus indicating the beginning of the sin that continued to grow into the great "wickedness" that resulted in God wiping out mankind ^{Genesis 6:5}.

There are very similar (but unexplained and curious) lines of descent from Cain and from Seth:

Cain → Enoch → Irad → Mehujael → Methushael → Lamech ^{v.17-18} and

Seth → Enosh → Kenan → Mahalalel → Jared → Enoch → Methuselah → Lamech ^{Genesis 5:6-25}.

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