

Genesis Chapter 4 – “The first Religion & the first Murder”

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the LORD.”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.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.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.”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?”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.¹⁶ Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.¹⁷ And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. And he built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son—Enoch.¹⁸ To Enoch was born Irad; and Irad begot Mehujael, and Mehujael begot Methushael, and Methushael begot Lamech.¹⁹ Then Lamech took for himself two wives: the name of one *was* Adah, and the name of the second *was* Zillah.²⁰ And Adah bore Jabal. He was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock.²¹ His brother’s name *was* Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the harp and flute.²² And as for Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron. And the sister of Tubal-Cain *was* Naamah.²³ Then Lamech said to his wives:

“Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
Wives of Lamech, listen to my speech!
For I have killed a man for wounding me,
Even a young man for hurting me.
²⁴ If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,
Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.”

²⁵ And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, “For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.”²⁶ And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then *men* began to call on the name of the LORD.

IntroductionRead Genesis 3: v. 7 & v. 21.

⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

²¹ Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

God rejected Adam and Eve’s attempts to cover their nakedness and shame. The fig leaves covered their nakedness but their hearts were full of sin. God wanted to teach Adam and Eve that they could not do anything outwardly or inwardly to remove the sin problem.

Only God could supply clothing that was acceptable to Him. Therefore God killed an animal and provided clothing for Adam and Eve.

This was a graphic illustration of the fact that sin brings death. Adam and Eve had never seen death before. It must have been an awful experience for Adam and Eve to see an animal killed. We are not told of the conversation that went on between God and Adam and Eve, but we do know that they would fully understand that an animal had to die in order that they might be clothed.

We now move from life in the Garden of Eden to life in a fallen world. No longer is everything beautiful and good, but everything is tainted with sin. Adam and Eve were sent out of the Garden of Eden because of their disobedience to God's word, influenced by the serpent.

Adam and Eve now had a sinful nature and this sinful nature would be passed down to any children that they would have in the future. (Romans 5: v. 12)

God placed a flaming sword at the entrance so that Adam and Eve could not return to the Garden of Eden.

There are two main things in chapter 4. The first is man's first attempt at "Religion" and the second is the "First murder."

1. Man's first attempt at Religion v. 3-7.

In v. 1-2 we are told that Adam and Eve had two children, their names were Cain and Abel. Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to God, but Abel brought the first born of his flock and of their fat to God.

Our text tells us that this incident happened in the process of time. The Hebrew meaning is "in the end of days".

One Jewish scholar, by the name of Fruchtenbaum says that the Hebrew word means at a specific appointed time.

He goes on to suggest that there was a fixed time in which the offerings were to be offered. In other words, God has arranged a prescribed time for offerings to be made.

If this were the case then it would not have been the first time that Cain and Abel had offered sacrifices to the Lord. Also God would have instructed "Blood sacrifices" as an atonement for man's sins.

The text tells us that God respected Abel's offering, but He did not respect Cain's offering.

The question we need to ask is why?

We need to fast forward to Hebrews Chapter 11 and verse 4. (N.L.T.)

⁴ It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel's offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith.

It is clear that Abel offered a sacrifice to God by faith, and Cain did not.

The question we need to ask here is "faith in what?"

The answer is simple, faith in what God had instructed them about animal sacrifices.

From what God taught in the Old Testament about animal sacrifices we can be clear that Abel had faith in God's prescribed method of forgiveness of sins.

Hebrews Chapter 9: v. 22 says "...Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness...."

In Lev. 17: v. 11 it says "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul."

The concept of a blood sacrifice has two aspects.

These are "Substitution" and "Atonement"

Normally a person would die for his own sin. But now, based on certain future events, God was saying that He would accept an innocent animals' death in man's place – as a substitute. It was a life for a life. The innocent dying in the place of the guilty.

The sacrifice pictured the law of sin and death being obeyed and justice being fulfilled.

The second aspect of the blood sacrifice was "atonement". God had said that the blood would make atonement for sin. The word atonement means covering.

The shed blood would cover man's sin, therefore when God looked at man, he would no longer see the sin.

Man would be viewed as righteous and therefore acceptable by God. The relationship would be restored. Man would still die physically, but the eternal consequences would no longer apply. (I.e. separation from God forever in the Lake of Fire.)

Through faith in God, as illustrated by the substitutionary death and the atoning blood on the altar, man would find forgiveness of sin and a new relationship with God.

So to answer the question, why did God reject Cain's sacrifice? We can say that Cain was wrong in two ways.

1. His actions revealed that he didn't really trust God.
2. Cain failed by doing things his own way.

God does not accept personal ideas on how to get right with Him.

Cain had the best intentions, but his sincerity was not enough. It did not bridge the gap between Man and God. Cain was doing his own thing. He felt that he knew better than God what was right.

On the other hand Abel offered the kind of sacrifice that God had commanded.

This was an innocent animal dying in his place and shedding its blood. Abel deserved to die for his sin, but God in his mercy allowed the animal to die in his place as a substitute.

As Abel placed his sacrifice before the Lord, he was trusting God to keep His word, that was to send a deliverer to save him from sin's awful penalty.

It is doubtful if Abel knew how the deliverer would accomplish his role, but it is clear from Hebrews 11: v. 4 that Abel was trusting God with the solution.

Cain was the first person to introduce religion. Religion is always man's attempt to get right with God.

However there is only one way to get right with God, and that is God's way.

This is why Cain is mentioned in the book of Jude as a negative example of someone who rebelled against God's ways.

Fast forward to the New Testament and we discover that God has done away with animal sacrifices and instead He has provided His Son as the once and for all sacrifice to provide forgiveness of sins.

Jesus Christ died in our place, that we might be set free from God's wrath upon our sin.

If you try to come to God in any other way, except through Jesus, God will not accept it. You will be rejected.

In John 14: v. 6 Jesus said "I am the way, the truth and the life, No one comes to the Father except through Me."

There is no other faith that will provide forgiveness for your sin.

If you try any other way, then you will be rejected just like Cain.

In v. 7, God gave Cain opportunity to repent, but it seems that he didn't like God's way of doing things.

So what happens when people start rebelling against God? They usually try and destroy God's people because their lives are too convicting.

So now we come to the second main theme in this chapter and that is the murder of Abel.

2. The first Murder – v. 8

We are told that as a result of being rejected by God, Cain decided to murder his brother Abel.

In v. 9 God spoke to Cain, He said "Where is Abel your brother?"

He replied "Am I my brother's keeper?" In other words he said, "Am I responsible for knowing where he is all of the time?"

By saying these words, Cain was not admitting his sin of murder and was challenging God.

If Cain had confessed his sin, there would have been an opportunity for forgiveness, but he didn't.

In v. 10 God reveals to Cain that he knows all about his murder of Abel.

In the same verse it says "the voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground."

For believers who have faith in God's method of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ, this is an encouraging verse.

It teaches us that for the believer in Jesus Christ, death is NOT the ultimate end.

In Psalm 116: v. 15 it says "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

Abel was precious to God and one day he would be raised from the dead.

In the meantime God proved that he was the God of Abel even after his death.

In v. 11-15 we have Cain's punishment described to us.

It is interesting that Cain recognizes the severity of his punishment in 4 ways.

1. Cain realizes that he has lost his livelihood in farming. (v. 14)
2. Cain realizes that he will lose his fellowship with God. (v. 14)
3. Cain would have no permanent home. (v. 14)

4. Cain will be in fear of his own life. (v. 14)

And yet God was still merciful to Cain, in v. 15 it tells us that He set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him.

God didn't introduce capital punishment for murder until Genesis Chapter 9: v. 6.

⁶“Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.

We must always remember that in God's eyes “MURDER” is always wrong.

The main reason is explained in the text. When a man or a woman is killed, something unique is destroyed. A life that will never be repeated is eliminated.

To destroy a person is to destroy something God made like himself. It is to mock the creator.

If you entered a private art gallery and smashed up every picture you saw then not only would it be mindless destruction, it would destroy something that the artist had created. It would be an insult to the artist himself. To destroy a human being is to smash the image of God.

In v. 16-24 we have some details about the family of Cain.

It appears that his descendants continued to rebel against God.

In v. 23-24 one of Cain's family actually boasted about killing a man for wounding him. We have our first example of Hebrew poetry.

We have 2 pieces of good news as the chapter finishes.

1. Adam and Eve had another son and named him Seth. We are told that Seth was another seed in order to replace Abel whom Cain killed. We are told in chapter 5: v. 3 that Adam was 130 years old when Seth was born. If we follow the genealogy in Luke chapter 3 we will discover that through the family line of Seth would come Jesus. Seth would be related to Joseph.
2. The second piece of good news is at the end of v. 26. We are told that “Men began to call on the name of the Lord”

Why is this good news? The original Hebrew translation makes it clear that the men were calling out and proclaiming the name of God.

The same Hebrew word is used in Genesis 12: v. 8 where Abraham built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord. It is also mentioned in Genesis 13: v. 4.

Here we have the beginnings of public worship. There would certainly have been Prayer, Praise and Thanksgiving.

Application

What application can we take home from this chapter and apply to our lives today?

Firstly “Religion” can never change the heart of men and women. Religion is a defiance on God's prescribed method of Salvation. You can worship at a Buddhist Temple or Shinto shrine, you can give money to those organizations. However, nothing will change your heart or your standing before the great creator God of

the Bible. Following any Religion whatever it might be is going man's way. It is man's way of rejecting God, and substituting with another way. God will always reject man's way of being acceptable to Him.

Man's way will always end in death, death to the body and death to the soul. However God's way will always end in life through the resurrected body and life in the soul now.

We can know peace in our hearts with God now. However we have to come to God through His method of dealing with our sin.

Jesus said in John 14: v. 6 "I am the WAY the TRUTH and the LIFE, no man comes to the Father except through Me."

So the only way to be forgiven for your sins is to put your faith and trust in JESUS. God at great cost send Jesus into this world to deal with sin. It was His sacrifice that provided for our FORGIVENESS, yes He died in our place. He was our substitute, He died instead of us.

It is only by the GRACE of God that we can become righteous in His sight.

We don't need to "DO" anything, but we do need to REALIZE, REPENT and RECEIVE His FORGIVENESS.

Q. Will you do this today?