

Cain & Abel

Genesis 4

Genesis Study Series

Gen 4:1 Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a manchild with *the help of the LORD.*" 2. Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

Was Eve thanking God for helping her bear a son (Cain), or was she boasting that she had created a man (Cain) as God had created a man (Adam, v. 1)?

The former alternative seems preferable (cf. v. 25). "Cain" means "acquisition" a portent of his own primary proclivity. Abel, from the Hebrew *hebel*, means "breath, vapor, exhalation, or what ascends." As things turned out, his life was short like a vapor.

“In Scripture it is usually the father who names the child, Eve did the naming in this case. Perhaps she did so because she believed this boy (Cain) was the seed or offspring that God had promised would crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15),” (Gangel & Bramer, 2002).

3. So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. 4. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; 5. But for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

WORSHIP INTRODUCED

- Someone must have taught them about the importance of offerings.
- There must have been a certain way to present the offerings before God.
- Why did God "have regard" for Abel's offering and not Cain's (v. 4)?
- Was it because Abel had faith (Heb. 11:4).
- What did Abel believe that Cain did not?

The Bible does not say specifically. The answer may lie in one or more of the following explanations.

Cain	Abel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Offering ▶ Fruit from the ground ▶ Provided what was required ▶ Actions were unrighteous <p>(1 John 3:12)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Offering ▶ Animal of the field <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Firstling ✓ Fat portions ▶ Went out of his way to please God ▶ Actions were righteous <p>(1 John 3:12)</p>

"He [the writer] characterizes Abel's offerings from the flocks as 'from the firstborn' and 'from their fat.' By offering the firstborn Abel signified that he recognized God as the Author and Owner of Life. In common with the rest of the ancient Near East, the Hebrews believed that the deity, or lord of the manor, was entitled to the *first share* of all produce. The *firstfruits* of plants and the *firstborn* of animals and man were his (Dr. Constable).

Many believe that Abel realized the need for the death of a living substitute to atone for his sins, but Cain did not. If he understood this, he must have learned it by divine revelation that Scripture did not record explicitly.

6. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7. "If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

At this point the LORD is giving Cain the opportunity to make the right decision. There are always two choices, God however, leaves it up to us to make the right one. Notice the LORD's questions to Cain, "if you do well." It is the same hypothetical question Jesus raises in John 14, "if you love me." The answer should be obvious, if you do well your countenance would have been lifted up. The alternative, "and if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door." This statement probably means that the power and tragic consequences of sin could master the person who opens the door to temptation (cf. 3:16).

Knowing Cain's heart God still provided for him a way out demonstrating that sin does not have to control you. Sin in this case is personified and viewed as one crouching at the door (literally like a lion scouting out a prey). Notice that sin's desire was for Cain but Cain had the ability to master it but he chose not to.

8. Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

When sin has been accomplished it brings forth death (James 1:15). The Apostle John

revealed the reason Cain killed Abel in 1 John 3:12: ". . . his own works were evil and his brother's righteous." Abel's attitude of faith in God resulted in righteous works that produced guilt in Cain. The seriousness of Cain's sin is clear from God's repeated references to Abel as Cain's "brother" (vv. 9, 10, 11).

9. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

God questioned Cain, as He had Adam and Eve (cf. 3:9, 11), to elicit Cain's admission of sin with a view to repentance, not simply to scold him. His father reluctantly admitted his guilt, but Cain tried to cover it up by lying. Cain was "much more hardened than the first human pair."

10. He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. 11. "Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12. "When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth."13. Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear! 14."Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."

Cain responded with self-pity. Note how God's grace was demonstrated with both Cain and his parents.

15. So the LORD said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him. 16. Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. 17. Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son.

Cain's wife (v. 17) was evidently one of his sisters or nieces (cf. 5:4). God did not prohibit marrying siblings and close relatives until the Mosaic Law.

Note that Cain was supposed to become a wanderer yet he began the development of a city upon leaving God's presence.

18. Now to Enoch was born Irad, and Irad became the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael became the father of Methushael, and Methushael became the father of Lamech. 19. Lamech took to himself two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah. 20. Adah gave birth to 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 lyre and pipe. 22. As for Zillah, she also gave birth to Tubal-cain, the forger of all implements of bronze and iron; and the sister of Tubal-cain was

Naamah. 23. Lamech said to his wives, "Adah and Zillah, Listen to my voice, You wives of Lamech, Give heed to my speech, For I have killed a man for wounding me; And a boy for striking me; 24. If Cain is avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

25. Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for, *she said*, "God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel, for Cain killed him." 26. To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then *men* began to call upon the name of the LORD.