

Text: Genesis 4.1-15

We now turn to the story of Cain and Abel. I guess this is a story most of us know quite well. Nevertheless, there is insight here that helps us understand what we as human beings are like.

We also find out what it means to be right with God. Abel was right with God, Cain was not.

Cain *could have been* right with God, but he *would not*. That is the important thing we need to know.

We are all born with a sin nature, but that doesn't mean we *must* sin. Or that we *must* be as bad as we could be. There is always a way for men to turn away from sin and turn to God, if the will to turn is there.

We aren't saved by our *willingness*, but we won't be saved if we *will not* be saved.

Read Gen 4.1-15

I. The home of Cain and Abel

A. The names

1. Cain: sounds like a word that means either "acquire" or "create"
2. Abel: means "breath" or "vapour"

Many want to make much of the meaning of these names, but the Bible does not.

B. The focus

1. Apparently, the parents, esp. Eve, are delighted with Cain
2. Cain is the central character of the chapter, Abel is passive throughout

Was Cain favoured over Abel? Again, Bible doesn't say, but certainly this could produce animosity between brothers.

II. The worship of Cain and Abel

A. The worship background

1. First mention of worship and of offerings, in the Bible

2. Must have been part of family life: they didn't just suddenly get the idea that this would be a good thing to do
3. Assumption: up till this point, one would assume that the offerings were always as God prescribed

On the outside, what would their worship look like up till this point? Exactly the same

B. The critical worship incident

1. Timing

- a. When did this occur?
- b. Seth was born when Adam was 130 yrs old (5.3)
- c. The offering could well have been "129 years in" from Creation
- d. However long it was, Cain is an adult:
 - 1) He must have learned how to offer from his parents
 - 2) He must have offered "properly" for a long time

2. The particulars of this incident

- a. Cain brought an offering "of the fruit of the ground" (3)
- b. Abel brought "of the firstlings of his flock and their fat portions" (4)
- c. The Lord accept Abel's offering, did not accept Cain's offering (4b-5a)

Notice the little chiasm here: Cain, Abel, Abel, Cain

3. Thinking about the offerings

- a. One can offer from the flock at any time: but of the harvest, only at harvest time [perhaps a significant difference]
- b. Cain could say, my offering cost as much as Abel's, that should be good enough (showing that approval doesn't depend on the value of the offering)
- c. Cain's offering deliberately broke what must have been an established pattern
- d. When Cain offered animals before, were those offerings accepted? (They were acceptable in form, but not in spirit – Cain's problem was a spiritual problem)

What this shows us is that someone can be raised in a God-fearing home but have no fear of God himself.

Our son Rory was telling us of a friend of his who went to the Bob Jones high school, went through all four years at Bob Jones University, but regularly posts on Facebook how you can't trust the Bible, giving many examples and mocking his upbringing. When he was at BJA/BJU he didn't *look* like this.

- e. Cain showed what he was like on this particular day ... he didn't have the faith of Abel

Heb 11.4 ¶ By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

III. The war of Cain and Abel

A. The problem in Cain's spirit continues (5b-8a)

1. Cain's disappointment shows in his faith
2. God offers a gracious warning (6-7)
3. Cain tells Abel about his conversation with God (8a)

B. The murder of Abel

"James 1:15 warns us that sin begins in a small way, but grows and leads to death."¹

1. They were away from home, in the field
2. Cain rose up and slew Abel (and then the text implies he hid the body)

The anger of Cain began with his resentment towards God. He stewed on it and stewed on it until it got so big in his heart it dominated his thinking and led to murder.

¹ Warren W Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), Gen 4.6-8.

IV. The wreck of Cain (the reward of Abel)

A. God called Cain to account: no sin remains hidden

The first two questions in the Bible

B. God expelled Cain “from the ground” – a possible view of this is that Cain, the tiller of the ground, was expelled from his way of life

NET Gen 4:11 So now, you are banished from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

C. Consequently, the curse Adam received was redoubled: it drove Cain out of the way of life he had lived all these years

D. Cain was sent out as a “vagrant and a wanderer”

1. Cain protests, he doesn't repent, he blames God “you have driven me out”
2. God graciously preserves Cain from anyone taking vengeance on him

So we see the wreck of Cain's life. There is no joy without repentance. There is only a wandering away from God.

Cain went on to prosper in a city he founded, but he lived apart from God, and his family grew further and further away from God.

E. Abel was rewarded: Heb 11.4

Heb 11.4 ¶ By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

Conclusion:

We are going to leave the story here. We see what a mess sin makes of life.

Only a few people go as far as Cain in acting out their sin.

But everyone has a sin problem they need to overcome.

You can't overcome it by making your own plans. You have to overcome sin by God's grace, and God's way.