

## Session 18 Summary & Review

### Cain and Abel: More Than a Simple Offering

We are in Genesis chapter 4. We've just begun the chapter, and this is the familiar account of Cain and Abel. But as we move through it carefully, we begin to see there is more here than simply one man bringing vegetables and the other bringing a lamb.

Let me read the opening verses:

“Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, ‘I have gotten a man with the help of Yahweh.’ And again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. Abel was a keeper of the flocks, but Cain was a cultivator of the ground. So it happened in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to Yahweh of the fruit of the ground. Abel on his part also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And Yahweh had regard for Abel and for his offering, but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.”

### Eve's Remark About Cain

There is something interesting in the way Eve speaks when Cain is born. In many of our English translations she says, “I have gotten a man with the help of Yahweh,” or something similar. But in the Hebrew text, the words “with the help of” are not actually there.

If you translated it very woodenly, it would read something like, “I have acquired a man—Yahweh.”

Now, that makes us stop and scratch our heads. That can't mean she thought she had given birth to Yahweh Himself. Or did she? We don't know. The text simply records what she said. Hebrew, in its earliest written form, had no vowels, no punctuation, no capital letters, and no spaces between words. Translators have to make decisions so that the sentence makes sense in the flow of Scripture.

So what exactly she meant, we can't say with certainty. Most likely she is acknowledging the Lord's involvement or blessing. But the exact nuance is not entirely clear, and the text leaves it that way.

### Two Occupations, Two Offerings

Cain was a cultivator of the ground. Abel was a keeper of flocks. Even in the language, there's a reminder of Adam—whose name is related to the ground. Cain works the soil. Abel tends sheep.

Both of them bring offerings. We are not told directly that God commanded them to do so, but the fact that both bring offerings suggests they understood something about approaching God.

Cain brings “of the fruit of the ground.” We are not told if it was the first fruits or the best. It simply says he brought an offering.

Abel, however, brings “the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions.” That detail is important. Later in the Law, the firstborn and the fat portions are repeatedly described as belonging to the Lord. Whether Abel had been instructed in that or not, we are not told. But he brings the firstborn, and he brings the best portions.

Yahweh has regard for Abel and his offering, but not for Cain and his offering.

On the surface, it might look like this is simply about professions—shepherd versus farmer. But Scripture itself tells us there is more to it.

### **What the New Testament Reveals**

When Scripture interprets Scripture, that is always our best guide.

In Hebrews 11:4, we read:

“By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he was approved as being righteous...”

The key word is faith. Abel’s offering was brought in faith. He trusted God. He believed God. He worshiped God in faith. That is why it was accepted. He was “approved as being righteous.”

We are not told that Cain had faith. And the New Testament goes even further.

In 1 John 3:11–12, we read:

“For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; not as Cain, who was of the wicked one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother’s were righteous.”

Cain is described as “of the wicked one.” That is strong language. His deeds were evil. His brother’s were righteous.

And in Jude 11, we are told of certain men:

“Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain...”

Cain becomes a category. He is grouped with Balaam and Korah—men associated with rebellion and corruption.

So whatever happened in Genesis 4, it was not simply that Cain brought the wrong agricultural product. There was something fundamentally wrong in his heart. Abel brought his offering in faith. Cain did not. Abel was righteous by faith. Cain is described as evil and aligned with the wicked one.

That changes how we read the story.

### **Anger and Warning**

After his offering is rejected, Cain becomes very angry, and his countenance falls. That is often the way with someone intent on sin. When confronted, they do not soften; they harden.

Yahweh speaks to him:

“Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is lying at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”

God questions him, just as He questioned Adam. “Where are you?” “Who told you?” Here again, God asks questions.

And then He warns him. Sin is lying at the door. Its desire is for you. You must rule over it.

Cain is being given an opportunity. He is being warned. He is being told to master what is rising up inside him. But he will not.

### **The First Murder**

Cain speaks to Abel, and they end up in the field. We are not told what was said. Perhaps it was an argument. Perhaps it was an invitation—“Let’s go out to the field.” The text does not say.

But there, in the field, Cain rises up and kills his brother.

When Yahweh comes to him again and asks, “Where is Abel your brother?” Cain answers, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”

It is a familiar kind of response. Evasion. Deflection. Refusal to take responsibility.

God replies:

“What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to Me from the ground.”

The ground—Cain’s own domain—has opened its mouth to receive Abel’s blood. The very soil he works has absorbed the evidence of his crime.

And now the ground will turn against him. It will no longer yield its strength to him. He will be a vagrant and a wanderer—aimless, unstable, without rootedness.

There is a parallel here with Adam. Adam’s work with the ground became difficult. For Cain, it becomes futile. The ground itself becomes part of the judgment.

### **Separation From the Presence of Yahweh**

Cain’s response is striking. He says his punishment is too great to bear. He recognizes that he is being driven from the face of the ground—and from the face of Yahweh.

He understands what that means. The conversations are over. The relationship, such as it was, is broken. He will be hidden from God’s face.

And he fears that whoever finds him will kill him. It’s ironic that the one who has just taken a life is suddenly concerned about his own.

Yahweh places a sign on Cain—whatever that sign was—so that no one would strike him. The text does not tell us what it looked like. It simply tells us that God marked him for protection, even in judgment.

Then Cain goes out from the presence of Yahweh and settles in the land of Nod, east of Eden. Further east. Moving away.

### **A Growing Line**

Cain builds a city and names it after his son Enoch. That alone tells us something significant. There were more people than just Adam, Eve, and their immediate sons. A city implies a growing population.

The genealogy that follows traces Cain’s line down to Lamech. Lamech takes two wives—the first instance of polygamy in Scripture—and boasts of killing a man and a boy, claiming even greater vengeance than Cain.

The line of Cain develops culture—tent dwelling, livestock management, musical instruments, metalworking in bronze and iron. These are not primitive, simplistic people. There is organization, technology, and industry.

And yet the moral trajectory is downward. Violence escalates. Boasting replaces remorse.

### **How Many People?**

When we later consider the lifespans recorded in Genesis and think about population growth, it becomes clear there could have been far more people alive at this time than we might casually assume. Even before the flood, there may have been thousands, even millions, depending on lifespans and family size.

They would not all have lived in one small encampment. They would have spread out. Still speaking the same language, but spreading geographically.

By the time of the flood, the population may have been vast. And yet, in that vast population, the moral condition was such that God determined to judge the world.

We are only at the beginning of that story here in Genesis 4. But already we see the division between faith and unbelief, righteousness and evil, submission and rebellion. Cain is not simply a man who brought the wrong offering. He is a man whose heart was not right with God.

And Scripture does not let us miss that.