



Lesson 4

Cain and Abel

Introduction

We read in chapter 4 of the birth of two sons to Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel. Cain was born first, he was a gardener and Abel was a shepherd.

The time came when Adam's family went to worship God. This is the very first recorded act of worship of God outside the garden and from it we learn some important principles.

Coming to worship before God (4:3-5)

Each brother brought something he had produced. Cain brought fruit or vegetables that he had grown. Abel brought an animal from his flock and it was the first born of its mother.

God refused to accept Cain's offering but accepted that of Abel. Why? After all, later in the Old Testament, when God gave the law to Moses He made it clear that things that had been grown were acceptable to Him (for example see Leviticus 2). However these were always offered to God after the sacrifice of an animal and this was essential for forgiveness:

“Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” Hebrews 9:22

The New Testament tells more about what happened, look at the following verse:

“By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts.” Hebrews 11:4

This is one of the great principles of the Bible and we shall see it many times in the book of Genesis.

Hebrews goes on to tell us:

“And without faith it is impossible to please him (God), for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” Hebrews 11:6

From this we can see what Abel believed in:

- He had faith that a sacrifice which involved the shedding of blood would be accepted by God for the forgiveness of his sins.
- God accepted his faith and said it was a righteous act, He was pleased with him.
- He wanted to find a way back to God (he was seeking Him); he believed that God would provide the way for this to happen and he hoped that his sacrifice would make it possible.

This is important for us in our worship of God today. God does not ask us to bring animals to Him in our worship and kill them as a sacrifice. However, He does demand that we believe in the sacrifice He has provided for us, that of the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot come to God in any way that we choose and expect Him to accept us. We have to come to Him through the Lord Jesus Christ, the way He tells us is right. This means that there are right doctrines and beliefs we must accept before God will accept us into His family just as He accepted Abel but not Cain.

Cain's Pride and Stubbornness (4:6-9)

Cain refused to accept the principle of sacrifice and he became angry when God refused his offering. Yet God still gave him an opportunity to put things right. But there was also a warning!

“The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.” Genesis 4:6-7





Notice that God did not say that the devil or Satan was waiting to get Cain; it was sin that wanted him. God is telling us that Cain's anger and refusal to do what God wanted was so strong it threatened to become a power that would destroy him. Sin was waiting to take over his life but he must not give in to the temptation inside him, he was to master it.

These are verses we can clearly understand; sometimes we too get so angry and obsessed by something that it threatens to take over our life. But we know that it is the feelings inside us that do this, not some supernatural being that urges us on.

Cain would not listen to God, nor to his brother. We read that he talked with Abel, but would not listen to him. Yet the Bible tells us that *'faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God'*. Cain is a great example of a man who was stubborn, eaten up by anger and preferring his own ways. He would not listen at all to his brother or to God.

Sin took him over and he murdered his brother Abel.

God punishes Cain (4:10-15)

God then spoke to Cain and told him his punishment.

He had insisted on bringing garden produce to God as an offering, this was not what God wanted from him – so God said, from now on you will fail as a farmer; the ground will not freely produce food for you (4:12).

He wanted to be accepted by God in a way that he chose and would not listen to God – so God sent him away from the family, he would be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth (4:12).

This banishment from family and from God was almost too much for Cain, he said:

"My punishment is greater than I can bear."

Genesis 4:13

God did not tell him that, because of his wickedness, he would die and then have a greater punishment in hell. Cain knew that the grave would be the end of his existence and that he would then return to the dust because God had told Adam that the punishment for sin was death. Cain's sorrow was for the extra punishment he would now suffer whilst still alive.

So Cain went further away from the Garden of Eden and the influence of God in his life (4:16).

Cain's Family (4:16-23)

We read of his family, they were talented people; musicians and metal workers but also aggressive like their father Cain. We know this because we read that Lamech said *'I have killed a man for wounding me'*. Like Cain, his descendants went far away from God and were people who were only interested in themselves, what they could gain from the work of their hands and what they could do for their own pleasures.

Finally, at the end of chapter 4 we read of another son born to Adam and Eve. He was called Seth and we shall now look at him and his family in more detail.

SUMMARY

In this lesson we have learned:

- We must have faith in God before we come to worship Him.
- We also must worship in the way He has shown us – we cannot choose for ourselves what to do.
- Cain would not listen to God or to Abel, his brother. His stubbornness led him deeper into trouble. We need to learn the lesson of humility from Cain's behaviour.

