

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT

Learning from Those Who Walked Before Us

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM CAIN AND ABEL?

Genesis 4

INTRODUCTION: The last two weeks we have looked at God's perspective on the lives of Adam and Eve, gleaned the Lord's admonitions to us about the living of our own lives.

Today we look at the lives of their first two sons, Cain and Abel, whose names are almost as famous as their parents, Adam and Eve.

Let me begin with a bit of chronology to set the table, so to speak, about the lives of these two men, which I did not have time to do with Adam and Eve.

What I believe are the very best chronologies of the Scripture place creation just after 4,000 B.C.

If that date for creation, a little more than 6,000 years ago, causes you to suppress a smirk or a chuckle, listen to me for a moment.

- The Bible is the only physical record we have of an eye witness to the date of the beginning of the earth. It is the account of the Holy Spirit given to men to record in their writings which collectively make up the Scriptures.
- The very oldest writing ever found is on a limestone tablet dated around 3200 B.C.
- While common dating of the earth is around 4.5 billion years ago, this guesstimate is rejected by many scientists, not because of their belief in the Bible, but because of scientific evidence.
- For instance, sediments are accumulating at the rate of 20 billion tons per year off the coast of the continents. Only one billion a year is being removed by the tectonic movement of continental plates. If the earth is more than 4 billion years old, these layers of sediment should be more than 4 million feet deep. Instead they average 1300 feet deep, and the evidence is that most of that was deposited in a very brief time period, such as during the worldwide flood!
- Folks, I could spend lots of time on this because there is a lot of evidence for a young earth. But my purpose today is for us to look at God's perspective on the lives of Cain and Abel. I just thought it would be helpful to get some chronological perspective.

So, let us read the first passage of Scripture telling about these two very different brothers.

Genesis 4:1–15 NKJV 1 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.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNIFICANT THINGS GOD TELLS US ABOUT CAIN AND ABEL?

Examining these two brothers is a story in contrasts. Let’s walk back through the text.

1 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.

CAIN	ABEL
farmer	shepherd

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.

...in the process of time it came to pass – A colloquial phrase that means things continued as they were (for over 100 years), but suddenly something was different.

CAIN	ABEL
Knew how to make a proper offering to the Lord.	Knew how to make a proper offering to the Lord.
In previous times, Cain probably traded some of his crops for sheep from Abel since the first sacrifice in the Garden of Eden was the blood of an animal.	Obviously, Abel knew what constituted an acceptable sacrifice. Abel is labeled a prophet in the N.T. so if Cain did not know, Abel would have told him.
What changed? What came to pass? This time – Cain brought some crops from his farm as an offering. Why aren't these nice ears of corn as good as a lamb from the flock?	Abel continued to offer to God the firstborn of his flock. Although the sacrifice of a lamb would have been of greater value than many bushels of produce, Abel was committed to obeying God.

4 And the Lord respected (looked long and with approval) Abel and his offering, 5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

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."

- God's asking Cain, "If you do well, will you not be accepted?" confirms Cain knew that God required an animal sacrifice.
- Cain's anger also testifies that this was not an innocent, first time mistake. If it had been, there would have been quick repentance and correction.
- When the Lord says, "And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door," the Lord is telling Cain he has a clear choice. The word for sin here means "missing the mark."

- God saying to Cain, “you should rule over it,” also shows us that although Cain knowingly erred in his sacrifice, it was not too late. He could yield to God and be accepted.

CAIN	ABEL
YHWH did <u>not</u> respect Cain’s offering.	YHWH <u>did</u> respect the offering of Abel.
YHWH did not respect Cain’s offering because it was not given in obedience.	Abel obeyed God. He simply did what God had said and shown.
Cain grew angry and his countenance fell.	

CAIN	ABEL
<p>Angry and contemplating his sinful choice.</p> <p>In the next verse this changes to</p>	<p>Obedient and content. Heb. 11 speaks of Abel’s faith, believing and obeying God.</p>
<p>Jealous and conniving against his brother.</p>	<p>The N.T. refers to Abel as righteous and a prophet, which means he received and proclaimed the Word of the Lord.</p>

8 Now Cain talked with (discussed this and prophet Abel explained the problem. But proud, self-centered Cain just seethed in anger.) **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.**

CAIN	ABEL
<p>Anger leads to murder.</p>	<p>Becomes the first man to die physically.</p>
<p>Sin progresses to lying to God.</p>	

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.

CAIN	ABEL
Lying leads to excuse making.	
Unrepentance leads to chastisement.	

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."

CAIN	ABEL
The ground would yield even less to Cain. He would become a fugitive and a vagabond.	

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."

CAIN	ABEL
Continued unrepentance led to self-condemnation and blaming God.	

God did not drive Cain from the face of the ground. God did not hide His face from Cain. In fact after Cain's complaint, God still answered him.

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.

CAIN	ABEL
God still showed Cain mercy, giving him a long life in which to turn back to the Lord.	

In the account of Cain and Abel, we see the clear contrast of sin and obedience.

This has nothing to do with farmer verses shepherd.

This has everything to do with choosing my way over choosing God's way.

Here we also see the progression of sin.

- **Sin begins with a choice to do it "my" way instead of God's way.**
- **Sin leads to**
 - **Anger**
 - **Jealousy**
 - **Lying**
 - **Making excuses**
 - **Blaming God for lack of relationship/fellowship**

WHAT IS THE INSIGHT AS TO GOD'S PERSPECTIVE ON CAIN AND ABEL AND HIS INSTRUCTION TO US?

- **Choosing our way over God's way is the hallmark of sin.**
 - **When we choose to do something because we want to, knowing that God says to do it differently, we are walking in the way of Cain. "God does not care." Be sure of that before you say it.**
- **When we choose our way over God's way, we have missed the mark. We have sinned.**
- **When we surrender to sin,**
 - **Anger**
 - **Jealousy**
 - **Lying**
 - **Excuse making**
 - **Blaming God**

Often follow.

- **If we notice frequent or persistent**
 - **Anger**
 - **Jealousy**
 - **Lying**
 - **Excuse making**
 - **Blaming God**

We should look for the sin into which we have fallen so as to repent. Well, I know of this sin in my life, but my anger or lying is not related. Still a consequence of a heart straying from God.