

The Book of Genesis

Lesson 7

Chapter 4:1-17

Adam and Eve had been deported from the garden because they had broken the law. Their children never knew the innocence and wonder of the sinless place planted by the LORD for them. Were the children of Adam and Eve affected by the actions of their parents? Absolutely! Forever they would bear the stigma and the penalty of their parents' sin of breaking the law of the LORD. What was that penalty? Adam and Eve and all their heirs can never know the way to the tree of life on this earth. The tree is guarded by the cherubim and the flaming sword.

How long did Adam and Eve live in the garden? We do not know. How old were they when they were deported from the garden? We do not know. How old were they when their first child was born? We do not know. Were any children born in the garden? We do not know. The Scripture indicates that the first child was a son named Cain and he was born after the deportation.

First Son Cain

Genesis 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."

Finally, after they headed out to the east from the tree of life, we have the first recorded proof of the sexual marital relationship of Adam and Eve which resulted in the birth a son. His name was Cain which means possession or acquisition. His name is the reason Eve said, "I have gotten." The son was her possession or her acquisition that came from her body. She called her son "a manchild with *the help of the LORD*." Actually, the Hebrew says *eth Yehovah* which should be rendered, "a man the LORD." Therefore, it is more proper to translate her words as, "I have gotten a man the LORD." Until the last decade, the commentators have agreed with this translation. Notice in verse 1 that "*the help of*" is in italics because it was added to the English text to help explain what was meant in the original Hebrew. Older commentators agree with the literal translation of "I had gotten a man the LORD." Their opinions and mine hold to the idea that Eve thought she had given birth to the LORD. He was the promised seed that would "bruise the head of the serpent" as promised when the LORD placed enmity between Eve and the serpent in Genesis 3:15.

There is another interpretation for "I have gotten a man the LORD." It is absolutely possible that Eve realized she had acquired her son by the divine gift of the LORD. Both interpretations are fully acceptable.

Second Son Abel

Genesis 4:2a **And again, she gave birth to his brother Abel.**

Eve then gave birth to another son whom she named Abel. Eve actually used the words *vattoseph laledeth* which means “to bear his brother.” Notice that the Scripture does not say that she conceived again and gave birth to a son; here she conceived and gave birth to Cain and then his brother Abel. We cannot be positive, but most likely, Cain and Abel were twins.

Occupations of Cain and Abel

Genesis 4:2b **And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.**

With the passing of the years, Abel became a shepherd and Cain became a farmer. These are the two occupations that will dominate the work of most men for thousands of years.

Offerings of Cain and Abel

Genesis 4:3 **So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. 4a And Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions.**

“In the course of time,” is not an accurate translation of the phrase. It is *mikkets yamim* and means “at the end of days.” It is the Hebrew way of saying “at the end of the week.” It is a reference to the day that ends the week, the Sabbath. Both Cain and Abel brought offerings on the Sabbath to worship the LORD. The passage says that Abel brought his offering from the “firstlings of his flock,” meaning a tithe from the increase of his flock during that season. It does not indicate that Cain’s offering was of the increase of his fields for the season, but it was the case; Cain’s was from the produce of his new crop and Abel’s was from the increase of the new cattle that were born that year.

Response of the LORD to the Offerings

Genesis 4:4b **And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; 5a but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard.**

The LORD enters the story at this point. What does He do? He “had regard for Abel and his offering,” but not Cain and his offering. The word “regard” is the Hebrew *shah* and it means *to gaze*. The LORD gazed upon the offering of Abel but not the offering of Cain. Why? Did the LORD like the fruits, vegetables and grains that Cain offered in worship that day? Yes! Did the LORD like the cattle that Abel offered in worship that day? Yes! If the LORD liked both of the offerings, why did He gaze only at the offering of Abel? It had nothing to do with the offering. Here is a principle that will be repeated throughout the rest of Bible; the LORD accepts our

offering with favor after He has examined our hearts. Just two chapters later in the book of Genesis the LORD addresses this point again the same way.

Genesis 6:5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

What was the problem with Cain's offering? Cain! The LORD looked at the intent of his heart. As the all-knowing God, He did not gaze at Cain's offering because He already knew the intent of Cain's heart.

How did Cain know that the LORD did not gaze upon his offering? Verse 3 of this chapter says, "**Cain brought an offering to the LORD.**" We must not impose the way we bring our offering to the LORD upon Cain. He did not offer it to a Synagogue or Church; neither had been organized at that time. The only humans on the earth were Adam and Eve, Cain, Abel and at least one daughter. When the Scripture says "**Cain brought an offering to the LORD,**" he actually brought his offering into the physical presence of the LORD Who had appeared to them on earth. How do we know this? Because in response to Cain's attitude of the heart, the LORD spoke directly to Cain in Genesis 4:6. Just as the LORD appeared to and spoke directly to Adam and Eve, He continued to speak with them and their children outside the garden in the following years. Cain knew that the LORD did not gaze upon his offering because he saw the LORD's action that day; he saw the LORD look at Abel's offering but not his!

Anger of Cain

Genesis 4:5b So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

The Hebrew meaning of the word translated "angry" actually means to burn or rage. The word "countenance" means face. Because the LORD did not gaze upon Cain's offering, his heart burned with rage and his face fell. His face did not fall because he was sad and distraught; His face showed his anger radiating from within.

LORD's Warning to Cain

Genesis 4:6 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."

Before the LORD intervened to direct and warn him of his choices before Cain had the chance to act on his anger and commit a sin. His choices were to do what was pleasing in God's eyes or what was evil. Cain's anger was misplaced, directed it upon Abel instead of the LORD. Abel

was innocent; he had not sinned. Had Cain directed his anger toward God, he might not have killed Abel and no punishment would have been placed on him.

We can gain great insight into life with this simple instruction from the LORD on anger. Anger is an emotion often provoked by instant displeasure about something seen, heard or felt. Anger by itself is not sinful as proven through the Old and New Testaments. Paul succinctly says in Ephesians 4:26, “**BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN**; do not let the sun go down on your anger.” The issue with anger is what you will do with that emotion.

What is sin? We are fortunate to have the Bible that clearly presents all the possible sins according to the LORD’s Divine will. But at the time of this event in the life of Cain, what did he know about sin? For his parents, eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a sin, but did they know that hiding from the LORD, passing the blame to others for their evil actions and not accepting personal responsibility were all sins too? We do not know what they knew about sin save for the instruction concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. However, we do know that immediately upon eating from the tree, they knew evil which was passed on to their children. We must also understand that the instinct to commit sin was also passed along at the same time.

In this passage, the all-knowing Creator and LORD interacted with Cain to warn him that “**sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you... .**” The LORD had arrived, willing and able to save Cain from the intent of his heart to lash out at Abel because the LORD had not gazed upon his bountiful vegetable offering. The LORD knew Cain’s heart; He knew that Cain was in the midst of the struggle between good and evil. Cain could have chosen to do nothing because of his anger and proven himself good and faithful in the eyes of the LORD or he could have chosen to lash out against his brother and his LORD. Cain must have known that he could do nothing to hurt the LORD; therefore, his sinful jealous intent would be directed toward the one who received the acknowledgement of the LORD.

The LORD warned Cain when He said, “**but you must master it.**” The LORD instructed Cain to master his evil desire to act on his anger and sin against the LORD by sinning against his brother. The LORD did not leave Cain without instruction; Cain would not find out after his action that his intent was a sin. The rest of the Old Testament reveals many stories in which people do things that are clearly labeled as sins later in the Scripture. For example, taking a sister as a wife was not a sin for the first 2,600 years of Bible history. Then, in 1475 BC, at the beginning of the Exodus from Egypt, the LORD declared that marital relationships between a brother and sister would from then on be considered a sin. The LORD had spoken directly with Cain to make sure he knew that his intended action would be a sin unless he mastered the desire and let it go. We all have potentially sinful desires and thoughts; we all must make a decision at

that moment; we all should decide to take the godly action; we all must accept the consequences when we choose to take the evil action.

Cain Speaks to Abel

Genesis 4:8a And Cain told Abel his brother.

What did Cain say to his brother Abel? In the majority of the handwritten Hebrew copies, a small space exists to the left of this text indicating that the Jewish leadership had determined that something was deficient in the verse. The fact that they are copies of the original Hebrew leaves much to speculation. The Samaritan, Syriac, Vulgate and Septuagint include something at this point similar to "Let us go out into the field." Evidently, the conversation with the LORD did not change Cain's mind. When the LORD left Cain alone, Cain invited his brother to go out into the field with him. Cain had to know his intent was a sin; therefore, his intent was to rebel against the LORD outright! It was Cain's sin. Notice that it came from within him without the intervention of the serpent; Satan had nothing to do with this evil action.

Cain Kills Abel

Genesis 4:8b And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

As far as the Bible reveals, this passage proved to be the first death of a human. It was not the first death of an animal; that had occurred many years before.

LORD Questions Cain

Genesis 4:9a Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?"

The LORD watched as Cain killed his brother; nothing escapes the all-seeing eye of the LORD. Why, then, does the LORD ask of Cain, "**Where is Abel your brother?**" We have seen these types of questions before with Adam and Eve after they had eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The intent of these questions was to give the sinner the opportunity to confess his wrongdoing. The LORD has always been a forgiving God to those who humbly repent from deep within their hearts. Here the LORD gave Cain the opportunity to be forgiven for his sin against Abel.

Cain Answers the LORD

Genesis 4:9b And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

Cain's response to the LORD added two sins to his account. First, he lied about the whereabouts of Abel. Second, he deflected all responsibility for the welfare of his kin.

LORD's Punishment

Genesis 4:10 **And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. 11 "And 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 shall no longer yield its strength to you; you shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth."**

"What have you done?" Do not be misled by this question from the LORD; He is not asking Cain to speak again; He is not trying to draw out a confession of sin; He is placing the blame of Abel's death squarely on Cain who spilt the blood of his brother on the ground. Notice here that the LORD is closely in touch with all of His creation, even the dirt of the ground. We only know about the blood which soaked into the ground; we do not know if Cain actually dug a hole to bury his brother. Regardless of those facts, the dirt of the ground will fail to produce adequate crops for Cain for the rest of his life; he will struggle to provide for his family as a farmer.

"... you shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth." The original is harsher than this version; it says, "a fugitive and a vagabond you shall be." Like a fugitive and a vagabond, he will be ejected from his family and association with Adam and Eve to constantly wander for a place of safety but without the hope of finding one.

Cain's Plea

Genesis 4:13 **And Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear!"**

14 "Behold, Thou hast driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Thy face I shall be hidden, and I shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and it will come about that whoever finds me will kill me."

Was Cain's punishment too harsh? This passage indicates that Cain thought it was; he had only killed his brother and then lied about it. A careful look at the original sheds light on the true statement of Cain. The Hebrew *gadol avoni minneso* is better translated into English as a question saying, "Is my crime too great to be forgiven?" Cain did not focus on the punishment in his statement but rather his crime of murder. He then repeated the LORD's instruction incorrectly and concluded that he, too, would be killed by someone! Cain was not driven from the face of the ground; he would still make his living from its produce but not to the extent that he once did. The LORD did not remove Cain from His presence, He never said that Cain could not speak with Him. Cain would "be a vagrant and a wanderer" of sorts; that is true.

The LORD heard Cain's concern that someone would kill him and intervened.

LORD's Protection of Cain

Genesis 4:15^a So the LORD said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold."

Cain thought his punishment for murder was unforgivable, but it was not. Cain could have been forgiven had he sought that forgiveness, yet he did not; nevertheless, all sin is met with a penalty regardless of being forgiven and Cain's sin was no different. But the LORD assured Cain that a greater penalty, sevenfold or seven times, will be borne by anyone who kills Cain. The LORD knew this promise would not comfort Cain or remove his fear for his own life.

Cain's Sign

Genesis 4:15^b And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain, lest anyone finding him should slay him.

To assure Cain that he would not be slain by anyone, the LORD appointed a sign that would protect him from being killed. What was this sign? Many have explained it but no one really knows. In trusting the Scripture, we must simply accept that a sign was placed on him that protected him from death by murder.

Land of Nod, East in Eden

Genesis 4:16 Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Cain was never out of the sight of the all-seeing, all-knowing and all-powerful LORD. This verse simply states that Cain left where he was speaking with the LORD and settled in the land of Nod. Where is Nod? The name means "wandering." Cain left his home with Adam and Eve and settled in the land of wandering east of Eden. We must remember, the English translation, "east of Eden" might better be translated "east in Eden." Genesis 2:8 said, "**And the LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden.**" The garden was in Eden; therefore, the whole land before the flood could have been called Eden by the LORD. The same structure exists each time it is mentioned, making the "garden of Eden" more correctly translated "garden in Eden." It is the same and rendered "east in Eden." Therefore, Cain began to wander in Eden east of where Adam and Eve were living.

Cain's Wife and Son

Genesis 4:17 And 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.

This verse has been responsible for generating one of the world's most asked religious question. Where did Cain get his wife? As mentioned in the commentary above for Genesis 4:7, the prohibition for marrying a sister or brother did not exist in man's knowledge until the LORD gave that instruction to the twelve tribes after they departed from the slavery in Egypt in 1475 BC and recorded in Leviticus 21. Hence, because there were no other women on earth at the time, Cain took one of his sisters to be his wife. How do we know that Cain had a sister? In Genesis 5: 4 Moses says, "**Then the days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years, and he had *other* sons and daughters.**"

Cain

Enoch (Cain's city was named after this child)

Wife/ sister of Cain

A more interesting question generated from this verse is "When did Cain take a sister as his wife?" Did he take her as his wife before he killed Abel or after as he was leaving the family? It is a question that we will have to wait until we reach heaven to know the answer.

Cain and his wife had a son first and they named him Enoch. The name means "dedicated." It means that this child was special to Cain and his wife; he was so special that they named the area they were living in after him. It was hardly a city by our standards today. It probably consisted of a cave for shelter, a river for water, land for crops and wild life for meat. Where was the city of Enoch? No one knows.