

### Cain and Abel

#### Genesis 4:1-12

Genesis 4:1-12 - *“Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, ‘I have acquired a man from the LORD.’”<sup>2</sup> Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.<sup>3</sup> And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.<sup>4</sup> Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering,<sup>5</sup> but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.<sup>6</sup> So the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?’<sup>7</sup> 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.’<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Where is Abel your brother?’ He said, ‘I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?’<sup>10</sup> And He said, ‘What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground.’<sup>11</sup> So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.<sup>12</sup> 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.”*

#### Background Notes

Who was the first person ever born? If you quickly said “Adam!” you were wrong, of course, because Adam was not born. Adam was created - created by God. Now whether Adam had a navel or not, I’ll let you decide the answer to that! But the first person ever born was Cain.

Can you imagine that event? Probably Adam helped deliver the child. And Eve said, *“I have acquired a man from the LORD”* (v1). She may have thought that Cain was the promised redeemer. How disappointed and heartbroken Adam and Eve must have been when they saw their first-born turn away from the Lord and murder his brother!

Many Christian parents have been disappointed, as were Adam and Eve, to see one or more of their children turn away from the Lord. If you are one of those disappointed parents, let me assure you that you are not the first parents to suffer great disappointment and heartache because of their children. Realizing this from our study of Genesis 4 may comfort you – and encourage you as well.

Cain was angry. He was miffed that God had not accepted his sacrifice. God said to Cain: *“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”* (v7). God gave Cain a second chance, but warned Cain that if he did not take it, then *“sin lies at the door.”*

What does that mean? It has been suggested that God was telling Cain there was a sin offering available at the door. But in view of the context, it seems God was telling Cain that if he didn't accept **God's** means of grace, then sin and its effects would overcome him. In his angry state, Cain didn't listen – in fact, he may have already been plotting Abel's murder.

The only way to keep sin in check is to accept God's means of grace. That was true then, and that is true today. The only way to have victory over sin in our lives is to accept God's means of grace that is found in Christ alone.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. God does not accept “Cain-type” offerings.

Cain was a farmer – a “tiller of the ground.” There's nothing wrong with being farmer, right? Cain appears to have done the most natural thing -- he brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord (v3). He brought of the fruit of his labor and gave it to the Lord. What's wrong with that? Cain seemed to be trying to be a godly person. He gave to the Lord something he had worked hard for! But verse 5 says that, “*but He [God] did not respect Cain and his offering.*” Why didn't God accept Cain's offering? After all, Abel was a shepherd and God accepted his offering of a sheep. Why would God reject an offering from Cain's area of labor? Have you ever felt sorry for Cain?

Well, I believe we must conclude that God had already revealed what an acceptable offering was, and He had revealed the acceptable way of sacrifice. How can I say that with any degree of authority? Turn to Hebrews 11, the great “Faith” chapter in the Bible: “*By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain*” (v4).

Abel's sacrifice was offered by **faith**. What does that mean? Throughout the Bible, **faith** is defined as **believing God and acting on what God has said or revealed**. Faith, as defined in the Bible, is never a blind leap! It is always a **reasonable** step, based on what God has spoken or revealed.

So it's clear that God had revealed the way of sacrifice, and both Cain and Abel knew what God had said. They both knew the right way to approach God. Abel believed, and by faith he brought an animal sacrifice. Cain didn't believe, and decided to come **his own way** – to bring a sacrifice of **his** choosing. Thus Cain and his offering were not accepted - but not because he was a farmer and Abel was a shepherd. No - God wasn't playing favorites with what they did in life. Cain was rejected because he chose to come his **own** way - not **God's** way – with his own works.

This is still true today. God doesn't accept Cain's type of offerings. Jude 1:11 says, “*Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain.*” The “they” in this verse are the false teachers that Jude was denouncing. And what's “the way of Cain”? Cain tried to come to God in his own way.

Don't try to come to God your own way, on your own terms, because God does not accept "Cain-type" offerings. We must come to God in God's way. Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"* (John 14:6). The Bible couldn't say it any more clearly. ***The only acceptable approach to God is through the Lord Jesus Christ.*** That's God's way! Sadly, however, people continue to try to bring offerings to God of their own making.

Recently I talked with a man who thought he was going to Heaven because of three things: he had never cheated on his wife, he loved his family, and he practiced good business ethics. This was his offering to the Lord – the good works he had done and he thought this was going to get him into Heaven. Well, these things are good, but they are not acceptable as an approach to God for salvation. These are Cain-type offerings. If you want your sins to be forgiven, remember: we must come to God in the way **God** has provided. God doesn't accept "Cain-type" offerings.

## **2. God does accept "Abel-type" offerings.**

Abel came God's way. God's way was the way of animal sacrifice. Why did God choose the way of animal sacrifice? God chose this because Abel's sacrifice looked forward to the one Great Sacrifice that was to come in the future. Jesus Christ, the **Lamb of God**, would go to the cross and die for the sins of the world. That one Great Sacrifice is pictured in God's "way of sacrifice" throughout the Old Testament.

Hebrews 11:4 again: *"By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks."* Abel believed God, and acted on the basis of what God had said. That's what faith is all about. Abel came to God and offered to God by faith - believing what God had revealed. Abel, though dead, still speaks. He speaks to us as through Scripture, as a model for everyone who wants to please God.

Abel came to God in God's way, not in his own way. God's way today is to approach God on the basis of the one Great Offering - the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ himself - that was pictured in Abel's sacrifice. God does accept "Abel-type" offerings.

## **Practical Application**

### **We are our brother's keeper!**

After Cain murdered Abel, God confronted him, saying: *"Where is Abel your brother?"* And Cain replied, *"I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"* (v9). And what was God's answer to Cain's callous question? *"What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground"* (v10). Notice - even though Abel's voice was silent, his blood cried out for justice - and God heard that cry. Cain was totally responsible, and he would be judged.

Written between the lines of God's answer to Cain was "**Yes**, you **are** your brother's keeper!" And so are we. We are our brother's keeper. 1 John 3:11-12 says: "*For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.*"

1 John was written to believers. In this letter we are warned not to be like Cain in our attitude towards one another! Oh, we may not murder one another - but we may be jealous of others, or angry with others. We may even hate others because their lives are more righteous than ours.

Are you in that category? Do you refuse to love your brother or sister in Christ? Do you have a jealous, angry, "Cain-like" spirit? We all are warned about this in 1 John 3:11-12.

Remember, 1 John 3:11-12 is written to believers. God expects us to be our brother's keeper. We are responsible to love our brothers and sisters, to watch out for them, to care for them - and **not** exhibit a Cain-like spirit. Remember, we **are** our brother's keeper!