

Text: Genesis 4

Title: Homicide and Religion Begin

Truth: The answer to sin is to call on the name of the Lord for help.

Date/Location: September 18, 2022 at FBC

Introduction

Once sin entered the world, death indeed come through sin—spiritual death, eventual physical death for Adam and Eve and their progeny, *and* murder. The first person to physically die was a God-fearing man named Abel, murdered in his early adulthood by his brother Cain.

In 2020, according to the CDC, there were 24,576 homicides in the United States.¹ That was a 30% increase from the prior year. In 2021, the number increased again by 6%. There were 1.2 million visits to the emergency room for assault in 2020.

I. Background, 4:1-2

- A. Adam and Eve had their first two children. The distance of time between births is not specified. The text makes no specific mention of them being twins, so it appears that they were born separately. Of course, “normal” childbirth was not yet defined, so if there were twins it may not have been a surprise to them. However, Moses was writing this text centuries after the fact, and it seems likely he would have mentioned if they were twins.
- B. There is a translation question about Eve’s exclamation, “I have acquired a man from the LORD.” Some suggest, “I brought forth a man with the help of the LORD (just like God created a man).” I take this general approach. She may be surprised, since this was the first human birth ever, at what came out. She saw the physical likeness between her offspring and her husband and was amazed that God had created her body to be able to make other human beings!

Others suggest, “I have gotten a man, the LORD.” In the latter case, the interpreter may suggest that Eve thought she had bore the

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/homicide.htm>

All Scripture is from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

promised seed who would redeem them from sin. In fact, she had *not* done so. Cain proved himself to be far from a redeemer. Therefore, it seems this notion can be discarded as the meaning of God and Moses, and Eve.

- C. Eve bore another child and his name was Abel. Interestingly, Abel's name means breath or vapor. His life was indeed a vapor that appeared for a short time and then vanished away. What makes that significant to us is not in the etymology of the lad's name, but in the Scriptural teaching found elsewhere (James 4:14).
- D. The text tells us that Abel kept sheep, and Cain was a dirt farmer. There is no theological significance to this. Both lines of work are good, honest labor. The fact that they specialized is interesting to this reader at least. A free trade arrangement obviously sprung up rather quickly as they would have exchanged the fruits of their labors.

II. The Offerings, 4:3-5

- A. Now young men, they bring offerings to the Lord. They must have been taught by their parents to do this, having understood that God deserves expressions of gratitude and confessions of sin, and that this was done through sacrifice. I believe Adam and Eve would have explained to them about animal sacrifice being required, even if it seems premature or unclear to us as we put ourselves in their shoes. We simply do not know what was revealed to them because it is not all written down, but obviously some things *were* told them that we do not know about. Their parents had directly fellowshiped with God for some days in the garden after their creation and marriage.
- B. Cain brought fruits or vegetables as his offering. Abel brought the firstborn of his sheep.
- C. The text tells us that God respected Abel and Abel's offering. He did not respect Cain nor Cain's offering. Cain was very angry about this.
- D. Why was Cain angry? Well, that's easy to understand. Why did God not appreciate him nor his offering? That may not be immediately clear, and a hasty reader might think that the problem is in God.

After all, should not God accept all our offerings? Why should He judge if someone brings a different offering—aren't we all different? That is foolish talk for a couple of reasons. The first is what we mentioned above—that God must have specified some things to these first people. Second, Hebrews 11:4 tells us that “by faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.” There are two aspects of the situation: the “by faith” aspect and the “better offering” aspect. I believe that some have tried to emphasize one or the other, but I'm going to stick with both. You can offer a conforming offering **without** faith, and it will not be right. You can offer a bad offering **with** faith, and it will not be right either. You must offer the right stuff in the right way, and Abel did that. Cain did neither. By this then it appears that an animal sacrifice was required, not just whatever the offeror decided to give. And it is certain that faith was required, else it was an empty religious exercise.

III. God's Advice for Cain, 4:6-7

- A. God asked Cain why he was so angry and why his countenance had fallen. His emotions were shown on his face. No answer is recorded from Cain.
- B. God advised Cain to do well. If he did, he would be accepted. Evidently, he did not do well before, but God is counseling him to do so now. That would include offering the proper sacrifice in obedient faith.
- C. God further advised that if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. Sin wants to rule over Cain, but he must choose to rule over it. If not, the implication is that the consequences will be very bad. What principles arise from that truth? Every step further you take into sin is a step further into slavery to it. The more you do wrong, the more the wrong rules over your life. It can take you to an end that you did not imagine was possible at the beginning, like Cain in this chapter. You must take charge and say enough is enough, and change your mind. This is called repentance. And because you are a fallen person and need forgiveness, appeal to Jesus to save you. God will help you by and by to stop the sins that beset you.

IV. Murder, 4:8-9

- A. The account is simple and unembellished. Human author Moses knew either directly from God or through history passed down orally what happened. Cain smote his brother. How exactly he did it is not specified, nor is it necessary. We are not told if he hid the body in the ground or simply left it *on* the ground.
- B. It is nonsensical that Cain would take out his anger against God on his brother. His brother did not wrong him. His logic was probably that his brother made him look bad so if he got rid of that problem, things would be better (?).
- C. Sin that was at the door had burst through the door and overtaken Cain and turned him into a monster.
- D. God came to Cain and asked about Abel. This is like the question God asked in Genesis 3:9.
- E. Cain answered God insolently (rudely, arrogantly lacking respect). Remember Adam and Eve, though pointing the finger of blame, did say in each case, “I ate.” They admitted they sinned. Cain did not admit he did wrong. Cain lied when he said, “I do not know.” Then he showed a callous disregard for human life when he asked, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Abel was a keeper of sheep; but Cain was not a keeper of his brother.
- F. So now Cain has offered an unacceptable sacrifice, become angry at God, not repented of sin, not chosen to follow righteousness instead, killed his brother, and now lied and showed no care for his brother—he was given over to self-centeredness. Not a good track record.

V. God’s Judgment, 4:10-15

- A. God “heard” the blood of Abel crying out from the ground. Life was extinguished there and is pictured as crying out as it sinks into the earth from which it came. This is because the death was unnatural, premature. God knew all about it already because of His omniscience.

- B. God cursed Cain even more than the original curse. Cain would find great difficulty in raising food from his labors. This is quite a supernatural punishment, but such a life sentence is fitting and even merciful given that later God would require the life of the murderer as a punishment of sufficient gravity to match the crime (see Genesis 9:6). Cain would have to turn to other means to find nourishment, thus God says he will be a fugitive and vagabond. Perhaps a nomadic lifestyle where he scratches together an existence is the only way he will be able to survive.
- C. Cain complained about his punishment. Another show of selfishness is on full display here! Yes, Cain, there are consequences for your sins. God warned you that sin lies at the door, but you did not listen. Now you bear the pain of disobedience. He was ultimately worried that anyone who finds Cain would kill him because he has been driven away from God and be exposed to others.²
- D. God made a concession in this situation by putting a special mark or sign on Cain to show that God would protect him. Anyone who kills Cain would be avenged in a far worse manner. This statement served as a deterrent to a massive increase in murder on the earth.

VI. Descendants of Cain, 4:16-24

- A. This narrative section records the early family history of Cain. He had to marry his sister (or a niece?) and they had a son Enoch. This is not the Enoch of Genesis 5. Cain built a city east of Eden and gave it the same name as his son.
- B. The family line then went Adam, Cain, Enoch, Irad, Mehujael, Methushael, Lamech. These 7 generations ended at a man who disobediently took two wives and had boys Jabal and Jubal, and then Tubal-Cain and Naamah. The text mentions that they took up specialized trades (livestock herders, musician, and metalworker). Society was beginning to develop and begin—whether by accident

² Adam and Eve continued having children, and grandchildren, so the population of the earth was rapidly increasing.

or intentionally—to implement the dominion mandate to the limited extent it was now possible because of sin.

- C. Sadly, Lamech was a murderer as well, for some little offense against him. This was perhaps self-defense, but his little song here seems out of place for a person who unwillingly was thrust into a situation where self-defense became necessary.

VII. Further Family Tree of Adam and Eve, 4:25-26

- A. Second-born Abel was dead. First-born Cain was not worthy of first-born status and had been driven away from the family. There were other brothers and sisters, no doubt, but God gave Adam and Eve yet another son, and they named him Seth.
- B. Adam named the boy holding in mind that God had given another seed for him instead of Abel. This is the one through whom the promised Seed would come.
- C. Seth had a son Enosh. Now that sin had become so ingrained and had such terrible consequences, perhaps our first parents insisted to their children down to Enosh that they had to rely on God for help to overcome the sin that was crouching at the front door waiting to pounce. Parenting had become very difficult, but crucial to discipline their children away from the anger and selfishness that drove Cain to become a murderer. People did indeed begin calling on the name of the Lord. True religion started at this point to overcome the sinful nature that was part of each person.
- D. They began to call on the name of the Lord. **Abram** called on the name of the LORD (Gen. 12:8, 13:4, 21:33). **Isaac** called on the name of the Lord (Gen. 26:25). **Elijah** called on the name of the LORD (1 Kings 18:24). Even **Naaman** the Syrian thought that Elisha would call on the name of the LORD to heal his leprosy (2 Kings 5:11). During the kingdom age in the future, God will gift pure speech to the **peoples of earth**, and they will call on the name of the LORD (Zeph. 3:9). The **Corinthians** and **other Christians** of that first century era called on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor. 1:2). In fact, **whoever** calls on the name of the LORD will be saved (Joel 2:32). Peter preached that **everyone** who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved—and he is referring to Jesus (Acts 2:21)!

Paul himself called on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16). And **you** too can do what these early God-fearing people did, by calling on the name of the Lord. Whoever does that will be saved (Romans 10:13).

VIII. The Grief of a Parent

- A. It is easy to read through this like just another article on your favorite news website or the evening television news. Murder and mayhem...what's new?! But I want you to think about this from mom and dad's perspective. Eve and Adam lost their second son. That's a huge grief.
- B. Even worse, their first son was the murderer. What went wrong with him? Why did he turn out so bad? Had they raised him poorly? Why was he so recalcitrant, so angry, so selfish?
- C. What's more, they would have survivor's guilt because they might feel like "Why not me instead of poor young Abel?"
- D. And finally, think of the guilt they would have because they are the first humans, the ones who are directly responsible for bringing sin into the world. Their choice at the tree of knowledge of good and evil years earlier has a direct correlation now to their sinful children and the death of one of them. It is indeed not mere survivor's guilt, but their own real guilt that they are in a sense the cause of all this mess. They brought sin into the world themselves, and they brought this condition upon their children.
- E. Still, Cain was responsible for his very ill behavior.
- F. NOTE WELL: This idea cannot legitimately be "transferred" or "applied" directly to you if you are a parent with similar guilt as Adam and Eve. Parents *today* do NOT have the same level of direct connection as Adam and Eve when it comes to bringing sin into their family's life. Adam and Eve started perfect but sinned and then brought more sinners into the world. Today's parents start out as sinners so were already part of the mess created by our first parents. Add to that so many other sinful influences today for young people (media, drugs, temptations, bad influences through school, etc.) that the connection parent-guilt-because-of-child-sin is not nearly so direct.

Of course, parents have an influence on their offspring. While the guilt connection is not the same as Adam and Eve, it is not entirely absent either! A multitude of factors must be considered in each individual case. But none of us started out as perfect in a perfect garden with perfect fellowship with God and then blew it. Your more remote type of connection should be carefully considered as you think of your own blameworthiness in the tragedies that may be God's assigned portion for you.

You cannot look at your child's accident or straying as if you are entirely at fault. The young person has responsibility as well. Sometimes there is simply nothing human that can be done to "fix" a sinful child's behavior. Only God through Christ can do that. Sometimes God does work that way; other times God chastens Christian children even to taking them to Heaven.

- G. How should we respond when such great tragedy comes our way? Our main response: quiet trust in the sovereign God. He rules over everything in a way that is beyond our comprehension. He knows what He is doing and why He has permitted everything. Do not overlook this basic truth as you cast about for answers during pain.

Conclusion

Genesis tells us about the beginning of everything, even murder. But in this passage also there is a hopeful note as people begin to call on God to save them. That's the only hope of mankind—not politics or education or medicine or science or secular counseling. You must call and continue to call on the name of Jesus our Lord as well. Do it now before sin leaps upon you and takes over your life.

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