

Genesis 4:1-16 – Sin Spreads and Increases

I. The Setting: The Rejected Offering (1-5a)

A. The Brothers' Introduction (1-2)

1. The Brothers' Birth (1-2a)

a. Cain is Born (1)

i. Eve Views His Birth As A Blessing

- Eve names him Cain (*qayin*) which sounds like (*qanah*) which means “gotten, or received

ii. There is some Question about what Eve Thought

- She may simply be showing faith that God is still bringing life from her after the fall
- She may think that this “man” (notice it doesn’t say child or boy) is the actual seed of whom God spoke in 3:15.

b. Abel is Born (2a)

i. Notice “his brother” is always attached to Abel’s name

ii. The focus of this chapter is on Cain, his actions, and his lineage.

c. This is the introduction of the two lines – The seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman

- ###### i. NOTE: This doesn’t mean everyone born in one or the other is stuck in his or her status. The seed of the woman is the one demonstrating faith and the seed of the serpent is the one demonstrating rebellion.

2. The Brothers' Occupation (2b)

a. Abel is a Shepherd

b. Cain is a Tiller of the Ground

i. Both occupations are equally valid and not inherently sinful or righteous

ii. However it is interesting that Cain is a tiller of the ground like his father, Adam. Yet, Abel is a shepherd like many other shepherds we will meet in scripture (i.e. Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, etc.)

B. The Brothers' Offering To the Lord (3-5a)

1. How Did They Know To Bring An Offering?

a. Did Adam instruct them in worship?

b. It Seems that God still speaks personally to the family so most likely God instructed about the proper worship and offering (notice God will speak to Cain twice in this chapter)

- c. We are not told, the point is that they knew to bring an offering.
- 2. Cain Brought the Fruit of the Ground
 - a. There isn't anything inherently wrong with bringing fruit of the ground as an offering.
 - i. The word offering is (*mincha*) which is used often in the Old Testament as a grain or food offering to the Lord
- 3. Abel Brought the Best of His Flock (3-4a)
 - a. The construction of the texts sounds like Abel went out of his way to bring the best of his flock.
 - b. Abel's offering is one that desires to please God
- 4. God "Regards" Only Abel's Offering (4b-5a)
 - a. Abel's offering is accepted
 - i. Abel's offering is accepted because he offered the best of his flock *with a heart of faith*
 - ii. Hebrews 11:4 - **By faith** Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.
 - iii. Bringing his very best was an act of faith
 - b. Cain's offering is rejected
 - i. Since Hebrews tells us that it was Abel's faith that made his offering acceptable (and what caused him to desire to bring the best of his flock) – Cain's offering is rejected because he did not
 - ii. Cain's offering is simply a religious act of duty, something he is supposed to do.

II. The Problem: The Increasing Extent Of Sin (5b-9)

- A. Cain is Angered By God's Rejection (5b)
 - 1. Cain's heart is angered by God's rejection of his offering
 - 2. Cain's response is the definition of empty religion
 - a. He does not respond to God's rejection as a humble believer would
 - b. He responds as a self-righteous man would
 - c. He is visibly angry that God refuses his empty token
- B. Cain is Given Fatherly Counsel From God (6-7)
 - 1. God gives him a constructive exhortation (6-7a)
 - a. God asks Cain why he is angry – to illicit a confession
 - b. As a loving Father, God assures Cain that if he does what is right, he will be accepted
 - i. This is not a matter of God being unfair or petty
 - ii. This is a matter of Cain's disobedience and unfaithfulness

- iii. God gently exhorts Cain to amend his ways and come to God with his heart
 - 2. God gives him a protective warning (7b)
 - a. God warns Cain that sin desires him
 - i. Sin here is pictured as a predator crouching in the doorway, waiting to pounce on his prey
 - ii. Sin is enticing and luring Cain away in order to destroy him
 - iii. God warns Cain that he must recognize his true enemy and war against him (rather than Cain being angry at God)
- C. Cain's Hardness of Heart is Exposed (8-9)
 - 1. Cain's anger leads to murder (8)
 - a. Cain talked with his brother Abel
 - i. Some translations render this to mean that Cain asked Abel to come to the field with the intention of murdering him (It is possible)
 - ii. It seems that the text simply says Cain spoke to Abel
 - Cain probably told Abel everything that transpired between him and God
 - Imagine what that conversation between brothers would sound like.
 - Abel, the faithful believer, may have told Cain, "Just obey what God has said. If you do well God will accept you."
 - To a hard-hearted, rebellious man, this would have made Cain even more angry
 - b. Cain Murders his Brother Abel
 - i. Cain does not want to master his sin
 - ii. Cain does not want to listen to the gentle warnings and exhortations God gave him.
 - Unlike Adam and Eve, God actually attempted to talk Cain out of his sinful behavior and warned him beforehand
 - Sin has so taken Cain's heart that he would not even let God's gentle words move him
 - 2. Cain is wholly unrepentant when confronted (9)
 - a. God questions Cain about Abel (9a)
 - i. God again questions Cain to illicit his confession
 - ii. God asks in order to reveal Cain's guilt and shame
 - b. Cain lies to God (9b)

- i. Rather than confess outright, or even make excuses for why he murdered Abel, Cain simply lies.
 - ii. Cain denies any knowledge of where Abel is
- c. Cain denies responsibility for his brother (9c)
 - i. Can asks God a rhetorical question about being his brother's keeper
 - ii. The answer to Cain's question is "yes." He is his brother's keeper, but Cain expects that the answer should be no.
- d. Sin has spread and grown to the extent now that there is no shame or guilt expressed when it is revealed.

III. The Response: The Increasing Severity of Judgment (10-12)

A. God's Righteousness Demands Justice (10)

- 1. God's Question: "What have you done?" – is meant to demonstrate the severity and horror of Cain's crime
- 2. The blood of Abel cries out to God from the ground
 - a. God's righteousness and justice cannot allow sin to go unpunished. The victim requires justice.
 - b. Notice that the blood of Abel is crying out "to God" – He is the arbiter and judge of all the earth.

B. God Levels Judgment Against Cain (11-12)

- 1. Cain is cursed from the ground (11-12a)
 - a. In Gen. 3, the ground was said to be cursed. Here God attaches the curse to the man. "You are cursed from the earth (ground)."
 - b. Now Cain will no longer receive sustenance from the ground when he tills it
 - i. Cain is a "tiller of the ground" So he is now deprived of his livelihood. He will be banished from the fertile ground.
 - ii. He will have to survive now as a wanderer (fugitive), gathering or hunting in order to survive.
- 2. Cain is cursed to be a wanderer (12b)
 - a. Cain would be banished from his home and occupation
 - b. If Eden is a picture of the tabernacle, Adam and Eve were banished from the holy of holies, and Cain is later banished from the outer court. He is to go into the wilderness.

IV. The Result: The Increasing Extent of God's Grace (13-16)

A. Cain Protests His Punishment (13-14)

- 1. Even now there is no remorse or repentance in Cain's heart
 - a. He is not sorry for sinning against God and his brother
 - b. He is unhappy with the consequences of his sin
- 2. Cain laments being driven from the ground (13-14a)

3. Cain laments being driven from God's presence (14b)
 - a. Cain understands that all blessings and goodness of any kind come from God's grace
 - b. Every good and perfect gift comes from above.
 4. Cain laments that he will be victimized by others (14c)
 - a. Who are these others?
 - b. They were members of his own extended family
 - i. Adam and Eve were 130 when they bore Seth (the line of the "seed" which replaced Abel)
 - ii. Adam and Eve had many more children who are not named (see Gen. 5:4.)
 - iii. None of Adam's daughters are mentioned by name and only two of his sons (the first born – Cain, and the "seed" – Abel / Seth)
 - iv. By the time Adam and Eve were 130, they may have been great, great, great grandparents, with families spreading out exponentially.
- B. God Extends Grace to Cain in Judgment (15)
1. God pronounces a curse on anyone who harms him
 - a. God gives Cain common grace
 - b. God became the protector of the murderer, promising vengeance on the avenger.
 - i. Even after Cain's wicked heart was exposed again and again, God extends the grace of life to him
 - ii. God allows the unregenerate to live and enjoy the common blessings of mankind
 - iii. It rains on the just and the unjust
 2. God places a mark upon Cain for protection
 - a. It is pointless to speculate about the mark – no one knows what it is
 - b. The mark was not meant as a sign of cursing, but a sign of protection against attackers.
- C. Cain Departs From The Lord's Presence (16)
1. Cain departs from God's presence and goes to "Nod"
 2. There is an interesting wordplay here
 - a. The word for "wanderer" or "vagabond" is *Nud* –
 - b. The text very possibly could mean, Cain departed from the Lord's presence and dwelt in "the land of wandering."