

Genesis 4:9-16

Last time we started our study of Genesis 4. Chapter four has three parts: In verses 1-16, we see the story of Cain and Abel. Then in verses 17-24 we see a narrative of Cain's descendants, while in verses 25-26 we finish the chapter with a description of Seth's descendants.

To review last time, we started with the first section (in verses 1-8) the story of Cain and Abel. This first section introduces us to the two men, their professions, and a time when they both brought sacrifices to the Lord. The story is laid out as a chiasmic, a literary device that compares and contrasts the two men.

1. We see Cain's birth, then Abel's.
2. Then a description of Abel's occupation (a shepherd) then Cain's (a farmer)
3. Then Cain's offering (grain) then Abel's (a firstborn from his flock)
4. Then Abel's acceptance (because it was a blood sacrifice brought by faith), then Cain's rejection (because his offering was one of labor—not faith, and of grain—not blood).
5. Then Cain's reaction and then Abel's murder.

Going forward I want to give you another way to think of verses 1-16 for they present a comparison between the saved and the unsaved, or the difference between believers and unbelievers. Note the following nine points.

1. Unbelievers and Believers start off the same, vs 1-2.

Adam^[a] made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.^[b] She said, "With the help of the Lord I have brought forth^[c] a man."² Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.

In verses 1 and 2, we see two brothers being born into the same family. They have the same parents, the same upbringing, the same environment. In verse 2 they choose different professions as Cain becomes a farmer like his father Adam, and Abel becomes a shepherd taking care of livestock that were being used for milk, their hides, and sacrifice.

2. Unbelievers offer unacceptable worship, Believers acceptable worship, vs 3-5a.

In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord.⁴ And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor.

We noted from verse three each man had brought sacrifices to God in the past, but we don't know where or how often this was done. There is no mention that God had ever refused their offerings. This time, however, Cain chooses to bring some fruit of the soil while Abel brings a firstborn lamb that had been recently slaughtered. We noted that God accepted Abel's sacrifice but refused Cain's.

So, the big question here is how do you come to God? And by coming to God I mean to establish a working and viable relationship with Him. The pattern of how this was to be done had been revealed in Gen 3:21 when God had killed an innocent animal and provided its skin to cover the nakedness (which was a picture of sin) of Adam and Eve. There needed to be a death to demonstrate the sinner deserves

to die. But God killing the animal was also a demonstration that an innocent could die in the sinner's place, that the animal could serve as a substitute. It also showed that sin could be covered, and that once covered, relationship could be restored.

As MacArthur notes, "God Himself, then, slays the first animal to make the first covering to cover the sinner. God takes an innocent animal and slays that animal as a substitute to provide a covering for sinners. That is the first illustration of the ultimate and only real sacrifice, Jesus Christ, God taking the innocent Son of God, the innocent Jesus Christ, putting Him on the cross, making Him a sacrifice for sinners, and then taking His righteousness to cover the guilty."

So we have in verses 3 and 4 two ways in which these men approached God to seek his favor. The first is the way of Cain. He brings to God the fruit of his labor in an effort to earn God's favor. He works hard and brings some grain from the field. Lots of people follow this example. They bring to God their good works: helping a neighbor, they give money to a worthy cause, they were nice to strangers. All these things are good things in and of themselves, but the problem is this is not the way God had proscribed. God wanted the picture of an innocent as a substitutionary death. So here what you have is the first example of false worship of the true God. Here is the first example of self-righteousness. Apparently, Cain doesn't feel he needs a substitute, he doesn't feel that death needs to occur on his behalf. He can bring God something of his own achievement. He is himself able to approach God without a sacrifice.

The other way to come to God is in the way Abel comes. Abel follows the pattern of Gen 3:21. He takes the best of his flock, a firstborn, an innocent, and slays it in the way God had slayed an innocent animal for the sin of his parents.

So the two men bring two different offerings to God; Cain brings an offering of his own labor or work, while Abel brings an offering of an animal that God had made, but that has now been slaughtered.

We noted God accepted Abel's sacrifice while refusing Cain's. The word accepted is also translated as regarded. It means God recognizes Abel's heart and his sacrifice. Abel comes to God in the proscribed way. Abel is acknowledging the need for a substitute, the need for death, and the need for a covering. Heb 11:4 states *By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.*

3. Unbelievers resent Believers, vs 5b.

So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

This refusal caused Cain to get angry and resentful. He becomes downcast, depressed, angry, and sullen. This is the typical response of UB to B. The righteous are always a rebuke to the unrighteous because we proclaim a gospel that doesn't include them. And it doesn't include them because they are unwilling to confess they are sinners. So UB will hate God for rejecting them and their self-righteousness and they will project that hatred upon you.

4. Unbelievers reject and resent the Word, vs 6-8.

Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?"⁷ If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it."⁸ Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field."^[d] While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

Now note how patient and gracious God is to Cain. He offers him an out. This is direct revelation to Cain. God warns Cain to not give way to his crouching sin nature which seeks to pounce upon him, to animate and control him. God gives him a way out of his plight through confession and the bringing of a right sacrifice, but Cain refuses. He does not want to hear what God has to say much less take God's advice.

We noted Cain was an example of the sin equation of Jm 1:13-14, and that is faced with a temptation, Cain thought about his perceived injustice, took time to nurse his hurt feelings, then devised a plan that evolved into action and as noted in verse 8 in which Cain takes his unsuspecting brother out into the field and murders him. It is the first recorded murder in human history. Abel was a righteous man, and Cain his brother, had premeditated his demise.

5. Unbelievers attempt to hide their sin, verse 9.

Vs 9a, Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

God asks Cain *where is your brother?* This is very much like Gen 3:7 when after Adam and Eve had eaten the forbidden fruit, God asked Adam and Eve *where are you?* God is omniscient. He knows exactly where Abel is, but he is asking Cain this question in an effort to illicit a confession. Cain gives his answer in vs 9b.

Cain first replies with *I don't know*. This is the first recorded human lie in the Bible. So in two verses we have the first murder and now the first lie. Sin often compounds and leads to more sin. Cain then throws out another comment to make the question look inappropriate and bothersome, *Am I my brother's keeper?* Like get off my back! God then responds in verse 10.

6. Unbelievers are ultimately indicted by God, vs 10.

Vs 10a, The Lord said, "What have you done?"

God now gets explicit. Having received an evasive answer and not a confession, God asks Cain directly, *what have you done?* Note God doesn't give Cain a chance to respond as God lays out the facts before him in verse 10b.

Vs 10b, Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.

God now takes the role of prosecutor and states, *listen, your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground*. This is the first mention of blood in the Bible and it is crying out to God for vindication. Having refused to acknowledge his sin and confess, God now pronounces judgement on Cain with a curse in verses 11-12.

7. Unbelievers are ultimately judged by God, vs 11-12.

Vs 11-12, *Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹² When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.*"

There is a two-fold component to the judgment. The first component is given in verse 11 and 12a, and that is Cain will be *driven from the ground*. The ground is where Cain made his living and now he will be banished from it as the verse goes on to say *it will no longer yield its crops for you*. Any ground which Cain now chooses to work is doubly cursed; first it is under the general curse of Gen 3:18, but it is now under this secondary curse. Note the ground took in Abel's blood. We see similar imagery in Num 16:30-35 and Deut 11:6 (when the earth swallowed Korah, Dathan, and Abiram). So the ground that takes in Abel's blood is the ground which now spits out Cain and will no longer yield anything to him.

The second part of the curse is that Cain will now *be a restless wanderer on the earth*. As he can no longer farm, he will spend the rest of his days moving about to gather food. Cain now responds in vs 13 and 14.

8. Unbelievers will protest Divine Judgement, vs 13-15.

Vs 13, *Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is more than I can bear. ¹⁴ Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."* ¹⁵ *But the Lord said to him, "Not so^[e]; anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over."* *Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. ¹⁶ So Cain went out from the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod, ^[f] east of Eden.*

The Hebrew word here for *punishment* literally means the punishment for iniquity (or the punishment for the sin). It means Cain understood his sin and its punishment and he reacts by stating *it is more than I can bear*. There is a note of self-pity and self-absorption here as Cain is only thinking of how this will affect him. The focus is all inward.

In verse 14, Cain sees the full spectrum of what God has imposed upon him. Note his punishment has four components,

1. *You are driving me from the land*. The land will no longer yield crops for Cain. His days of being a farmer are over.
2. *I will be hidden from your presence*. Cain understands God has now ceased relationship with him. He will be separated from God from this point on.
3. *I will be a restless wanderer*. As Cain cannot make a living from the ground any longer, he is now forced to be a gatherer.
4. *Whoever finds me will kill me*. From this statement it is apparent there are other people about. The statement in Gen 5:4 about Adam and Eve having other sons and daughters was already in process, so Cain had other brothers and sisters about at this time.

God responds to Cain in verse 15. Note God does two things. First he promises to Cain, that He himself will protect him with a threat of vengeance, (vs 15a) *But the Lord said to him, "Not so^[e]; anyone who kills*

Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.” Verse 15a notes God’s threat of vengeance to anyone who would kill Cain. The phrase *will suffer vengeance seven times over*, means a perfect measure. In other words, God will exact vengeance on anyone who will touch Cain in a perfect manner.

Secondly, God will impart a mark on him so everyone will know Cain is under God’s protection, (vs 15b) *Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him.* We are not told what this mark is. (as an aside--Rev tells us that in the tribulation period, the second beast will impart a mark to all who belong to the Anti-Christ and his economic-political-spiritual economy. It will be on their forehead or their R hand, which will be the name of the beast or the number of its name-666, see Rev 13:11-18). Whatever mark God chose for Cain, it was readily apparent and known.

9. Unbelievers live apart from God, vs 16.

Vs 16, *So Cain went out from the Lord’s presence and lived in the land of Nod,* ^[1] *east of Eden.*

Verse 16 introduces us to the next phase of Cain’s life and transitions us into the discussion of his line in verse 17. Note *Cain went out from the Lord’s presence*. The last time we knew of the Lord’s presence was at the end of Gen 3 when God had set forth his presence in the form of the flashing sword to guard the entrance to the Garden of Eden. We can infer Adam, Eve, Abel, and Cain lived near this area. Now Cain leaves and walks eastward where he lives in Nod. The word *Nod* literally means wandering. So the verse is better read as Cain walks eastward and lives as a wanderer in the land of wandering. This is the lot of unbelief, People wander aimlessly with no direction. They are left to self-definition. We will see next time how Cain and his descendants go about this.