

**Genesis 4:1-16 "Cain & Abel" (p.3)**

Ajax Alliance Church. Sunday February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

**Genesis 4:1-16.** [4:1] Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD." [2] And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. [3] In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, [4] and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, [5] but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So, Cain was very angry, and his face fell. [6] The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? [7] If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it." [8] Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. [9] Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" [10] And the LORD 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 work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." [13] Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. [14] Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." [15] Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him. [16] Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. (ESV)

In **December 1863**, a little-known American writer named **Edward Everett Hale** published a story in *Atlantic* magazine entitled "**The Man without a Country.**" This story, which subsequently made Hale famous, was about a United States Army officer, **Philip Nolan**, who had been involved in the revolutionary war **treachery** of Aaron Burr. **At his trial** he was asked if he wished to say anything in his defense to show that he had always been faithful to the United States. But **he cried out**, "I wish I may **never** hear of the United States again." **The judge** decided to take Philip Nolan's request seriously. So **instead** of sentencing him to death for his treason, which he had every right to do, **he sentenced him to be imprisoned at sea** on government vessels with **instruction to the officers** that **no** one was to permit him to hear the name of or receive any information about his country. In this fashion **many years go by**. He passes from ship to ship, always being transferred just before the one on which he has been traveling returns to a U.S. port. Government red tape keeps him from being pardoned, and at last he dies at sea—...A man **without** a country!

In **Genesis 4**, **this is what Cain became** as a result of his far more serious crime of first **hating** and then **murdering** his brother Abel. But in Cain's case, **so far as we can tell**, there was **no** change of heart, softening of temper, or growing love for the land and people he abandoned. **We see the effects of listening to the voice of Satan.** **Far** from a liberation of shackles and freedom, **the effects seen in the offspring of Adam and Even** are evident. **Broken** fellowship with God, has **resulted in** **mistrust** and **hostility** in the family of God. Although **we see the fruit** of God's blessing through offspring, **the results of the fall** are profound. Not only are **the lesser impacts** upon the Dominion

mandate seen in the **burden** now of **work** and **pain** of **childbirth**, but a much more profound **broken fellowship with God** is now evidently profound.

**Much worse than an earthly virus, sin contaminates, spreads and issues in death.** In Genesis 3 the sin was against God, in Genesis 4 it is against a fellowman. **The order here is ever the same; the one who has no fear of God his eyes, has no genuine respect for the rights of his neighbor.** Again, **in Genesis 4 we see the local fulfillment of Genesis 3:15—the enmity between the two seeds—the wicked and the righteous, Cain and Abel.** Further; we are shown, even more clearly than by the coats of skins in **the previous chapter**, that **the guilty sinner can only approach God by means of a sacrifice** (Pink, A. W. (2005). *Gleanings in Genesis* (56). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.)

**Genesis 4:1-16**, gives **a picture of faith** and how it is only by genuine faith **through an approved sacrifice**, that we can approach God. **The rejection of this means rejection by God Himself.** **The tragic lesson of this rejection is spelled out in: 1) The Characters** (Genesis 4:1-2), **2) The Crime** (Genesis 4:3-8), **3) The Consequences** (Genesis 4:9-16).

**People can only enjoy the love of God and with each other as seen first through:**

**1) The Characters** (Genesis 4:1-2)

**Genesis 4:1-2.** [4:1] Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD." [2] And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. (ESV)

In **verse one** we see that Adam **“knew/lay [yāda ] with his wife”** which was a **common idiom for sexual relations** in the Old Testament. The act of sexual intercourse was considered only **the means** by which God Himself gave children. He was acknowledged as **the sovereign giver of all life.** **This recurrence of “knew” in the Cain-Abel narrative probably is an allusion to the “tree of knowledge” and serves as a reminder of Adam’s sin and its consequence (2:9, 17; 3:5, 22), especially the wordplay on the outcome of their eating: “they knew [yāda ] that they were naked” (3:7).** (MacArthur, J. J. (1997). *The MacArthur Study Bible* (electronic ed.) (Ge 4:1). Nashville: Word Pub.).

**Cain’s birth** is the first indication that God’s beneficent word would come to pass (in the promise of **Gen. 3:15-16**) This verified that **Adam’s faith was not misplaced (Gen. 3:20).** **Divine superintendence** assured for humanity what it could **not** achieve by itself. **Eve acknowledges this** when **she attributes to the Lord’s involvement her giving birth to Cain.** **The narrator reinforces this indirectly** in referring to Adam’s wife by the seldom-used **“Eve,” not found again in the subsequent Old Testament**, (that the "mother of all living" (**Gen. 3:20**), would give bear offspring of life). **Usually the name given to a child in Hebrew narrative** conveys an interpretive significance, either explicitly stated in the narrative or by suggestion. By a play on the sound of the verb **“bore/brought forth” (qānîti).** **Eve names her eldest “Cain” (qayin).** **Eve is given the childbearing function (3:16, 20) in subduing the earth while Adam is ordained to work the “ground” whence he came (2:7, 15; 3:17).** **As the “ground” (’ādāmā) (by) the Lord had produced “man” (’ādām), so Eve the woman (’iššā, 2:23) (by the Lord) produced the “man” (’iš), Cain.** **She sees in creating Cain the realization of her divinely assigned role.** **This first birth recorded in the Bible is consonant with all of remaining Scripture, which invariably attributes conception and life to the unique work of God and as evidence of his blessing (e.g., Pss 127:3-5; 139:13).** **From the outset of God’s plan for the human family, procreation is the divine-human means whereby the man and woman might achieve the dominion that God has envisioned for them (Gen. 1:28).**

- Through human selfishness, and believing the myth of overpopulation, western nations continue to have diminishing birth rates. Muslims realize that the key to dominion is sustainable population. Western nations are increasingly becoming Muslim mission fields through declining western birth rates and immigration, which is increasingly Muslim.

From the description of Abel as "his brother," in Genesis 4:2, it is apparent that the story is told with Cain in focus. Its language underscores the despicable act of this murderer, who out of envy committed fratricide. "Abel" means "breath" (*hebel*), (as God breathed life into the creation of Adam, so Cain will remove the breath of Abel). Introducing the two sons in terms of their occupations is important for the narrator since it establishes the plot for the murder that follows. Abel's vocation is not anticipated in chaps. 2–3, though the garden narrative permits it, while Cain's is the one assigned to Adam (2:15; 3:17–19). The biblical setting is worship, and the factor that led to Abel's death was Cain's exaggerated pride. Like his parents before him, Cain desired recognition that did not rightly belong to him (4:7). Abel is a man of faith (Heb. 11:4) whereas Cain is reckoned as a form of evil (1 John 3:12; Jude 11). ( Brueggemann, W. (1982). *Genesis* (p. 56). John Knox Press.)

Please turn to 1 John 3 (p.960)

John's first epistle comments that Cain was of the "evil one" because he hated his brother and murdered him (3:11–12). By appealing to Cain as example, the apostle proved his premise: the one who hates a person is a murderer. He explains in 1 John 3:

**1 John 3:10-18.** [10] By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. [11] For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. [12] We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. [13] Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. [14] We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. [15] Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. [16] By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. [17] But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? [18] Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. (ESV)

- In the New Testament, Cain is viewed as the forefather of an unrighteous seed who had drawn first blood in the perpetual struggle between the ungodly and the godly seed first anticipated in Genesis 3:15.

**Illustration:** The two brothers are immediately identified as representative figures: Cain of the farmer and Abel of the herder. Two rival lifestyles involving ways of producing food that have often come into conflict with one another are thus said to have existed virtually from the beginning. The inhabitants of the land of Canaan were well-acquainted with this issue, for seminomadic tribes with an economy dependent on sheep and goats often encroached on their farmland. The conflicts resulting from these two types of food production have continued into modern times in the American West, as commemorated in the song from the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *Oklahoma!*, "The Farmer and the Cowman (Should Be Friends)." Those two rivals

both **scorned** the shepherd. But note that this can **scarcely** be taken as the major theme of the story, since **neither** party fares very well. **The shepherd dies** and the **farmer** is **uprooted** from his land, and **the issues are deeper than sociological conflicts** (Gowan, D. E. (1988). *From Eden to Babel: A commentary on the book of Genesis 1-11*. International theological commentary (66). Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.).

**People can only enjoy the love of God and with each other as seen second through:**

**2) The Crime** (Genesis 4:3–8)

**Genesis 4:3-8.** [3] In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, [4]and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, [5] but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So, Cain was very angry, and his face fell. [6] The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? [7] If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it." [8] Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. (ESV)

**Genesis** does **not** explain how **the practice of sacrificial worship** began. **The first readers of the book understood it well because they had been instructed in full by God through Moses (Lev.)** (Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary* (Ge 4:3). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.). **"In the course of time" (v. 3)** is vague and **may imply that the practice of giving offerings was customary for the brothers, perhaps learned from Adam. Cain and Abel's offerings** were presented to the Lord according to their differing vocations. "The term translated 'offering' in this passage, *minha*, is **used in the Levitical laws for the bloodless rather than the bloody offering, consisting either of flour and oil or of flour prepared with frankincense (Lev 2:1, 4, 14–15); it is also used in the Old Testament in a broader sense, including both bloodless and bloody offerings** (*KJV Bible commentary*. 1997 (24). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.).

**Cain** did **not** bring the firstfruits (*bikkûrîm*; cp. Lev 2:14); **he brought only an offering of some of his crop (v. 3). This is contrasted with the offering of Abel in verse four,** who **brought of the "firstborn"** (*bikkôrôt*) the best of the animal, the fatty portions (v. 4). **Fat portions** translates a word that is also used in Num 18.12, 27–29 in **reference to new oil, wine, and grain, in which the sense is "the choicest or best";** but here, as in Lev 3.3 (there translated simply "fat"), it refers to the highly prized parts of the animal that **were offered as a sacrifice** (Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (1997). *A handbook on Genesis*. UBS handbook series (107). New York: United Bible Societies.) **Later Israel acknowledged the efficacy of both the grain and blood offerings,** but of these particularly **the firstfruits** (e.g., Exod 23:16) and firstborn (Exod 13:2, 15; Lev 27:26; Deut 15:19) were reserved for God. **Israel itself was regarded as God's firstfruit (Jer 2:3) and firstborn (Exod 4:22). This imagery shared by the church (e.g., Rom 11:16; Heb 12:23) and Christ (e.g., Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:20, 23) as the "firstborn" indicates the blessing of God and the veneration of the Lord by his people. Cain brought a token gift of his produce to the Lord, but Abel brought the very best** (Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary* (Ge 4:4). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.).

- In **2 Samuel 24:24** David is quoted as saying, "I will **not** offer burnt offerings to the Lord ... that cost me **nothing.**" Since **this is the first reference to offerings in the Bible,** it is not surprising that **this fundamental principle** is highlighted. **Cain did not give the first and best as Abel did** (Kissling, P. J. (2004-). *Genesis*. The College Press NIV commentary. (221). Joplin, Mo.: College Press Pub. Co.).

**God's response toward Cain and Abel**, therefore, was **not** due to the nature of the gift per se, whether it was grain or animal, **but the integrity of the giver**. **The narrative ties together the worshiper and his offering as God considers the merit of their individual worship: the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, [5] but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. Cain's offering did not measure up because he retained the best of his produce for himself. Cain, disdainingly the divine instruction, just brought what he wanted to bring: some of his crop** (MacArthur, J. J. (1997). *The MacArthur Study Bible* (electronic ed.) (Ge 4:4). Nashville: Word Pub.).

**Please turn to Hebrews 11 (p.947)**

This was **not an act of atonement**. That had already been done by God Himself (**Gen. 3:15**). **The symbolism behind the offering may have been the same as that behind our offerings; we (give) a portion of our possessions ... in token of the fact that we have first dedicated ourselves to him** (Jeske, J. C. (2001). *Genesis* (2nd ed.). The People's Bible (60). Milwaukee, Wis.: Northwestern Pub. House.).

**According to the writer to the Hebrews, this is linked with faith itself:**

**Hebrews 11:1-4**. [11:1] Now **faith** is the **assurance** of things hoped for, the **conviction** of things not seen. [2] For by it the people of old received their commendation. [3] By faith we understand that **the universe was created** by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. [4] **By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain**, through which he was **commended as righteous**, God **commending him by accepting his gifts**. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. (ESV)

- **Salvation** has always been and always will be **by faith**. **The faith of Old Testament saints was effective only because of the future sacrifice of Christ which animal sacrifices foreshadowed. His sacrifice was and always will be the only covering for sin. Unlike a human observer, God sees the condition of the human heart and weighs the motive of the worshiper** (e.g., **1 Sam 16:7**). Elsewhere Scripture shows that **the Lord requires of the giver an obedient and upright heart** (e.g., **1 Sam 15:14**; Hos 6:6; Matt 5:24).

In **Genesis 4:6**, **God questions Cain for the same purpose** He queried the man and woman in the garden (**Gen.3:9, 11**)—**not** for information, **but to help (Cain) to understand his own feelings and motives (to elicit Cain's admission of sin with the view to repentance)**. **Cain's anger revealed his true attitude, which resulted in his despondency. God confronts Cain about the scowl on his face. Cain was "angry" and his bitterness was seen that his face was "fallen/downcast"**. (Utley, R. J. D. (2001). *Vol. Vol. 1A: How it All Began: Genesis 1-11*. Study Guide Commentary Series (73). Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International.).

In **verse 7** God declared that **when Cain practices what is right** he will have a good conscience before God **without** shame (Cf. Num 6:26; Job 10:15; 11:15; 2 Sam 2:22). **"If you do well [by repenting], you will be able to look up again in freedom from anger and guilt. The Lord forewarned Cain that right action would be rewarded but a wrong course meant giving sin an opportunity to destroy him (v. 7a). The rationale of the Lord's question assumes a correspondence between doing "what is right" and receiving divine approval, but the very tenor of the question shows that Cain was not doing "what is right." The consequences of Cain's reaction to God's correction are more far-reaching than the initial sin itself, for if he pursues sin's anger, it will result in sin's mastery over him. This is his decision. It is possible for Cain to recover from sin quickly if he chooses the right thing.** (MacDonald, W., & Farstad, A. (1997). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments* (Ge 4:7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.).

**“Sin”** is likened to an animal **“crouching/lurking”** at the **“door,”** meaning the animal’s resting place, ready to stir if incited. **This pictures sin temporarily at bay and subject to its master but coming alive when stirred.** By this divine analysis we learn that **sin has a pervasive power** that seizes occasion to **enslave** its victims (cp. Rom 3:9; 1 Cor 15:56; 1 John 5:19). **But Cain is urged to repent lest he be consumed; he cannot claim helplessness nor ignorance, for he has divine counsel.** **The apostle Paul testified to the inner struggle against the power of sin** and conceded that **the power of Christ alone** could liberate him (**Rom 7:15–25**). **Cain’s refusal to deal rightly with his sin** permitted his anger to **fester** into murder (Prov 27:4; Eccl 7:9; Eph 4:26, 31; Jas 1:15.). **The Lord instructed Cain** that though sin **“desires” him he can still “rule over/master it (4:7b).** This language is a lexical **allusion to the judgment oracle against the woman (3:16b),** reminding Cain of the earlier consequences of sin’s realization (Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 158–59.).

In **Genesis 4:8** we come to **the fulcrum of the Cain-Abel narrative,** where **Cain lured Abel into the field,** where he **assassinated** him. **This is reminiscent of crimes stipulated in the later Mosaic period** that were **punishable** by death (Deut 19:11–12; 22:25–27). **Structurally Gen. 4:8 parallels** the morbid act of the first **disobedience (Gen. 3:6).** **The virus of sin** has infected the parent’s children; **Adam and Eve do not** have to await their own death to experience the devastating effects of their **rebellion** in the garden. **They witness the murder of their youngest and the exile of their firstborn.** **We may have righteous anger against sin** (Mark 3:5; Eph. 4:26), but **too often our anger is itself sinful.** **Jesus warned** that anger could be the first step toward murder (Matt. 5:21–26). **We must ask the Holy Spirit** to help us control anger (Prov. 15:18; 16:32), **manifest love to those who offend** us (Matt. 5:43–48), and **learn to practice forgiveness** (Eph. 4:26–32) (Wiersbe, W. W. (1997). *With the word Bible commentary* (Ge 4:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.).

**Illustration:** (Anger)

**A boy once asked,** “Dad, how do wars begin?” **“Well, take the First World War,”** said his **father.** “That got started when Germany invaded Belgium. **”Immediately his wife interrupted him:** “Tell the boy the truth. **It began because somebody was murdered.”** **The husband** drew himself up with an air of superiority and **snapped back,** “**Are you answering the question, or am I?”** **Turning her back** upon him in a huff, the **wife** walked out of the room and **slammed the door as hard as she could.** When the dishes stopped rattling in the cupboard, **an uneasy silence** followed, broken at length by **the son** when he said, **“Daddy, you don’t have to tell me any more; I know now!”** (Michael P. Green. (2000). *1500 illustrations for biblical preaching* (19). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.)

**Finally, people can only enjoy the love of God** and with each other as seen first through: **3) The Consequences** (Genesis 4:9–16)

**Genesis 4:9-16.** [9] Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" [10] And the LORD 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 work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.**" [13] Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. [14] Behold, you **have driven me today** away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a **fugitive** and a **wanderer** on the earth, and **whoever finds me will kill me.**" [15] Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! **If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on**

him sevenfold." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him. [16] Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. (ESV)

### Please turn to Genesis 9 (p.6)

God's question "Where is Abel your brother?" echoes the inquiry put to Adam in the garden, "Where are you?" (Gen. 3:9). Both acts of disobedience are thus tied together, indicating that Cain's murderous act had its beginnings in the sin of his father. Unlike his father, who admitted his crime (though reluctantly), Cain adds to his condemnation by lying. He attempts to elude the question and absolve himself of responsibility by his question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Cain intends it as a rhetorical question requiring a negative reply, but the response from God discloses otherwise. Adam was appointed "keeper" (*šōmēr*) of the garden (Gen. 2:15), but here the issue involves responsibility for another human being. The definitive reply to Cain's question is found in the later Noahic covenant when the Lord formally sanctions retributive justice against murderers. Since people are created in the image of God, and the unjust taking of a life is a direct offence against God, His designated civil authority is commanded to act with justice in Genesis 9:

**Genesis 9:1-6.** [9:1] And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. [2] The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. [3] Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. [4] But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. [5] And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. [6]"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image. (ESV)

- Like many actions today, when law enforcement abandons its God designated authority to prevent injustice and the courts fail to punish the wrongdoer, and instead becomes a political enforcement and intimidation tool, injustice abounds.

Cain abrogates this sacred obligation of kinship loyalty by the appalling crime of fratricide. Because Cain commits this "family scandal," he loses the protection of the family bond and thus fears for his life. The response from God in verse 10, "What have you done?" is reminiscent of Gen. 3:13 where the Lord asks the same of the woman. As in a criminal trial, God presents condemning testimony against Cain: "your brother's blood" refutes Cain's protestations. God has a way of asking the most disarming questions to expose our sin and guilt. Cain learned quickly that sinners will have to give an account of their sin before God sooner or later (Matthew 12:36; Romans 14:12; I Peter 4:4, 5) (Butler, J. G. (2008). *Analytical Bible Expositor: Genesis* (39). Clinton, IA: LBC Publications.).

Our passage depicts Abel's postmortem call for vindication by this eerie personification: "The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me..." Once again, like Adam who heard the "voice" ("sound") of God and is called to account for his actions (Gen. 3:8). The source of the disquieting cry is the "ground" that is cursed because of Adam's sin (Gen. 3:17) and is now polluted by the spilling of innocent blood. As we just saw in Gen 9:5 Israel was forewarned that murder defiled its land, and for such crimes there was no exoneration for the nation except through retribution against the malefactor (e.g., Num 35:33; cf. Gen 9:5). Collective guilt required just and prompt

action by the community against the culprit (cf. Lev 24:14–16; Num 35:12; Deut 19:13; Josh 7:25). That blood of Abel cries out until the blood of One even more innocent than Abel is shed as well (Heb. 12:24). In the manner of his death, Abel depicts the Savior Jesus (Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1997). *The Nelson study Bible: New King James Version* (Ge 4:10). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.).

Like the serpent, in verse 11, Cain is placed under a curse; this is the first occasion in Scripture where a human is cursed. This curse indicates the gravity of his crime against God and creation. Cain's culpability is emphasized by the direct accusation "from your [own] hand." The language "you are cursed" is the same as the oracle delivered against the serpent: "You are cursed [min] above all the livestock" (Gen. 3:14) is parallel to "you are cursed [min] from the ground" (4:11). This linkage shows that like father like "seed," both the serpent and Cain are murderers who receive the same retribution. Because Cain has polluted the ground with innocent blood, he is "driven" from it as his parents were from the garden (Gen. 3:24). God in essence uses the very item that blasphemed Him as a curse. The ground from where the insincere offering was made will not again produce an insincere offering for Cain. In our day there is a curse upon the earth because of humanity's sin which causes it to lose its fertility. In some of the most lush sections of our earth multitudes of folk are starving. It takes great effort and ingenuity for people to make this earth produce in abundance. (McGee, J. V. (1991). *Thru the Bible commentary: The Law (Genesis 1-15)* (electronic ed., Vol. 1, p. 108). Thomas Nelson.)

- We can understand from this curse, that there comes a time when, through a lack of repentance, those things for which we went through the motions with, no longer satisfy or produce the same result.

Verse 12 notes that as a fitting punishment Cain the farmer no longer enjoys the fruit of the ground and is thus by necessity consigned to live as a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth. Because God owned and occupied the land among his people, it was declared holy in covenant-law, requiring ceremonial provisions; a dead body must be buried by nightfall lest its corpse offend God and defile the land (Deut 21:23). Abel's corpse is left rotting in the open field. Cain's expulsion from the tainted land has its later parallel in Israel's experience of exile ... for choosing to live immorally (e.g., Lev 18:24–28; 26:33–35; Deut 28:64). Cain's sentence adds to the alienation between man and the ground that has already been introduced in Gen. 3:17–18. Underlying these punishments is a principle that recurs throughout Scripture: human sin has a bearing on the fertility of the earth. Whereas God intended humanity to enjoy the earth's bounty, sin distances people not only from God himself but also from nature (Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (58). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.)

In verse 13, Cain laments his condition, but does not ask for forgiveness. The context of v. 14 is more in keeping with complaint than request. Cain's complaint ("you have driven me") repeats the description in Gen. 3:24, where God "drove" (the same verb, *gāraš*) his parents out of the garden, but Cain adds that he will be left to himself and forgotten by God ("hidden"; cf. the psalmist's tormenting fear of lonely abandonment by God in Pss 13:1 [2]; 22:1, 24 [2, 25]). Cain protests that his penalty is too harsh. There is a decided difference between his response to God's decree and that of Adam (cp. 3:20). Cain expresses no inkling of remorse, only self-pity and resentment. That Cain does not receive divine forgiveness is shown by his expulsion "from the LORD's presence" (v. 16). This is the complaint of criminals everywhere. Cain only sees himself. He does not think of what he has done to Abel. And he blames God for being harsh. But Cain was the harsh one. He slew Abel! There is no word of repentance here, for sin makes one selfish; and Cain thought only of his own suffering, not of Abel's terrible suffering. Cain's fear of being killed by "whoever finds" him indicates his realization

that his crime merited death. **Sin brings guilt and fear of judgment** (Butler, J. G. (2008). *Analytical Bible Expositor: Genesis (40–41)*. Clinton, IA: LBC Publications.).

**How does God respond to Cain's complaint?** **Verse 15** notes that nothing more than the original sentence (banishment) will occur. **Covenant law prohibited** personal revenge (Lev 19:18). **Reprisal** is God's business. God therefore sets out a **warning** that **"If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold."** **"Seven"** as a figure of speech meaning completeness or fullness **expresses the certainty and severity of God's vengeance against** a vigilante. The **"mark on Cain,"** indicates that a **"Mark"** is the common word for **"sign"** (*ōi*); **the exact nature of the sign or its place on the body ("on Cain")** is **unknown**. **Why then does God preserve the life of Cain, this murderer?** Perhaps the answer is that **by the "sign" God prevents** the spread of bloodshed that otherwise would escalate. Moreover, **God is declaring that life and death are His prerogative**, which He does **not** share with anyone **except by divine sanction** (cp. 9:5–6). **God's judgment against the culprit** is restrained by his grace. **His promise of procreation is not** thwarted even by human murder (1:28; 3:15, 20). This **mark or sign** (the same word as in 9:13; 17:11)—is **not a stigma but a safe-conduct**—is almost a covenant, **making him virtually Cain's gō'el or protector**; cf. 2 Samuel 14:14b, AV, RV. It is **the utmost that mercy can do for the unrepentant**. (Kidner, D. (1967). *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 82). InterVarsity Press.)

**Finally, in verse 16, Cain will live "away from the presence of the LORD"** which is another narrative reminder of **Adam's crime and penalty (Gen. 3:22)**. Cain's residing in **"the land of Nod, east of Eden,"** implies that he is further **removed** from the garden than Adam. **This city or region is unknown**. It may be symbolic—the Hebrew word **nod** means **"wandering"** which **fits with Yahweh's earlier description of Cain's fate** (see vv. 12, 14). (Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., Whitehead, M. M., Grigoni, M. R., & Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Ge 4:16). Lexham Press.)

### **Please turn to Jude (p.964)**

**Cain is a picture of unbelief and its consequence. Jude, the brother of James and Jesus** (cf. Mt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3) **used the example of Cain** to show the patterns and **dangers of unbelief**. **Characterized by dissatisfaction** with the place they occupied, **rebelled against God. Jude explained this starting in verse 10:**

**Jude 1:10-13.** [10] But these people **blaspheme all that they do not understand**, and they are **destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively**. [11] **Woe to them!** For they **walked in the way of Cain** and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion. [12] These are **hidden reefs** at your love feasts, as they feast with you **without fear**, shepherds feeding themselves; **waterless clouds**, swept along by winds; **fruitless trees** in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; [13] wild waves of the sea, casting up the **foam of their own shame**; wandering stars, for whom **the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever**. (ESV)

In **Genesis 4, Cain's case** is a sorry one, it is sorer even than this in that **it has become a pattern for many persons who have followed him**. **If you are walking in Cain's way**—if you have **rejected** the way of salvation provided for you **through** the shed blood of Christ, **refusing** to accept responsibility for your own state or the state of others—**heed the warning of God and turn back** while there is still time. **Reject** Cain's way. **Take the way of Abel** who, though he was killed, nevertheless had testimony of God that he was righteous (Matt. 23:35; Luke 11:51; Heb. 11:4). **God says of Abel**, **"By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And**

by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead” (Heb. 11:4). Let (the testimony of) **Abel speak to you** and **follow his example** (Boice, J. M. (1998). *Genesis: An expositional commentary* (254). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books.).

(Format Note: Some base commentary from Mathews, K. A. (2001). *Vol. 1A: Genesis 1-11:26* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (258–279). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers)

**Closing Hymn:**

**Prayer Room Invitation**

**Benediction:** **In the words of the Apostle Paul** who **sent Tychicus** the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord **to the Ephesians at the end of Chapter 6:** <sup>22</sup> I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts. <sup>23</sup> Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible. (Eph. 6:20b-24. ESV). **In Christ we Pray. Amen.**