

# Raising Cain

## Genesis 3:22–4:10 (ESV)

**CONTEXT:** Remember last week, we saw the first sin - now Adam and Eve were sinners by choice, thus, they were subject to the law of - *like begets like*. Their offspring would also be sinners by birth as well as choice.

**TEXT: Genesis 3:22–4:16 (ESV)** <sup>22</sup> Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—”

Now, the tree of life, we said earlier, was the **key to longevity**. It seems that this tree had very powerful healing qualities. We said that in...

So there was this tree of life, in Eden, but Adam and Eve were driven out.

<sup>23</sup> therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup> He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

### Genesis 4:1

<sup>1</sup> Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.”

So this is the first human birth. Adam and Eve were created fully mature - Cain was created through normal processes. Eve had her first taste of the pain associated with the curse as she brought forth Cain.

One has to imagine that **so much hope** came with the birth of Cain. For all they knew, this would be the “seed” of the woman, promised in the previous chapter, that would crush the serpent’s head. This is also the firstborn son - a place of high esteem in the ancient world. This child would be the Patriarch after the death of Adam.

Then we read in verse 2 -

<sup>2</sup> And again, she bore his brother Abel.

**Able is child #2.** We don’t know how he got his name. There is no great exclamation attached to it—just “then, there was another one.” Firstborns often get scrapbooks, milestone journals, and professional photo shoots. By the second or third child, parents are too tired to find the camera, let alone edit the photos.

2b. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground.

- Able was a **rancher - working with animals, likely sheep**
- Cain was a **farmer - working with crops**

While all of this is taking place, keep in mind that years are passing. Adam and Eve have other sons and daughters. By verse 3, Cain and Abel are likely in their 20s.

Someone will always ask, “**Where did Cain get his wife?**”. It was obviously one of his sisters. Which is gross, I know - but keep in mind that the gene pool was very clean at this point, and this is prior to the prohibition against interfamily relationships.

**JOKE:** This is also one of the ways we know that mankind began in **Eastern Kentucky**. I used to use Mississippi as the punch line for that, but we had a guy from Mississippi here one day, and he was very upset. He said his cousin/wife was deeply offended.

**NOW - what happens next is the focus of the story.** The rest of the text is packed with insights, namely, insights about worship, parenting, and the Gospel.

## 1. Insights About Worship

<sup>3</sup> In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, <sup>4</sup> 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, <sup>5</sup> but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.

Much debate has occurred over those three verses. Let me try to answer some of the questions that arise from the passage:

### A. Why Did They Give in the First Place?

We have no record of God commanding them to give an offering or make a sacrifice. To them, it seems to have just been the right thing to do.

We’ve said this before - the word “**Worship**” comes from an Old English word that means “the worth of a ship”. When you board a cruise ship, you will see prominently displayed a manifest. That manifest is an accurate listing of everything on board that vessel. It is used to determine the value of the ship's cargo, and to apply the appropriate tariffs at each port of call. An official would survey the manifest and determine the worship or worth of the ship.

That is why the root word for Appraisal is “**praise**”. If you seek to purchase a piece of land, someone will appraise the land and tell you its value.

In the same way, we praise and worship God - **we tell God what value we attribute to Him.**

There is something inherent in human nature that drives us to sacrifice for that which we value. By the way, this is one of the ways to identify the idols in your life. What will

you sacrifice for them? Time? Talent? Treasure? We give to that which we value.

So, it could be simply that Cain and Able recognized that they were alive by God's grace, He had made their flocks and crops grow - thus they wanted to show Him how appreciative they were.

Each Lord's Day, we gather together with God's people and we do the same. We bring the sacrifice of praise, we give of our time, our talent, our treasure in order to say to the Lord that He is our object of greatest value and we trust Him.

## B. Why Did God Receive the Worship of Abel but not Cain?

Someone might say, Preacher, don't talk to me about what I give. I will give what I want when I want - you will, but understand, God doesn't have to receive it. God received Abel's gift, but not Cain's. Why?

Some have suggested that Abel brought a blood sacrifice, and Cain did not—that's a good and logical guess, but I don't believe it is accurate.

One way to discover the difference between the two gifts is to examine the New Testament and see what the authors of the New Testament had to say about this passage.

- **The writer to the Hebrews tells us plainly in Hebrews 11:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> 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.

Ok, so there we see Abel's offering, which requires faith. He was in some way trusting God in his offering, but Cain was not.

- It is referenced again in **Jude 11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> 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.

The way of Cain, we are told, was the same as Balaam's error and Korah's Rebellion.

- What was **Balaam's** error? He came against God's people to gain **profit**.
- **Korah's** rebellion was similar in that he came against Moses to gain **power**.

So, somehow, Cain's offering did not show faith, and it was influenced by greed.

### Let me show you the difference:

<sup>3</sup> In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, <sup>4</sup> 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,

Abel brought of the **FIRSTBORN** of his flock. So, his flock had lambs - Abel brought to God the FIRST of the flock, not knowing if there would be a second. What does that require - FAITH.

Cain brought an offering, “in the course of time”. In other words, it seems that once Cain knew that his needs were met and everything was taken care of, he figured that he ought to give something back to God.

Do you see the difference? The difference was not necessarily the **amount** of the gift or the **type** of the gift —it was the heart of the giver. One motivated by faith, the other not.

Able gave God his first and his best, trusting that God is good and will provide more. Cain's gift indicated that he didn't really trust God.

Adam and Eve sinned in a similar way - they just didn't think they could trust what God said about the fruit of the tree.

That's important - when we give our first fruits, it's pointing toward Christ, who is called in the text, “God's firstfruit”. That is why we give first, before we pay bills.

When God rejected Cain's offering, anger rose up in Cain's heart. Not so much against God, but against Abel. Cain had been rejected and Abel was being favored - it was not supposed to be this way. Cain was the first born. Cain was his mother's hope.

*There are Insights About Worship... secondly, there is a...*

## 2. Insights About Parenting

Now, notice Cain and Abel were raised by the same parents, in the same environment. One was acting in a way that God rejects, the other was acting in a way that God favors.

- Adam and Eve were not blamed for Cain's bad behavior.
- Adam and Eve were not blamed for Abel's good behavior.

Parents - don't take too much blame for the lack of faith in the hearts of your children. Don't take too much credit either.

Parents simultaneously **underestimate** and **overestimate** their impact.

- **We underestimate** - You see, the example of Adam and Eve clearly influenced Cain. They didn't trust God about the fruit, and Cain didn't trust God about life. They blamed others and said my disobedience was someone else's fault. Cain also redirected his sin as anger toward Abel.

**ILLUSTRATION:** You've heard it said that kids do what we do more than what we say, right? Because of that, we often teach lessons we did not mean to teach. For example, if a small child picks up a piece of fine china and mom freaks out, yells at the kid, and says, "We don't touch that". She intended to teach the child not to mishandle valuable objects. What her actions taught the child was, "it is ok to lose control of your emotions and yell in this household".

The actions of Adam and Eve taught Cain that you can't really trust the Almighty.

- **We overestimate** - Sometimes we forget that our kids stand as individuals, personally accountable to God for their faith or lack thereof. That is why two kids can come from the same house and one follow Jesus and the other does not.

In our house, if one of our kids acted up, I recognized immediately that they were taking after Julie's side of the family. The fact is - we have three kids. ***I cannot believe for any of them. I cannot disbelieve for any of them.*** They are accountable before God as individuals.

When God addresses the sin of Cain, He does not say a word about his parents. Cain is solely and directly responsible and accountable.

**You say, Pastor, if we aren't to flip out when our kids misbehave, how should we respond? Well, respond the way God does in this text.**

## **A. Address the Countenance**

<sup>6</sup> The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?"

Nothing reveals the heart of a person more than their countenance. There is no cream, there is no surgery that can correct a fallen countenance. You see, there is a direct line from the countenance to the heart. As goes the heart, so goes the countenance.

### **Proverbs 15:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> A glad heart makes a cheerful face...

### **Aaron blessed the people in Numbers 6:24–26 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> The Lord bless you and keep you; <sup>25</sup> the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; <sup>26</sup> the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

Notice - one of the greatest blessings we can experience is when God's countenance shines upon us. When we experience the pleasant countenance of God, we express a pleasant countenance as well.

You see, as Parents, we can change the behavior and not address the heart. The goal is heart change.

God asks Cain - why has your countenance fallen? In other words, there was a time when Cain's countenance was lifted. He had experienced joy and peace. But not now - why?

Just as we said last week, Good parenting is marked by asking good questions.

## B. Address the Personal Responsibility

<sup>7</sup> If you do well, will you not be accepted?

Notice that God conveys to Cain that Cain's countenance and Cain's joy were Cain's responsibility.

Cain - you are miserable because of what you did, NOT what Abel did.

NOW - there was no punishment beyond that. The experience of his heart was punishment enough. It's the Dr. Phil method - ok, your actions placed you in a state where you are downcast and miserable... how's that working for you?

Then notice the insight God gives him:

7b. And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it."

Sin is pictured as something hidden that is waiting to pounce. It is crouching at your door. That's the nature of sin, we don't see it clearly.

Why? Because IT's desires are contrary to you. Everything that is good for you, sin wants the opposite.

What is the solution? You must rule over sin.

**Puritan John Owen** said it this way - *you must be killing sin or sin will be killing you.*

Throughout the scriptures, God holds life and death, blessings and curses, before people and calls them to choose for themselves.

God will not force you into joy, but he will invite you.

God will not force you into heaven, but he will invite you.

NOW - Cain's worship was rejected by God. Cain was reproved by God. He responds in anger, but rather than kill his sin, look what he does.

<sup>8</sup> Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

Cain took all of his anger and channeled it NOT as his sin, but at his brother.

Like Adam and Eve before him, my sin is your fault. If I am to be happy, I must eliminate you. I can only go up, by striking you down.

THIS IS THE WAY OF CAIN. Progress through elimination.

### C. Pay Attention to the Tone

<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?”

Last week we said, “God didn’t call out - where are you?” For His sake, but for Adam’s. In the same way, God isn’t asking about the location of Abel for His sake but Cain’s.

You can almost hear the snarky, jaded tone in the written words.

Parents - your kids may seem to have perfect behavior, but if their tone is snarky and their countenance is fallen, sin is taking root in their heart. Draw closer, ask questions.

Cain knew exactly where Abel was. He was dead. He wasn’t his brother’s **keeper** he had become his brother’s **killer**.

*There are Insights About **Worship...Parenting...** and thirdly...*

## 3. Insights About the Gospel

<sup>10</sup> And the Lord said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground.

That’s the nature of sin’s effect.

The **Omniscience** of God means he saw everything

The **Omnipresence** (Not just space, but time) of God means He is seeing it in real time as if it were happening right now.

Thus, the worst sin we have ever committed cries out against us perpetually before God.

**ILLUSTRATION:** A famous 19th-century story tells of a man who was being considered for a high-ranking position in British society. He was brilliant, charming, and well-educated. His résumé was flawless. But shortly before his appointment, he received a strange letter in the mail. It read: “*We know what you did. If you don’t step down, we will make it public.*” **He immediately withdrew his name from consideration.**

Years later, he confessed: he had no idea who wrote the letter—or which of his transgressions they were referring to. But he did know this: he had done something—

and that was enough. The guilt was still so real, so loud, that even the *hint* of exposure unraveled him.

Some of us live just like that man—**haunted by voices from our past**, uncertain who knows what, always afraid the truth will come to light.

- Genesis 18 speaks of the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah crying out to Heaven against them.
- James 5 tells us that the unpaid wages that people have earned cry out for justice.
- The Apostles would shake the dust off their robes if a town rejected the Gospel to say that dust would testify against that town.
- Here we see the blood of Able cries out against Cain.

I wonder if anything is crying out to God against you and me? Certainly there are.

#### **CONCLUSION/INVITATION:**

- Our **Sin** cries out against us - did you see what he did?!
- The **Law** Cries out against us - he's fallen short!
- Our **conscience** condemns us as sinners!
- **Satan** cries out send them all to HELL!

Sin says **guilty** → The blood says **forgiven**

Satan says **unworthy** → The blood says **redeemed**

The law says **condemned** → The blood says **justified**

The conscience says **shame** → The blood says **washed clean**

The crowd says **crucify Him** → Jesus says **Father, forgive them**

**ILLUSTRATION: BUT, there is a picture in the scripture of something called a mercy seat, it covers the ark of the covenant. Within the ark is a copy of the law that rightfully condemns us. The writer to the Hebrews tells us...**

#### **Hebrews 12:24 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> ...Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant... sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

You see, when Jesus died on the cross, He entered into the most holy place, and sprinkled His own blood over the mercy seat, and that hushed the cries of the law that condemned us.

So we don't have to go one in the way of Cain - we are called now to offer the sacrifice of Abel.