

The Curse of Cain

Genesis 4

Introduction

Today, we are going to discuss Genesis, chapter 4. It is a good illustration of sin because all men are sinners, all men are condemned, all men are without excuse, and in this chapter, we will find depravity rearing its ugly head just outside the garden of Eden.

Genesis, chapter 4, provides the only authoritative account of early civilization. It is a little different of course, than scientists' accounts or anthropological writings that would suggest that early man was a cave man who walked around carrying a club and dragging his woman by the hair on her head. Such accounts are not exactly true.

As a matter of fact, early man was incredibly intelligent; they were geniuses. We will find in the ancestors of Cain, the first and second generation of Adam and Eve, that they were creating incredible things. They were inventing such things as musical instruments and metallurgy. They were inventing all kinds of things that would rapidly move a primitive society toward the kind of society that you and I enjoy in many ways today.

So, do not be fooled by society's accounts of early man. Early men were not dumb cave men, but were brilliant, as we will discover in this chapter.

Now, in the study of the life of Cain in Genesis, chapter 4, the first question I usually hear is, "Where did Cain get his wife?" Usually, that question comes from a person who does not want to talk about anything related to the gospel. They will say, "Where did Cain get his wife? Explain that to me and I will believe the rest of the Bible."

Let me answer that briefly, before we continue to the rest of Cain's biography. Cain married his sister. Before the law came, when God gave the genetic boundaries and the penalty for breaking the boundaries, men and women were married within the family.

It was the command of God to multiply and fill the earth. Obviously, Adam and Eve were the only parents. We know from Genesis, chapter 5, verses 4 and 5, that Adam lived for nine hundred thirty years.

Notice what happened during those hundreds of years – he had a lot of children. Look at verse 4.

Then the days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years, and he had other sons and daughters.

Adam multiplied his little corner of the earth. His quiver was full. So, Cain had quite a selection. He chose one of his sisters.

Why God Refused Cain's Offering

Now, the more important question is addressed in chapter 4. Let us begin with verse 1.

Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a manchild with the help of the Lord."

That is interesting because I believe that that is a simple statement of faith; that Eve is resting on the promise of God to bring a man, a seed, from her womb that would be the Savior. Of course, it is not Cain. Continue to verse 2.

Again she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

Abel was the first herdsman or shepherd and Cain was the first farmer. Both of these occupations were worthy and ones that they chose.

Look at verses 3 through 5a.

So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering; but for Cain and for his offering, He had no regard. . . .

Let me answer one question, "Why did God refuse Cain's offering?" I will give three reasons.

Cain's offering was bloodless

1. First, because Cain's offering was bloodless.

In the New Testament book of Hebrews, in chapter 9, verse 22, we read that there is no atoning or remission for sin apart from the shedding of blood.

Now, there are some views that I will not take the time to address, that suggest Cain came to God with a bad attitude and it was because of his attitude that God rejected his offering. I think the text would indicate otherwise.

- First, notice both Cain and Abel brought an offering.

That is not a coincidence. Verse 3 says,

So it came about in the course of time that Cain [and Abel] brought an offering to the Lord . . .

These terms are related to the giving of an offering. I think it is implied in this verse that Abel and Cain built an altar. On that altar, they placed their offerings. How did Cain know and learn that they were to bring an offering to God? This is an argument of course, without text, but I think God instructed them by their parents, Adam and Eve.

Let me give another reason why I believe Cain's offering was rejected because it was without blood.

- Secondly, they both came at an appointed time.

Notice again the phrase in verse 3, "in the course of time". What I am trying to do is prove that God gave Cain and Abel revelation about bringing sacrifices to God. The phrase "it came about in the course of time," could be literally translated, "at the end of days," which is a reference to the Sabbath day. These men brought their offerings on the seventh day. Was that coincidental? Absolutely not. It was a result of revelation.

- Thirdly, I think that revelation would be given in chapter 3, verse 21,

The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

As we studied earlier, Adam and Eve, in the garden, tried to cover their sin with fig leaves. That was not sufficient because that was the work of their own hands. God kills some animals and takes the skins and clothes Adam and Eve. I think in that clothing, He gave them added revelation.

There is only one way to atone for sin. Atonement, by the way, means covering. You cannot cover sin with the leaf of a tree. You must cover or

atone for it by the shedding of blood; by the giving of another life. Fig leaves will never atone.

So, I think God refused Cain's offering because first of all, it was bloodless.

Cain's offering was the fruit of his own hands

2. Secondly, God refused Cain's offering because it was the fruit of his own hands.

This is the religion of the world from the time of Cain; that is, we will approach God by the works of our hands; we will seek to satisfy a holy God by something that we do. That was insufficient because our own works can never atone for sin.

Cain's offering was the fruit of the ground

3. Thirdly, I think Cain's offering was refused by God because it was the fruit of ground.

Cain ignored the curse. Look at a passage we studied earlier in chapter 3, verse 17.

Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; . . .

(note the curse),

"cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life."

The earth had been cursed. There is nothing from this earth by the works of our hands that will ever satisfy a holy God. Cain tried. I think he rebelled against known revelation – revelation from God, in that they both brought an offering on the Sabbath day.

Now, notice what happens when God confronts Cain. Look at verses 5 and 6 of chapter 4.

but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your countenance fallen?"

It is almost as if God says, "Cain, you know what you're supposed to do. Why, now that you've disobeyed, are you angry at me?"

Notice what God says in verse 7a.

If you do well, . . .

(What would that be? Obviously God is saying, “If you do what I tell you to do.”),

... will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not well, sin is crouching at the door; ...

The word “crouch” is used by the ancients to mean a lion who is crouching and ready to pounce on his prey. God is saying, “If you disregard My will, My revelation, My word, sin, like a lion, is crouching at your door ready to pounce. You are open prey.”

Notice what He says in the next phrase of verse 7.
and its [sin’s] desire is for you, ...

Does that ring a bell? Do you remember in chapter 3, verse 16, what God told the woman?

To the woman He said, “I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband ...

The same phrase that is used in this verse is used in referring to Cain’s sin. In other words, “Your sin has the desire to control you.”

Because of the fall, women try to control their husbands. That is part of the curse. It is part of sin that a woman now tries to manipulate and control her husband.

So, God is saying to Cain, “If you disregard My will, sin will manipulate you. Sin will control you, if you disregard My will.”

The Five-fold Result of Cain’s Sin

Now, notice the five-fold result of Cain’s sin. By the way, Cain’s sin was not murder; Cain’s sin was disobedience. Murder is the first of five results of his sin. Five things happen because Cain disobeyed God’s revelation.

Cain murdered his brother

1. The first result of Cain’s sin is that he murdered his brother.

Look at verse 8 of chapter 4.

Cain told Abel, his brother. ...

(What was he telling him? He was telling him about God. Perhaps he was arguing that God was playing favorites. We do not know.),

... And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

Perhaps, if we could go back in time, we could watch two men out in the field. We cannot hear what they are saying, but we note that there is a heated argument going on. Cain is raising his fist to heaven. Abel is perhaps, pleading that he repent. Finally, Cain in his heated passion, picks up a blunt instrument or even takes his hands and beats Abel to death there in the field. He rose up and he killed him.

Cain lied to God

2. Notice the second result of Cain’s sin; that is, he lied to God.

Look at verse 9a.

Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?”

You may remember that when Adam sinned, God came and asked him a question. Well, in this verse, He is talking to the second generation and He asks a question and gives him a chance to repent. He says,

... “Where is Abel your brother?” ...

Note Cain’s response in the next phrase of verse 9.

And he said, “I do not know.” ...

That is a lie. Cain knows the exact spot where he has buried Abel so that no one will discover his sin. So he lies and says,

... “I don’t know.” ...

And then he asks the question in the last part of verse 9,

... “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

By the way, let me ask a question of you. What is the answer to that question? “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Is the answer, “Yes,” or “No”? The answer is “Yes,” you are your brother’s keeper. You do have a responsibility for your brother. Not only do we have responsibility for that family member, but of course, in the New Testament, in the body of Christ, you and I have a responsibility for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Yes, I am my brother’s keeper. There is a great sense that I am to know and I am to be concerned about where my brother is spiritually; where his life

is; where he resides in his relationship with God. Yes, I am my brother's keeper.

Then, in verse 10,

He [God] said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground."

Cain murders his brother and then lies to God. Isn't that true of all of us? One of the first things to follow sin is a lie. Children lie to parents because they are living in sin. Parents lie to children to perhaps justify their sin. Husbands lie to wives, and wives lie to husbands. Why? Because there is sin at the door. To cover it, to clothe it, we begin telling one lie after another. Soon, it multiplies and becomes a tangled web, and we begin wondering, "What did I say?"

Someone said, "You never have to worry about what you said if you tell the truth."

So Cain began lying.

Cain lost his first love

3. Notice the third result of Cain's sin; that is, he lost his first love.

Look at verses 11 and 12a.

Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strengths to you; . . .

Now, we can only understand this if we try to understand Cain. There is a breed of men called farmers, and they love the earth. Their greatest joy is watching the stalks of corn wave in the breeze. They get no more satisfaction out of anything other than knowing that their barns are filled with fresh hay. They love the ground. It is their love, their life.

Cain chose the occupation of farmer because he loved the ground; he loved the earth. It was his greatest joy to plant seed and see it grow and multiply. He brought to God the best things his hands had produced by his labor. He loved it, and God took it away from him. In effect, God said, "Cain, the earth is cursed, but now, the earth is going to ignore your hand. That means, Cain, that you're going to go out there and plant seed, and nothing is going to happen."

That would be the nightmare of a farmer. I can imagine that Cain probably went out immediately to test this. He probably planted some seed and watered

it and watched over it for a few months. He perhaps, knelt and tried to coax it out of the ground, watering the ground with his tears, saying, "Please grow."

Yet, the curse stood true. The earth ignored Cain, a man who loved it so much. This was a result of the tragedy of sin.

Cain lost his sense of permanence and direction

4. Notice fourthly that Cain lost his sense of permanence and direction.

Look at the last part of verse 12.

. . . you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth.

In other words, "You are going to leave this place and spend the rest of your life wandering around."

Again, we cannot understand this unless we think in terms of what a farmer is like. Most farmers are born, grow up, live and die in the same town.

I was born in Worthington, Minnesota, just next to Butterfield, Minnesota. It is a farming community. I have not been back in ten years. We used to go back every summer, and I can still remember in my mind's eye, that little main street and the general store that was run for many decades by my aunt and uncle. All of the people in town knew each other. They were people of the earth; they farmed. In fact, my father was raised in a farmer's home, and he sold his inheritance and joined the Air Force and moved to the city. That is how I was raised in the city.

There in the little towns of Worthington and Butterfield, life is so simple. The farmers live close to the ground, and the roots are deep. They have lived there all their lives. There is a real sense of permanence. Nothing exciting in our definition, ever happens. In fact, their version of a crime wave would be some teenagers riding through town at eleven o'clock at night on their motorcycles or something. Nothing really flamboyant ever occurs. It is simply – you get up, you farm, you eat, you go to bed. And yet, they love it that way. You could not pull them into the city if you tried.

Think in terms of that when you think of Cain. Perhaps you have read or heard about all of the farmers over the last decade that have lost their farms. Unless you have been raised on a farm, you will never understand the agony of their hearts. To auction off what has been in the family for decades, generations, years – this is their life; their roots! They live in the

same home where grandpa and grandma lived, and now, they are losing it.

That is the way Cain felt. That is the tragedy of sin. Because God would virtually tell Cain, “Yank up all the roots. From now on, you wander. No more permanence; no more stability.”

Cain lost his fellowship with God

5. Fifthly, the last result Cain’s sin was that he lost his fellowship with God.

Look at verses 13 through 15.

Cain said to the Lord, “My punishment is too great to bear! Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me. So the Lord said to him. “Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold.” And the Lord appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him.

This sign was not a mark, but a sign for Cain. We do not know what it was, but it was something that when others saw it, they knew they were not to touch Cain.

Cain was to live under the curse for his entire life. Continue to verse 16 and notice the first phrase.

Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

“Nod” is the Hebrew word which means, “the land of wandering”. Cain would wander the rest of his life.

It is interesting that Cain rebelled against the curse because the text tells us, in verse 17, that he tried to build the city to gain some kind of permanence. The Hebrew text indicates there is not a completion of the work. In other words, he began to build, but he never finished. His children probably finished for him.

Cain continued wandering – a fugitive from God. There was no sign of repentance; no sign of confession. You never hear Cain say, “Okay, Lord, just a second. I’ll go and get a lamb and be right back.”

No. Cain took his basket of fruit, and we have every indication that he walked away from God forever.

We are told in verses 18 through 26, of his family.

Now to Enoch was born Irad, and Irad became the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael became the father of Methushael, and Methushael became the father of Lamech.

Lamech took to himself two wives: the name of one was Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah.

Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock.

(this guy invented the tent and he took us home with him),

His brother’s name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and the pipe.

As for Zillah, she also gave birth to Tubal-cain, the forger of all implements of bronze and iron; and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

(notice that it did not take millions of years for people to discover how to use iron and bronze),

Lamech said to his wives . . .

(in his proud heart),

“Adah and Zillah, listen to my voice, you wives of Lamech, give heed to my speech, for I have killed a man for wounding me; and a boy for striking me;

“if Cain is avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.”

(in other words, “I am more wicked than my father, and I am proud of it.”),

Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for, she said, “God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel, for Cain killed him.”

To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord.

Application –

Two Thoughts From the Life of Cain

Let me give two thoughts from the life, the biography of Cain. It is brief, yet it is painful. The man who rejected the revelation of God took his own approach to God in his own hands and said, "I'll come to You, God, in my way." Like those today, who say they will approach God their way, God rejects them.

Disobedience to God never makes sense

1. The first thought is that disobedience to God never makes sense.

The price of disobedience to God is too great. The penalty is more severe than any enjoyment you or I could ever receive from sin. Disobeying God never, never makes sense.

I can remember, as I was growing up, listening to my father at the Friday night Bible study for military men. He would ask the question, and I used to chuckle because I knew what was coming, "Men, give me three logical reasons why you sin."

The guys would pop up their hands and say things like, "The devil made me do it."

They would give all the excuses. Then, my father would prove to them that there is no logical reason, no sensible reason why you or I would ever disobey God. Disobedience never, never makes sense.

Obedience to God begins with a choice

2. Secondly, obedience to God begins with a choice.

Notice, although I have not spent any time on this and it is probably a sermon in itself, both Cain and Abel were born into the same home. Both boys had the same advantages and had the same amount of revelation from God. However, they proved to us that obedience is dependent upon choice.

One chose to follow the revelation of God, while the other chose to disobey the revelation of God. One came with humility, while the other came with pride. One came the way God suggested, while the other came his own way.

Let me close with a story that I love. Charlotte Elliott was a very troubled young lady. She was not a Christian, and in fact, was rebelling against what she knew was true.

Charlotte was raised in a godly home. Her parents, out of desperation one evening, invited a visiting preacher into their home for dinner. He came in and began talking about the Lord at the table. They were asking questions for him to answer that would perhaps, probe into the heart of their daughter so that she would come to Christ. Finally, she blew up and, in a rage, stomped off. They finished their meal in silence.

After awhile, Charlotte, sorry for her outburst, came back to the table. The family had been dismissed and only the preacher was there. He began urging her to choose Christ. She was so overwhelmed with all of her pride, with all of her sense of worth, that it took some talking to reveal to her that she was in fact, a sinner. She finally, after an hour or two of discussion, broke down.

Then, the greatest obstacle to Charlotte's mind and heart was the fact that she was too sinful for God to ever accept her. She was too filled with herself, her own works. The pastor began saying, "Charlotte, you've got to come to God just like you are. Come to God just like you are."

Still, the light did not break. The preacher left.

Charlotte stayed up all night with those words ringing in her mind, until finally, the Spirit of God made it clear. Her own testimony is written in a way that we sing. Let me read the words that Charlotte Elliott wrote.

*Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

*Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

*Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,

*Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

The hope for our lives, men and women, is the hope that Abel found in coming to God in His way, just as he was – a sinner. We have found the acceptance due to the obedience of one and the rejection of another because he came in the way that he wanted.

Oh, what a delight to know that, when I come to God by the way of the cross, just as I am (and Jesus continually accepts us on that same basis that we, just as we are, have gone to Him), we can rest, just as we are, in Christ, forgiven, pardoned, and relieved. What a relief that is.