

Genesis 4B (2011)

- We drop back into the story of Cain and Abel after God has instructed Cain to seek the sacrifice offered him to atone for his sin
 - But as we will see today, Cain doesn't take that offer
 - And in fact, Cain goes further in the opposite direction, indulging his sinful flesh

Gen. 4:8 Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

- In understanding what transpired, we face another lost in translation challenge
 - The opening phrase of verse 8 reads "Cain said to Abel his brother..."
 - There is something missing
 - Most modern English translations have tried to make it read as if this phrase stands alone (i.e., unconnected to the rest of the verse)
 - But the earliest surviving Hebrew, Greek and Latin texts all state this verse as:
 - "Cain said to Abel his brother, let's go out into the field."
 - The NET Bible has also chosen to render it this way
 - This better translations conveys Cain's premeditation, as Cain convinced his brother to go to a remote place before committing murder
 - Cain must have had a large enough extended family at this point that he had reason to need privacy, and fear retribution
- So Cain commits the first murder in the Bible, the full depravity of the human heart on display from the very beginning
 - All the sin required for us to do the very worst things in life existed from the time of the second man
 - The condition of the world is not the result of a worsening of the human condition that leads to things like murder
 - It has always been a part of the human heart

- We should also notice the conscience at work as well
 - Why did Cain feel the need to lure his brother into a remote place?
 - There can be no other explanation than that Cain felt guilt over his crime even before he committed it
 - And he was protecting himself from discovery – evidence of a conscience
- What was the basis of Cain's anger at Abel?
 - Simply, a hatred of those who gain God's approval
 - As Jesus warned:

[John 15:18](#) "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.

[John 15:19](#) "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

[John 15:20](#) "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

[John 15:21](#) "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.

- When Cain murdered Abel, scripture tells us it was the most ungodly man living destroying the most godly
 - The first believing son persecuted by the first unbelieving son
 - The spiritual son of the first murderer, Satan, rising up against the first prophet, Abel – first among many to be persecuted
 - The pattern continues unabated today
- Now we have the second time God has confronted man after a sinful act

[Gen. 4:9](#) Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

[Gen. 4:10](#) He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground.

[Gen. 4:11](#) "Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

[Gen. 4:12](#) "When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth."

- Verse 9 is one of the most sarcastic and disrespectful statements spoken to God recorded in the Bible
 - God gives Cain the same opportunity for repentance that He offered Adam and Eve in the Garden
 - And instead of responding with confession, Cain offers this remarkably blunt response
 - In fact, this is the first human lie in history
 - Clearly, there is no repentance nor remorse in his heart
 - But don't miss the grace of God on display in these early chapters of Genesis
 - Despite watching mankind turn away from Him, disobey Him, disrespect Him, nevertheless God maintains a patient forbearance with all of it
 - And as a result of the first murder, we also see in v.10 the first burial referenced
 - That's the meaning of the phrase "from the ground"
 - And the earth "opening" its mouth to receive Abel
 - In this case, the burial was done out of the need to cover up a mistake, not out of respect for the body
- God then responds to Cain's insolence with a statement of judgment
 - God says, look what you have done (in the form of a question)
 - And that Abel's blood cries to God from the ground
 - God is aware of injustice and of the affliction of His children by faith
 - Abel's blood cries out to God for vengeance and God acts in the due course of time
 - The punishment God delivers to Cain sounds similar to Adam's but is actually quite different (and it's unique to Cain alone)
 - God says "you" are cursed from the ground

- While Adam's sin resulted in a curse against the ground
- Now the ground itself becomes evidence against Cain and brings a curse upon him
- In Hebrew, the sense is that the ground has been Cain's prosecutor and jury, convicting Cain of his sin
 - And the verdict that the ground demands is death
 - So God pronounces a curse on Cain
 - Remember, a curse is a permanent judgment of damnation
 - There is no recovery possible for Cain
- Furthermore, God declares that the earth will no longer give its produce to Cain
 - He is no longer a farmer who stays in one place
- Instead, Cain will wander the earth and scrounge for his living
 - The word for vagrant is *nua*, which means to shake in fear or to stagger, to walk to and fro
 - To wander is *nud*, which is similar in meaning but with an emphasis on grieving and mourning
 - He will forever wander the earth in fear and grieving
- More importantly, Cain must live out his days away from the rest of his family and from God Himself
 - At this point in the history of humanity, Cain can expect to be alone for the most part
 - More importantly, Cain is being banished from God's presence on the earth
- It's obvious that God has maintained some kind of presence among men on earth even after the Fall in the Garden
 - Cain and Abel sacrificed to God
 - Later we'll see that other men in Adam's family knew God and even walked with Him

- So Cain's banishment means he is leaving the community where God is frequently visiting in some form
- Cain's removal from God's presence is a remarkable picture of what we know happens to all unbelievers in eternity
 - They are eternally separated from God's presence as they feel the weight of their sins
 - This is the cursed outcome of every unbeliever
 - Notice that according to this analogy, the unbeliever isn't annihilated
 - Cain's existence didn't come to an end
 - He continued on but apart from God, in an existence of suffering
 - Similarly, the unbeliever under judgment is also subjected to a continuing existence apart from God
 - Cain's story is a Biblical picture of how unbelievers are going to be judged one day
 - They will appear before God
 - And He will test their work, but they won't have an answer for His questioning
 - And in the end, their deeds will be found lacking, and they will receive punishment in eternal separation from God
 - And as an unbeliever, Cain pictures the eternal through the experiences of his earthly life
- The Bible declares that Cain was an evil person who had no faith in God
 - And this is why he finds no forgiveness
 - But if we are ever tempted to think that someone may be converted to faith through some convincing display of God, remember Cain
 - Cain knew God
 - He spoke with God, He talked to God
 - Yet he didn't accept the gospel
 - He didn't submit his will to God's

- An encounter with God or a powerful religious experience cannot create faith
 - Hebrews tells us that God is the author and perfecter of our faith
 - He is also the perfect judge of all who oppose Him

Gen. 4:13 Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear!"

- Cain reacts with regret and sorrow, and a complaint
 - Cain seems to understand the significance of God's judgment
 - In literal Hebrew, Cain declared or said that his iniquity (or crime) was too great to be lifted or forgiven
 - He may not be talking about his punishment, but rather his offense
 - He recognizes he won't find mercy from God
 - Don't be misled by what you see in Cain here
 - This is worldly sorrow, not godly repentance

2Cor. 7:10 For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

- Only God can produce true spiritual repentance, and it leads to a faithful response to God's word
 - In 2 Cor. Paul explains the difference to his readers as encouragement
 - They had been chastised by Paul and felt sorrow, but Paul says this was good sorrow, because it led them to lead a more godly life
- No such godly response is taking place here
 - Instead, Cain is simply showing regret over his circumstances

Gen. 4:14 "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."

- Cain now argues his case before God
 - He says he is being...
 - Driven from the face of the ground
 - Banished from the farming of the land – his way of life
 - Made a wanderer
 - These are simple restatements of God's words
 - But then Cain adds that this existence will leave him vulnerable to attack
 - Moving around puts at him risk from those who would harm him
 - The irony here is that what Cain himself started, he is now concerned about receiving
 - The first murderer fears being murdered
 - What he sows, he now fears reaping
 - And who might threaten Cain?
 - Reasonable projections of population growth arrive at a likelihood that there were 20-30 thousand people on earth by the time Abel died
 - All of these people are relatives, and since Cain is the first to murder, the prospect of retaliation is on Cain's mind
- So God responds to Cain's concern with a measure of grace

Gen. 4:15 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.

- God is bringing some protection to Cain
 - God declares that anyone who takes vengeance on Cain for Abel will receive a seven-fold (meaning divinely complete) vengeance on his own family
 - Then to be sure that this promise was trustworthy, God gave Cain a sign that he could remember

- The typical reading is that a mark was put on Cain, but the word for sign is *oth* – a sign like that given to Noah
 - More likely, God simply gave Cain something that he knew meant that he could trust God's promise
- Why does God protect Cain?
 - Ultimately, Cain stands as a witness against lawlessness for many generations
 - Secondly, God has not instituted earthly punishment for sin
 - There is no government or laws to constrain men's behavior
 - So God is merely controlling sin more than protecting Cain

Gen. 4:16 Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Gen. 4:17 Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son.

Gen. 4:18 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.

- Cain is no longer in the presence of the Lord
 - And so he goes east of Eden
 - East is always a picture of where the unrighteous go (Babylon)
 - West is always a picture of righteousness and the Kingdom
 - This is a common motif in the Bible
 - Mesopotamia is in the East
 - Israel is in the West
 - Abraham was called out from the East and sent to the West
 - Isaac's bride Rebekah, who pictures the Church, is called out from the East and meets her husband in the West

- Ishmael and Esau leave the West and go East
- Etc.
- Cain lands in Nod, which could mean wanderer in Hebrew (similar to *nud*)
 - This shows fulfillment of prophecy
- In v. 17 we hear that Cain has a wife, and at this point, a question everyone asks is – where did Cain get his wife?
 - In fact, this question is one of the first places critics of Scripture will go to suggest the Bible is untrustworthy
 - How can Cain have a wife?
 - But the answer is so easy, even children can answer it correctly
 - His sister! (Or likely some other female relative, a niece perhaps)
 - Can this be appropriate?
 - First, consider that our hesitation to accept this answer is conditioned on modern standards and mores
 - We understand today that incestual relationships are unhealthy
 - They produce defective (disabled) babies – DNA is a problem when you bring together parents with closely matched genes and those defects pass down to the child
 - Secondly, God Himself outlawed incest in the Mosaic Law
 - Prior to this time, brother-sister marriages were not unlawful, although they were uncommon
 - Take Abraham, who married his half-sister
 - In the beginning, the need for brother-sister marriages was obvious, and God permitted it
 - But initially such marriages were not unhealthy because the DNA of Adam was perfect, as he was created perfectly
 - The curse on the Earth introduced the wearing down of the human genome and the introduction of genetic defects - albeit over many generations

- Later, after DNA errors began to build up, God outlawed such marriages to protect families from the problems bad DNA would cause
- This is a classic example of wrongly interpreting scripture with a modern viewpoint
 - Today we have been conditioned to see incest as bad and harmful, and therefore it is outlawed - rightly so
 - But in Cain's day, there was no prohibition and no medical concerns with the practice
 - And it was essential to growing the population of men on Earth