

Genesis 4A (2011)

- As we begin Chapter 4, Adam and Eve begin their life outside the garden as a married couple
 - At first, life isn't too bad
 - Adam and Eve had the beginnings of a great marriage
 - He didn't have to hear about all the men she could have married and she didn't have to hear about how well his mother cooked
 - No in-laws, no siblings, no noisy neighbors
 - Though they are under a curse, the full effect of that curse won't be apparent for many centuries
 - But in case we were tempted to think that the sin of the garden didn't have an immediate effect on mankind, God gives us the events of Chapter 4

Gen. 4:1 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."

- The chapter opens with Adam and Eve having their first child
 - Adam and Eve have relations
 - This is unlikely the first time Adam and Eve had been together in this way
 - The reference to one flesh in Chapter 2 suggests that the marriage was consummated from the start
 - But here they conceive and a child is born
 - With no prior experience with child birth, it must have been both a scary and awesome moment
 - The first time one human being gave life to another
 - Eve, the mother of the living, is witness for the first time to what God's promise will mean for her and all women
 - The first baby is born, and we wonder a little at how they would have understood to care for him

- They name him Cain (*Kaian*) which comes from the Hebrew root *kin*, which means to give form to, or give shape
- Then Eve adds that interesting phrase at the end
 - The Hebrew in the last part of this verse is very important to understanding it's meaning
 - In Hebrew, that verse only says "I have received boy: Jehovah"
 - Translators have struggled to make sense of this statement, usually placing other words in the verse to create a different meaning
 - But the meaning is exactly as Moses stated
 - Eve has announced that she has given birth to God in the form of a boy child
 - Remember God had promised Eve that she would bring a child who would crush Satan
 - And so as this child is born, Eve is overjoyed in the birth moment and imagines she will have the privilege to birth the promised Messiah
 - This is a natural assumption
 - How was Eve to understand that it would be millennia before the Messiah arrived
- Before long, a second boy arrives

Gen. 4:2 Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

- To put this verse in perspective with the prior verse, we need to look at it in Hebrew as well
 - The name Abel in Hebrew is *habel*
 - Which means vapor
 - It can also be spelled *habal* which means vanity
 - We can see two meanings in his name

- First, we can see a prophetic meaning in that Abel was fleeting like a vapor
- Secondly, we see Eve's realization that she was wrong about Cain
 - By now Cain is probably a toddler and Eve noticed that her "Messiah" was going through the terrible twos
 - This can't be God, she realized at some point
- Then she realized that the birth of Cain wasn't a one time event
 - She will birth many children who will carry on that pattern
 - She might have thought that the birth process was merely intended to produce the Messiah
- So when Eve has a second boy, she has learned her lesson
 - She declared that it was vanity on her part to assume she was giving birth to the Messiah
 - And she names her second son Abel (vanity) to remind herself that she had been vain when she made her declaration concerning Cain
- God often frustrates men by not choosing the one we assume should be chosen
 - Moses begins a pattern here that will continue throughout the book of Genesis
 - The line of Messiah is in God's choosing, not man's
 - And he will continually make distinctions between the two children to emphasize that fact
- Abel becomes a keeper of flocks while Cain farms (*Incorrectly switched in the audio*)
 - We can understand the need for farming, but what were the flocks for?
 - Since the eating of meat was not yet permitted, we assume the flocks produced milk
 - And as we'll see now, they also served a purpose in worship

[Gen. 4:3](#) So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground.

[Gen. 4:4](#) 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 for his offering;

[Gen. 4:5](#) but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

- In the course of time...
 - Moses emphasizes that what happens next is according to the natural course of events
 - It suggests an inevitability arising from the Fall in the Garden
 - Here is a story on the consequences of sin in the world
- Cain and Abel brought an offering to God
 - Sacrifices were already an understood necessity
 - God had at some point revealed to Cain and Abel the necessity for atonement
 - This is before the Law of Moses, but God's Law has always been in place
 - Moses was merely the one privileged to reveal it in the way God delivered it
 - So Cain and Abel are directed to approach God with these sacrifices
 - Notice that God and man are still in a relationship though now it's a different relationship
 - Where before God and man worked and lived together in the Garden
 - Now man is seen approaching God with payments and an atoning sacrifice in an effort to appease God's wrath for sin
 - Obviously, the relationship between God and man has been injured through sin
 - And these two boys are caught up in this problem, though they had nothing to do with the original sin in the Garden

- Each man brings a different offering and gains a different result with God (we need to look closely at this)
 - Our first clue to understanding what happens is in noticing that Cain brings a grain offering
 - Just as in the Law that was provided through Moses, God commanded grain offering, and Cain is giving his offering here
 - But under God's Law, the grain sacrifice was a tithe offering
 - We know the Law had not been given in its full form at this point
 - But God would have instructed these men in a way similar to what He gave Moses
 - Our second clue is that Abel brings an animal sacrifice, specifically a first-born animal that has already been killed and its fat was being burned
 - This is the second major type of sacrifice
 - Animal sacrifices were atonement for sin offerings
 - Our third clue is found in the Hebrew at the beginning of v.4
 - The Hebrew is limited to a few words, leaving room for interpretation
 - The Hebrew is *Habel gam bo*, which is "Abel also brought"
 - It likely means Abel brought grain like Cain and also brought an animal sacrifice
 - Abel seems to understand the need to honor God with tithes and to bring atonement for his own sin
 - But Cain is limiting his actions to tithing only
 - We see confirmation of this interpretation in the book of Hebrews

Heb. 11:4 By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his **gifts**, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

- Abel is said to have presented gifts (plural)

- The next clue is found in how God responds to Cain & Abel
 - God has regard for Abel, not for Cain
 - In Hebrew, give regard is *shaah* = paid attention
 - Another way to say it is He made His face to shine upon Abel's sacrifice
 - But God doesn't have regard for Cain's sacrifice
 - In Hebrew, it's the same word (*shaah*) but with a negative in front
 - Why did God see the two sacrifices differently, since both types were commanded under the Law?
 - Was Abel's contribution better in some way?
 - Some have speculated that the cause for God responding so differently was in the nature of the sacrifices themselves
 - Maybe blood vs no blood
 - Maybe fruit (off) the ground vs firstlings
 - That Abel also tithed like Cain, but Cain didn't bring an animal sacrifice like Abel
 - First consider some scripture

[1Sam. 15:22](#) Samuel said,

"Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices
As in obeying the voice of the LORD?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams.

[Hos. 6:6](#) For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice,
And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

[Hos. 6:7](#) But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant;
There they have dealt treacherously against Me.

[1John 3:11](#) For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;

[1John 3:12](#) not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

- Scripture teaches that sacrifice is made necessary by our sin
 - But God is more interested in our obedience so that it doesn't require sacrifice in the first place
 - More importantly, in speaking about Cain and Abel, John says that the key difference between the two was that the actions of one were evil and the other righteous
 - John's commentary teaches us that there was something unrighteous in Cain's actions and something righteous in Abel's
- God is condemning Cain's sacrifice because it was made with an unbelieving heart
 - Cain is not interested in knowing God or in loyalty, and Hosea said
 - Abel's actions, on the other hand, reflect faith
 - What kind of faith are we talking about in their cases?
 - Specifically, Cain is not believing in the promises of God concerning the need for atonement
 - Cain doesn't accept the reality of sin and the fact that an atonement is necessary
 - He is acting purely out of pride and self-righteousness
 - And God will not accept much less be pleased by Cain's tithe offering unless it comes with faith in God's promises
 - Without faith, it's impossible to please God
- How can we know that Cain's lack of faith is the cause for God's displeasure?
 - Look at what follows...

[Gen. 4:6](#) Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?"

[Gen. 4:7](#) "If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

- These two verses offer one of the more inscrutable statements in all scripture
 - Many have tried and failed to make sense of these words, especially in light of the context

- In fact, many interpretations (and many translations) of this verse are nonsensical
 - We are going to learn them properly this morning
 - We should note in passing that this is the first mention in the Bible of anger
 - Cain expressed anger against God because God does not accept Cain's sacrifice
 - We're left feeling that Cain arrived before God so that he could receive praise for his tithe
 - When the praise didn't come, it angered him
- First, God asks why are you angry? Why are you disappointed?
 - Why does God ask this question?
 - It's clearly rhetorical, but it begs a question...why wouldn't Cain be angry about God's rejection?
 - Then looking at v.7 God says if you (Cain) do well, will not your countenance be lifted up?
 - But in Hebrew, most of those words aren't there
 - In Hebrew, the verse reads: do well, be raised up
 - Now God's question starts to make more sense
 - God says to Cain why are you angry that I gave regard for Abel's animal sacrifice?
 - Animal sacrifices are for sin
 - Since you didn't bring an animal sacrifice, you must not have felt you needed atonement (i.e., you don't think you have sin)
 - So why would you be angry with Me for giving regard to your brother's sacrifice if you don't even need to sacrifice?
 - If you do well (have no sin), you will be raised up (resurrected)
- Then we reach the toughest part of the statement

- “If you do well, sin is crouching at the door...”
 - Not doing well here is the opposite from the earlier statement
 - Doing well = not sinning, so not doing well must mean sinning
 - If you sin, then sin is crouching at the door?
 - This statement makes no sense
 - At the very least, it’s redundant
 - The word for sin is *chattah*, which is usually translated “sin offering”
 - You can see a similar application in Greek in 2 Cor 5:21

[2Cor. 5:21](#) He made Him who knew no sin **to be sin** on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

- Jesus, Who knew no sin, became a sin offering on our behalf
 - He didn’t become sin, but rather a sin offering is implied in that verse
- In Cain’s case, God is saying if you sin, then a sin offering is...
 - The English translation says “crouching”
 - How does that word make sense here?
 - Sin is waiting to get me? It’s already got me
 - Sin is ready to tempt me? God said when Cain sins, it will be crouching (temptation has already happened)
 - There is no way to fit the word crouching into this context
 - The word in Hebrew means lying down, but it’s almost always used to described a four-legged animal lying on the ground
 - Like a goat or sheep laying down
 - Next, the word door is properly translated doorway
- Finally, we look at the end of verse 7

- The end of the sentence is only two words in Hebrew: *teshuqah, mashal*
 - *Teshuqah* means desire and it occurs only here and in Gen 3 (a woman's desire for her husband) and Song of Solomon
 - This is the only time of the three, where the interpreters have assumed a negative connotation
 - It should have remained positive
 - *Mashal* means a master or ruler
- What does this image evoke?
 - It reminds us of Passover, when God places the blood of a the lamb over the door of the homes of Israel
 - This is God's proclamation of the Gospel to Cain in the form of a promise to provide a sacrifice in the doorway for sin
 - If Cain is without sin, he'll be raised up without an animal sacrifice needed
 - But if he sins, an animal sin offering will be lying in the doorway
- God tells Cain to have a desire for that master or King (i.e., Christ)
- The solution to Cain's anger and dejection is to accept Christ