

Genesis 4 | Cain and Abel

⁴ The man was intimate with Eve, his wife. She conceived and gave birth to Cain. She said, “I have gotten a man with the LORD.”² She also gave birth to Cain’s brother Abel. Abel tended sheep, but Cain worked the ground.³ As time passed, one day Cain brought an offering to the LORD from the fruit of the soil.⁴ Abel also brought some of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions. The LORD looked favorably on Abel and his offering,⁵ but he did not look favorably on Cain and his offering. Cain was very angry, and his face showed it.

⁶ The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why do you have that angry look on your face? ⁷ If you do good, will you not be lifted up? If you do not do good, sin is crouching at the door. It has a strong desire for you, but you must rule over it.” ⁸ Cain said to Abel, his brother, “Let’s go into the field.” When they were in the field, Cain attacked Abel, his brother, and killed him.

⁹ The LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel, your brother?” He said, “I don’t know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”¹⁰ The LORD said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the soil. ¹¹ Now you are cursed and sent away from the soil which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. ¹² When you work the soil, it will no longer give its strength to you. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.”

¹³ Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is too great for me to bear. ¹⁴ Look, today you have driven me away from the soil. I will be hidden from your face, and I will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth. And whoever finds me will kill me.” ¹⁵ The LORD said to him, “No! If anyone kills Cain, he will face seven-fold revenge.” And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain, so that anyone who found him would not strike him down. ¹⁶ Cain went out from the LORD’s presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

1. Eve’s words found in verse 1 might be translated in one of several ways. Martin Luther understood her to say: “I have gotten a man, the LORD.” If this is a correct understanding of Eve’s words, what does it say about her faith?

2. Hebrews 11:4,6a reads: *By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. 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. Without faith it is impossible to please God.*

What was the key difference between Cain and Abel and the reason one’s offering was acceptable to God while the other’s was not?

3. Briefly explain the following Scriptural principles for giving offerings:

- Give in response to God’s love in Christ
- Give from a willing heart
- Give regularly
- Give in proportion to what God has given you
- Give to the Lord the firstfruits of your income
- Give generously, trusting the Lord

4. Which of the following do you think comes closest to God's warning in Verse 7b? Why?

"Cain, beware! If you do not master your sinful anger, it will master you."

"Understand, Cain, that if you do not fight against and control your sinful thoughts and feelings, they will ultimately lead you to sinful actions."

"Repent, Cain! With my help, put away your sin."

5. With what judgment does God again attempt to lead Cain to repentance and to an understanding of his sin?

6. Can you see signs of impenitence on the part of Cain in verses 13 and 14 (as well as in verse 17)? In spite of this, what did God do for Cain?

7. Martin Luther felt that in verse 13, Cain may have meant, "My guilt is greater than can be forgiven." Have you ever felt this way? If so, where do you find comfort?

Closing Prayer: Lord Jesus, sin often crouches at the doors of our hearts wanting to leap into action. Forgive us, and by your power lead us to successfully fight the good fight of faith. We ask this in your name. Amen.

Helps: (1) Eve believed that by giving her a son, God kept his promise to send a Savior from sin (see Genesis 3:15). (2) While Abel's offering was that of a believer, Cain's offering flowed from an unbelieving heart. Cain's motivation in offering his gift was self-righteous. (4) All three statements help us understand the meaning of God's warning. (5) Cain, who had supported himself through farming, would no longer be permitted to do so. He would now be a restless wanderer who would struggle to survive. This judgment was a constant, life-long reminder of the seriousness of his sin. (6) Cain's chief concern was not over his sin but over what would now happen to him. In verse 17 we see Cain attempting to neutralize God's judgment that he be a restless wanderer. In spite of this impenitence, God graciously gave Cain a sign that assured his safety. (7) Because sin is such a terrible thing, even Christians may wonder if their sin can always be forgiven. At those times the repentant Christian can find comfort in God's Word: The blood of Jesus, [God's] Son, purifies us from all sin (1 John 1:7b); Jesus said, "It is finished" (John 19:30b); As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us (Psalm 103:12).