

GENESIS

Lesson 4

Am I my brother's keeper ...

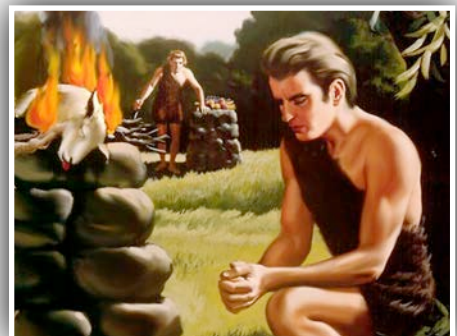
CAIN AND ABEL.

Genesis 4:1-24

Between Genesis 3 and 4 a period of more than 100 years passes. As chapter four begins, Adam “knew” Eve. This term is often used in the Old Testament and refers to the sexual relationship in marriage. This term is only used of human beings and demonstrates that human sexual intimacy is more than simply a reproductive act.

From this union came Cain who was the first person ever born. Abel was born next and there is no indication of how much time passed between the births. Cain became a farmer and Abel was the first shepherd. There is nothing in the text to indicate that one occupation was more valued than the other.

In Genesis 4:3, Cain and Abel both made a sacrifice to the Lord. Cain brought an offering from the fruit of the ground and Abel brought the first and best of his flock. There is much we do not know from this short narrative. We do not know the age of Cain and Abel when they made their sacrifices to God. We do not know the origin of sacrifice. Did God command sacrifice or did the brothers decide to make a sacrifice on their own simply as an expression of thanksgiving to God? Why did they make this sacrifice, was it for sin or simply an expression of their thanksgiving to God. We simply cannot know the answer to these questions.



- 1. What insight does Hebrews 11:4 give us into the sacrifices of Cain and Abel?**
- 2. Describe the response of God to the sacrifices of Cain and Abel.**

In Genesis 4:6-7 God asks Cain three questions. 1) Why are you angry? 2) Why has your face fallen? 3) If you do well, will you not be accepted? These questions strike at the heart of Cain and offer advice that if heeded would have saved him from the trouble that was to come. Then God gives Cain this warning: “and if you do not well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.” Genesis 4:7 is the first mention of sin in the Bible.

As the anger builds within Cain he rises up and kills his brother and here we see the first murder. God had warned Cain to watch for sin and to control his anger, but he did not listen. Instead in a fit of rage he strikes his brother and kills him.

This leads to Cain being questioned by God who asks, “Where is your brother?” After Cain’s response of “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” God then asks, “What have you done?”



3. How does Cain’s response to God in Genesis 4:9 differ from the response of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:8-13?

4. What is Cain’s punishment? (Genesis 4:11-12)

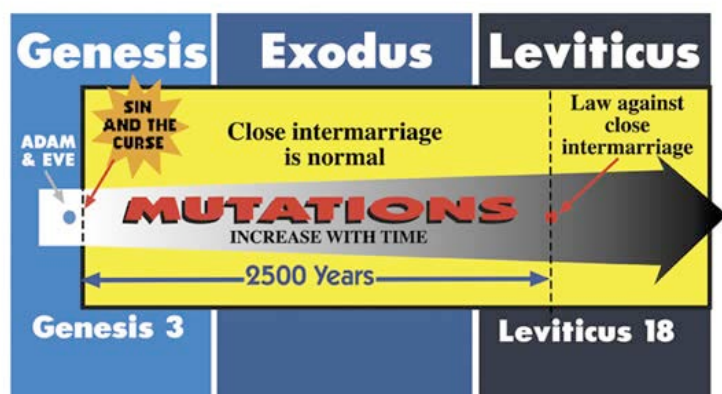
Cain protest the punishment that God gives to him. He protests: 1) Generally -- He says the punishment is greater than he could bear; 2) Banishment from the ground; 3) Being hidden from God’s face -- even in his rebellion he understands what the lack of God’s blessing means; 4) Being a fugitive and wanderer -- Cain knows that he will no longer have any real home, but may be pursued; 5) Being in danger -- He fears for his very life.

The question often arises: “Why didn’t God put Cain to death for killing Abel?” While we cannot know the answer to this with certainty it may stem from the fact that the murder was not premeditated, and God shows mercy even while punishing Cain.

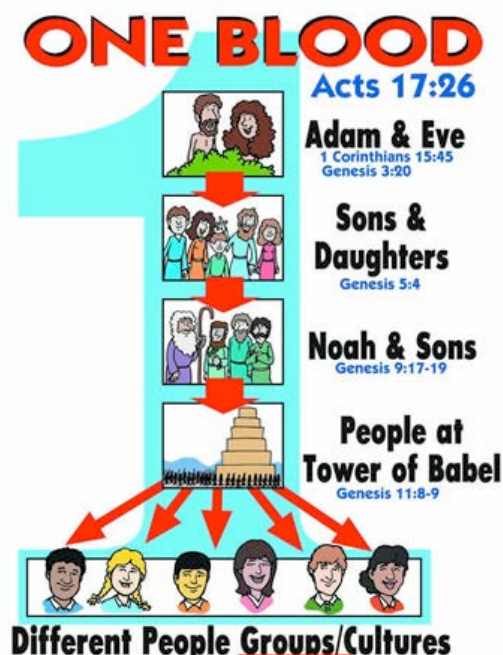
The fear that Cain felt from others should be understood in the context of the earth’s population. By the time Cain is murdered about 130 years of human history has passed. If Adam and Eve began having children soon after their own creation and had children over the natural course of their childbearing years (Genesis 5:4) and if those children bore children the earth’s population could now number in the hundreds of thousands. The historian Josephus says that tradition says that Adam and Eve’s children numbered thirty-three sons and twenty-three daughters.¹

¹ F. Josephus, *The Complete Works of Josephus*, translated W. Whiston, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1981, 27.

The question of where Cain got his wife often arises among those who wish to discredit Christianity. The answer to this question is simple. Cain married one of his sisters. In our modern world brothers and sisters cannot marry because of genetic defects. In the beginning Adam and Eve were created perfectly and without genetic defects; therefore there was no genetic threat from Cain marrying his sister. Note the following two illustrations from Answers in Genesis.²



In the beginning there were only two people (Adam and Eve). Adam and Eve had children who would have married. Due to their long life-spans they would have been able to produce many children. By the time of Leviticus, God forbids close intermarriage.



Naturally, every person on earth is related; not only because we all descended from Adam and Eve, but also because in the time of Noah only he and his family are saved from the destruction of the flood. All people group have been descended from two people.

5. How does God show mercy to Cain in Genesis 4:15?

In Genesis 4:16 we read that Cain settled in the land of Nod. The meaning of Nod seems to be wandering, not necessarily a specific geographic location or perhaps it came to be known as Nod after Cain moved there.

Cain “knew” his wife and she gave birth to a son named Enoch. This is one of three men with the name Enoch found in the Old Testament. Cain became the first city builder. How extensive this city was is open to debate. It could have been a simple walled area with just

² <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/nab/who-was-cains-wife>

a few houses or could have been a much large group of buildings. The word used for city can refer to any human settlement whether large or small.³

From the genealogy of Cain we learn about some of the first nomads, artisans and craftsmen. Even though Cain's descendants were wicked they were successful in the secular world.

Lamech the seventh generation was the first man to take two wives. This chapter shows the increasing spiral of sin that has entered the world. Where Cain gave in to sin, Lamech exults in it, and as Cain sought protection, Lamech looked for provocation.⁴ Lamech became the first poet and his poem in Genesis 4:23-24 is "a boastful ballad celebrating vengeance."⁵

THE BIRTH OF SETH

Genesis 4:25-26

The line of Cain is filled with evil and degenerates with each generation. There is hope though as Adam and Eve have another son named Seth. In some way Eve viewed this son as a replacement for Abel. She also seems to expect Seth to be a faithful man like Abel.

Next the author says that Seth had a son named Enosh. Eve had named all the other sons who had been born, but here Seth, the father gives Enosh his name. Furthermore, a milestone is now reached as people began to call upon the name of the Lord.

6. What is meant by the phrase "call upon the name of the Lord?"

³ Kinder, David. *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Genesis*. Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1967.

⁴ Kinder, *ibid*.

⁵ Smith, James E. *The Old Testament Survey Series (Electronic Edition)*. Joplin, MO: College Press.