

God of Our Fathers: Genesis

Lesson 4: Cain and Abel

By **Lorrie C. Reed, M. Div., Ph.D.**
Rivertree Christian Chapel

Contact:
Rev. Dr. Lorrie C. Reed
c/o Rivertree Christian Chapel, Ltd.
P.O. Box 438534
Chicago, IL 60643
lreed@rivertreechristianchapel.org

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Lesson 4: Cain and Abel

Lesson Introduction

- If you have a sibling, describe a situation in which you and your sibling disagreed.
- How was the matter resolved?

Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, learners will:

- Identify differences between Cain and Abel
- Describe the consequences of Cain's sin
- Describe ways in which God protected Cain
- Discuss the implications of being one's "brother's keeper"
- Express understanding of who God is

Background for the Scripture

After Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden, they had two sons, Cain and Abel. Genesis chapter 4 gives the account of the first murder, as Cain slew his brother Abel because of God's rejection of Cain's sacrifice. Although the Bible is silent on why Cain's sacrifice was not pleasing to God, at least one source has noted, "It seems reasonable to infer from subsequent developments that God had made known what kind of sacrifice was required, and that Cain acted contrary to those instructions" (Schultz, 2006, p. 10).

Several important points emerge as this story unfolds. First, Abel values his personal sense of revenge more than he values life (Tulloch, 1997, p. 39). Second, a division takes place between the godly and the ungodly (Benware, 1993, p. 34). And, finally, themes of sibling rivalry appear along with dissention between farmer and shepherd (Collins, 2004, p. 8). These themes can be found throughout the Old Testament; they are initiated in Genesis.

Genesis 4:1-16 (KJV)

4 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.

² And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

³ And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.

⁴ And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

⁵ But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

⁶ And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

⁷ If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

⁸ And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

⁹ And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?

¹⁰ And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

¹¹ And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;

¹² When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

¹³ And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

¹⁴ Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.

¹⁵ And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

¹⁶ And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.

Examining the Scripture

1. Typically pairs of brothers found in Genesis feature siblings with opposing characteristics. Identify ways in which Cain and Abel are different from one another.
2. What were the consequences of Cain's sin?
3. In what ways did God protect Cain?

Applying the Scripture

1. In what ways are shepherds and farmers in opposition to each other? How, if at all, is this opposition apparent in the present day?

2. What does the job of being “my brother’s keeper” involve in the present day?

Quest to Know God Activity

1. What does this scriptural account reveal about God?
2. List two or three characteristics you discerned about God as you went through this lesson.
3. What statement can you make about the God of our fathers that you can pass down to future generations?