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Cain and Abel



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg delves into the story of Cain and Abel from a biblical perspective. He notes that while there is a heretical interpretation that suggests Cain was Satan's offspring, there is no merit to this belief. Cain's offering was not accepted by God, possibly because his heart wasn't in the right place, while Abel's was. However, Gregg stresses that the focus should be on following God's word and instructions rather than on innovative religious systems or preferred methods of worship. The story of Cain and Abel highlights the importance of adhering to God's standards and avoiding sin.

Transcript

Let's look at Genesis chapter 4. Alright, here we have the first two humans born. Adam and Eve were not born, they were created from the dust. So this is the first two human births, both boys.

Since the task was for this original family to be fruitful and fill the earth, and since there was only one family and it's clear that eventually they would have to marry siblings, it would have been maybe more fortunate for there to be a boy and a girl early on, but that's not how it was to be. There were later girls born to Adam and Eve as we read in Genesis chapter 5. The first two children they had were both boys. And then as we know from how the story progresses, one of them was killed.

But Cain, it is said that Cain was conceived when Adam knew his wife, which of course, knew is a euphemism for intercourse, but it's one that's used elsewhere in Scripture as well. It's even used in the New Testament when an angel told Mary that she would be the mother of the Messiah. She said, how can this be? I have not known a man.

The word know is an interesting term to use for that particular reproductive activity because only human beings really know each other. Only human beings really have relationship in the act of reproduction. There are certain species that are monogamous as it were.

Monogamous isn't really the right word because I think it implies marriage, but there are animals that pair for life, but not very many. And I'm sure that they don't pair for life in

the sense of really becoming close acquaintances and so forth. But human beings are made to not simply mate, to not simply have offspring, but to have relationship and for offspring to come as a result of relationship.

And so the Bible uses the word know. Now the word know here is the ordinary word in the Hebrew language for know. It's not a different one.

It's the same word that would be used to know information. Or simply to know a person by acquaintance. But obviously in some context it has a specialized meaning of the special intimacy between a man and wife through which children are conceived.

And Cain came from that, but when it says of Abel, it doesn't say Adam knew his wife again and she bore Abel. It just says then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. And because it doesn't mention a separate act of knowing in the case of the second child, some have thought maybe these were twins.

Now that's reading more into it than it needs to be. It needn't be stated every time they had intimacy. It could be just implied that they did again, but these two sons came in rapid succession.

They may have even been twins with Cain being the older of the two. Now somehow there is a heretical notion that has arisen, which is totally contrary to the wording of the passage, that tries to imply that Cain was not the son of Adam. That he was not the biological progeny of Adam, but that he was the biological progeny of Satan.

And this is sometimes called the Satan's seed doctrine. It has been taught in certain, in some Pentecostal circles, especially in the latter rain movement. This was taught by a guy named William Branham, who is the founder of what's called the latter rain movement.

It's also taught in a lot of anti-Semitic and white supremacist type groups. Somehow they got the idea that Cain was not a product of union between Adam and Eve, but between Eve and Satan. And therefore Cain, they say, was the seed of the serpent.

The seed of Satan. And therefore is not fully human. And of course, depending on who is promoting this doctrine, it seems like the most common view is that the so-called Jewish race is descended from Cain, not from Abraham.

And therefore that the Jews were the seed of Satan. Obviously you can see how this kind of heresy would automatically create an anti-Semitic platform. But there's absolutely nothing in his favor.

I can only guess, because I've never bothered to read the trash that the people write who promote this doctrine, but I can only guess how they would support it. In 1 John chapter 3, it does say that Cain was of that wicked one. If you look over at 1 John, just to

give us an opportunity to see how the Bible uses language so we don't make the mistakes other people make who have an agenda.

1 John chapter 3, verse 10 through 12. John says, in this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest. Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain, who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brothers were righteous. Now notice there's reference in verse 10 to children of God and children of the devil.

And then Cain is identified in verse 12 as one who is of the wicked or of the devil. So apparently one of the children of the devil. This is very probably, and I've never heard anyone use this scripture.

It seems like the only place they could possibly get this idea is the idea that Satan was conceived by Satan himself. However, this totally misunderstands the usage of John's language. When the Bible says we are children of God, it doesn't mean that we were conceived of a virgin like Jesus was.

Those who are the children of God do righteousness and those who are the children of the devil do the deeds of the devil. This is a figure of speech. It's not talking about biological origins.

It's talking about spiritual relationship to the devil or spiritual relationship to God. And a person of any race might be a child of the devil. In fact, it specifically says, whosoever does not righteousness is one of the children of the devil.

Well, certainly there's a lot of people who do righteousness of a variety of races. And so these are all children of the devil. But it's not a racial thing.

People of one race, some of them might do righteousness and some of the same race might do unrighteousness. In which case, within that one race, you have some children of God and children of the devil. Obviously, there's nothing related to ancestry implied here.

It has to do with spiritual connectedness on the moral level. And so also, if you'll turn over to John chapter 8, John chapter 8, Jesus was speaking to some of the Jewish people of his day who were critical of him and challenging him. And he said to them in verse 44, You are of your father, the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.

Now, okay, so Cain was a child of the devil. And Jesus said that some of the Jews, at least, were children of the devil, of their father, the devil. And this, I would imagine, provides the only conceivable rationale for suggesting that the Jews are seed of Satan

through Cain who is a seed of Satan.

Because both Cain and the Jews, at least some of the Jews, are said to have been children of the devil. Now, what this misses is that Jesus was also of the same race as the people he was criticizing. And so were his disciples.

They were all of the same race. They were all Jewish. And yet, not... I mean, his disciples who had the same ancestry as those he was criticizing, they were not children of the devil.

They were children of God. And so, again, it's obvious he's not referring at all to anything ancestral. And if they would just read the passage we look at in Genesis 4, it seems quite clear.

Adam knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain. I mean, how could it be made more plain that Cain was the offspring of Adam, not of some intruder? So, I bring this up only because there are people out there, and some of them are here in Idaho. Some of them are in this part of Idaho, who teach this kind of a doctrine.

And it's totally without warrant. It's totally without merit. There's not even a little bit about it that makes sense.

The Bible clearly teaches that Cain and Abel were both offspring of Adam and Eve. And when the Bible speaks of people as children of the devil, it's speaking of a spiritual relationship, not an ancestral or genealogical relationship to the devil. Now, these two young men took separate courses in terms of their careers.

Cain tilled the ground, and Abel raised livestock. So, they were both into food production, which is what humans used to have to do a lot with their time. Most of us do very little in terms of producing the food we eat.

Some here do a lot more than the rest of us do, but obviously most modern Americans don't grow any of the food they eat and are not in touch with their food sources at all. They just go to the store and pick it up, and someone else grows it. Actually, only about 3% of Americans are farmers by profession or by vocation.

So, 97% of us mainly eat what's grown by 3% of the population, and that kind of puts us out of touch with food production, gives us a lot of time on our hands to do things like video games and have a lot of diversions, most of which have not really been positive developments in our culture. Cultures that were much more tied to the necessities of food production, I mean, let's face it, we're the only species on the planet that doesn't spend most of our time searching for food. I mean, what does every other species do all the time? They mate and they eat and look for food.

They either hunt or they gather or they do what they do because that's what life is all

about for them. Now, that's not what life is all about for us because man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. And therefore, to live at a time where we don't have to be always producing our food with all our time, 12 hours a day, 6 days a week or whatever, which is normal for thousands of years for people to do, it gives us the liberty to feed ourselves in the other areas with every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, but we have not always used our leisure in a wise way.

I mean, we have as much attraction to entertainment as worldly people do in many cases. Maybe, hopefully, a little cleaner forms of entertainment in most cases, but still, if we had lived 200 years ago or so, most of us would be farmers and most of us would be spending long days just trying to keep body and soul together by putting food on the table. We have been given a great deal more leisure than people throughout history have known.

And the leisure brings with it responsibility. And God will really hold us accountable for what we offer to God. Now, when they produce their food, that's what they did with their time.

Cain probably worked 6 days, 7 days a week. Probably every waking hour was somehow involved in either producing or eating food. We can't relate with that.

We have got 40 hour weeks and vacations and weekends off and things like that. Most people couldn't possibly dream of having that kind of luxury for thousands of years. And it kept people out of trouble.

They say the devil finds work for idle hands. And God, remember, when he cursed the ground, he did so probably partly to keep man busier. It's when Adam and Eve had a little leisure on their hands that they found ways to get into trouble.

And it's not as if God never wanted them to have leisure. But the fact remains, it was at a time when they didn't have anything else to do, apparently, that they got into trouble. And so God, apparently, to try to keep them out of so much trouble, made it a little harder.

Made thorns and thistles come out of the ground. Caused the ground to be cursed so they had to work in the sweat of their face to earn their bread. And that's what Cain was doing.

That's how Cain made his living. Now, livestock husbandry was something that may have been originated by Abel. We don't know that Adam and Eve did any of that.

It may have been Abel who first recognized that certain kinds of animals, well, he was probably not raising them for food because they didn't eat meat quite yet. He probably was raising them for, depending on what he was raising, it must have been sheep,

probably raising them for the fiber. But, of course, eventually, livestock began to be raised for food as well.

And so food production, or at least agricultural pursuits, was what people got into immediately at the very dawn of history. And what most people did for the majority of history until just the last 200 years, approximately. I mean, the majority of human beings were farmers.

And so we see these people keeping busy, making a living, probably a lot busier than we were, but they still had to take what they had and offer some of it to the Lord. Now, we don't spend as much of our time making a living, it may be. But what we have, we still have to offer to the Lord.

And if we have more leisure time, that should be offered to the Lord. I really believe that to whom much is given, as Jesus said, of them much will be required. And if we have more leisure, that makes us more responsible to, to give more, to produce more, for God.

But they didn't have that much leisure, so they had to take the products that they produced in their living and offer those to God. And that was a way in which they would, you know, communicate that as this portion is being offered to God, so God really owns it all. We're just giving a portion of it to, as a token of His ownership.

Later on, God required a tenth of the spoils of Abraham. That was part of the Jewish law. We don't have any evidence that God had the tithe or the tenth as a, some kind of eternal ordinance that even Adam and Eve knew about.

The first time we learn of God requiring people to give a tenth of their increase to God is in the law of Moses. Though we do read of Abraham after winning a battle, and then to Melchizedek, who was a priest of God in Genesis 14. And we also read of Jacob promising to give God a tenth of everything if God would prosper him in the years that he was away from his family.

Whether he ever fulfilled this vow or not, we're not sure, but he probably did when he came back from Padinarum. The point is, Abraham and Jacob both offered a tenth, at least on one occasion. We don't know if they did this regularly, but on one occasion, each of them gave a tenth of what they had to God.

And that became sort of the measure that was required of all the Jews to give. And giving a tenth, I think was just when God made it a law, it was God's way of saying, all your possessions are mine. I'm going to prove it by requiring you to give me a piece of them, you know.

I'll let you live on the other nine tenths. But by my mandating that you give me a tenth, it makes it clear I could mandate any portion I want because it's all mine. I'm just going

to settle for a tenth and let you live on the rest.

What portion of their produce or of their livestock Adam and Eve or Cain and Abel brought to the Lord, we don't know. But we should probably assume that they brought them partly as a means of acknowledging God is the one who's provided the products of the ground and so forth. It's also probable and we don't have much told us about this this early on in the narrative, but it's also probable that they had a sense either instinctive or taught to them that they needed an atonement for their sins.

When Adam and Eve sinned, God slew animals and gave them skins to wear. Whether Adam and Eve understood this to be something like a sacrifice and a blood offering of any kind, we have no record. We don't know whether Adam and Eve would have understood it that way.

But in retrospect, we can because we know from Leviticus that God has given the blood of animals to make atonement for sin. And in Hebrews chapter 9 it says that without the shedding of blood there's no remission of sin. So God shed blood of animals to cover the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin, the very first sin.

And it may have been that Adam and Eve communicated these things to their sons that we're now a sinful race. We weren't when we were first created, but we are now. And it's necessary for us to offer to God something to kind of cover for our guilt so we can remove any complaint God may have against us.

We don't know the degree to which Cain and Abel fully understood this idea of atonement, but I do think it was probably not unknown to them. And that may be one of the reasons why there was a difference in God's attitude toward Cain's and Abel's respective offerings. We read that Cain brought what was natural for him to bring, that which he produced from the ground, some of the fruit of the ground.

He was a farmer and so that's what he had on hand, so he brought some to the Lord. And Abel brought the firstborn of his flock and offered apparently a lamb or maybe several lambs. We don't know how large his offering was, but God was much more impressed with Abel's offering than with Cain's.

In fact, it wasn't that he was more impressed, he was impressed with Abel's, but he was not at all impressed with Cain's. And there's much discussion that's gone on as to why God accepted Abel's and rejected Cain's. Probably the most obvious suggested answer would be that Abel's was a blood sacrifice, that he brought blood where Cain did not.

Now, had God ever commanded that blood be brought? We have no record of it at this early point. But that doesn't mean he hadn't. Hey, we've got so little information.

Adam and Eve lived 930 years and we only have a couple stories about them. They did something, they talked about something during those years. I'm sure they talked about

something to their kids.

And it may very well be that they did teach their children these principles. If not, Abel may have gotten it by revelation from God because Jesus tells us that Abel was a prophet. Did you know that? Abel was actually a prophet according to Jesus.

In Luke chapter 11, if you look over there. In Luke 11, verse 50 and 51, Jesus said that the blood of all the prophets which we shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Now, he said the blood of all the prophets is going to be required from Abel to Zechariah.

Obviously, including Abel in that category of prophets. Now, we don't read of Abel ever prophesying but that's no surprise. We don't read of him doing anything except offering a lamb and I'm sure he did a lot more things than that in his life.

He must have had revelations from God if he was a prophet. He must have received words from God and he must have pronounced those words to whoever would hear him. Now, you might think he didn't have a very large audience because he only had his parents and his brother but actually there were other children eventually born here and probably a very large family.

And it may be that Abel was the one that God anointed and chose to be God's spokesman to the family and he may very well have communicated as Moses later did the need for people to bring adequate blood sacrifices for atonement. We can't know for sure and therefore we're not told. However, something of interest is said about Abel's sacrifice in Hebrews 11 that the implications of which are that Cain and Abel both had a word from the Lord as to what they should bring.

In Hebrews 11 in verse 4 it says, By faith, Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain through which he obtained witness that he was righteous. God testified of his gifts and through it he being dead still speaks. Now, by faith, Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.

Now, we could speculate as to what made his sacrifice more excellent but the interesting thing is it says by faith he did it. Now, in what sense was Abel's offering an act of faith? Paul said in Romans chapter 10 Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. That's Romans 10, 17 if I'm not mistaken.

Yes. Faith comes as a result of hearing the word of God. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

And therefore, if Abel did this by faith it presupposes that he must have heard the word of God. That he could have faith in the word of God. And he did what the word of God instructed him to do.

Now, if Abel heard the word of God and was a prophet as Jesus said he was in all likelihood he shared it. He probably communicated it. In all likelihood no one including Cain probably no one was ignorant of what God was requiring.

Now, in Hebrews 11, 4 it does not tell us what made Abel's sacrifice more excellent. It may have been the mere fact that he had faith and did what God told him to do but it indicates that the sacrifice itself was more excellent than Cain's. And it may as I say be nothing more than the fact that Abel offered a blood sacrifice and Cain did not.

It's also possible there were other factors. It's possible that the heart of Abel was more pleasing to God than the heart of Cain. Twice in the book of Proverbs it says the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.

In one verse in Proverbs specifically it goes on and says how much more when he offers it with evil intent. If a wicked man offers an act of worship to God in his unrepentant wickedness it's an abomination to God and even more if he's got bad motives for it. And so, that would ordinarily commend a righteous man to God actually stinks to God.

Actually offends God. That's what the word abomination suggests. If it's offered by a man whose motives are not pleasing to God or whose heart is not right with God or who's unrepentant and wicked.

So, that may have been the issue. We don't know. We know that Cain was a child of the devil and his works were evil in general and his brothers were righteous.

So, it's possible that the sacrifice of Abel was accepted not just because it was a blood sacrifice but because it was offered by a man whose heart was right whereas Cain's heart was not right and therefore his sacrifice would be an abomination no matter what he offered even if he'd offered a lamb maybe. There's another thing too and this may not mean anything or it may. It specifically says in Genesis 4, 3 that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground but Abel brought of the firstborn of his flock.

Now, the firstborn or the firstlings the King James says suggests that Abel took that which came first that which was the firstborn the first thing that God gave him. He didn't wait until all his debts were paid and his bills were paid and then took what was left over and bring it to God if there was a little left over. He took the very first of his blessings and returned them to God the firstborn of his flock.

We don't read whether Cain brought the first fruits. He just brought some of the fruit and it's not so much that some of the fruit would be any worse than the first fruits in terms of its quality. It would be more a matter of the attitude of the firstborn that the person who brings the firstborn is the one who is thinking okay, I'm putting God first.

Before I take home some to feed my family before I sell any of this to make a profit I'm taking the very first and giving it to God because I'm putting God first is the idea

whereas the man who doesn't do that maybe gives God the remnants left over after everything else has been covered that man has God in a different position in his hierarchy in a different position in his priorities and so it's possible that this reflects on Abel's part an attitude that God was pleased with and that did not exist in Cain. Again, some of this is speculation but there are reasons to consider that these may be the reasons that God respected Abel but not Cain. Now, Cain was disappointed in verse 5. His countenance fell.

That means his face dropped. He had a long face. He was disappointed in a big way when he noticed that God didn't respect his offering.

Now, how did he notice this? I mean, if you and I set up altars in the backyard here and each of us offer a sacrifice on one of them, how would I know if God liked yours better than mine or mine better than yours? I mean, how would we know? Obviously, Cain knew exactly what God's attitude was toward his offering but he apparently didn't know in advance that God would react the way he did because his countenance fell which suggests disappointment on Cain's part when God didn't show respect to his offering. How did God communicate this respect for Abel's and not for Cain's? We don't know but there are a couple of possibilities. One is that God may have appeared to receive one and not the other.

We know that God walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day in the garden and he also appeared to Cain and spoke with him. Later in this chapter, there's actually conversation between Cain and God like between two people. Apparently in those days, God still appeared to people in apparently a human form, what we call a theophany.

And he would communicate just like two people might communicate to each other. In the early days, there weren't many people to talk to so maybe God accommodated them by coming around and talking to them sometimes. In any case, we know that it's possible that they saw God, that He appeared perhaps even in a priestly manner to receive the sacrifice of the one and not the other.

That's a possibility. Another possibility is that God showed His favor to one and not the other in the same way He did on Mount Carmel when the prophets of Baal prepared their sacrifice on their altar and then Elijah prepared his and prayed. Both prayed to their gods and God sent fire from heaven down and consumed the sacrifice of Elijah and did nothing for the prophets of Baal.

That was certainly a demonstration of God's favor on the one over the other. So there's more than one possible way that God might have exhibited that He did not appreciate Cain's offering but did appreciate Abel's. We are not sure which way God did but it was certainly unmistakable.

Abel knew and Cain knew God's response to what they did. Now the fact that Cain's

countenance fell suggests that he actually wished that God had received his. He actually wished that God had appreciated his offering as much as Abel's.

And yet if, as we've suggested, Abel's offering was a matter of faith which means a response to a revealed word from God, we have every reason to believe that Cain was aware of that revealed word of God as well or else why would he be held accountable for not having faith? If his faith... If he didn't have faith and it was only because God hadn't spoken, how could he be blamed for that? I believe that they both knew what God had said. But Abel believed that God... He took God seriously. I believe Abel took God's word seriously enough that he thought well, if God said He wants that, that's what I'd better give Him.

Because God won't be pleased with anything less than what He prescribes in the worship of Himself. But Cain, I believe, was more presumptuous. I believe he knew what was expected.

I think he knew what God had said. But he also... He didn't revere God enough. He no doubt felt that well, God may say that He wants such and such, but hey, I work hard for what I've got here.

What I have to offer is just as valuable as what Abel has to offer. And you know, God should like that. God should appreciate that.

I mean, I'm going to do it my way. And after all, it makes perfectly good sense for me being a farmer and tiller of the ground to produce produce and to offer that to God. And why should I have to trade off some of that for an animal with my brother who I don't get along with anyway and offer a lamb to God just because God said He wants one? God should accept what I have.

The amount of produce I can give Him can be of equal dollar value to that of a lamb. So, I mean, God shouldn't have any complaints. I'm going to do it my way.

It's a little bit like when a couple of priests later on in Leviticus chapter 10 named Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, decided to worship God in the tabernacle a little bit differently than God had prescribed. There was a ritual that God had prescribed. There was an altar that God supernaturally ignited by fire from heaven, fire from His presence in the end of chapter 9 of Leviticus.

And the priests were supposed to take some coals from that supernatural fire that God had ignited. I mean, it was kept burning in a natural way. It wasn't supernatural after it got started.

But it originated with God. And then they had to feed the fire forever. It was supposed to never go out.

So, they had to keep feeding the fire. And they were to take coals from this fire to burn incense before the Lord as an act of worship in the tabernacle. And Nadab and Abihu were told in the opening of Leviticus 10, it was their duty to burn this incense.

And they used fire from another source, we're told, the way it's put in the King James. They offered strange fire before the Lord. Strange meaning foreign.

It wasn't from the authorized or the approved source. Apparently, they chose to get some fire from some bonfire nearby or from some other source than the one God had provided. And they thought that should be good enough.

After all, why not? Doesn't incense burn as well regardless of where you get the coals from? Isn't it the incense itself and the smell of the incense that God cares about? Why should He care that we modify His instructions a little bit? And so, they take this strange fire before the Lord. The Bible says that fire came out from the presence of God and consumed them. They were killed before the Lord.

They died before the Lord and were incinerated for what seems a rather minor infraction. But it was an act of presumption on their part. They assumed that even though God had given instruction about how He is to be worshipped, that they could modify it a little bit.

Why not? It's going to get the same results anyway, right? Incense is going to burn. It's going to smell the same. Who cares where the fire came from? Well, it's not a matter of where the fire came from as much as one's attitude toward God.

Because once these two men died, Moses said to their father Aaron, Thus saith the Lord, I will be regarded as holy by those who approach me. That was their problem. They didn't regard God as holy.

They didn't respect that God was not such a one altogether as one of us. It says in Psalm 50, God speaks to the wicked. He says, You thought that I was altogether such a one as yourselves.

Well, God's not altogether such a one as one of us. God is other. The word holy means set apart.

And God says, I will be regarded as holy by those who approach me. Now this is a lesson that Nadab and Abihu learned the hard way. And so did Cain.

When God gives instructions, He says, This is how I want you to worship Me. That's the way you're supposed to do it. And you might be able to reason and say, Well, who cares if we change a little bit? If we innovate a little bit? I mean, essentially, God ends up being worshipped.

Isn't that all that matters? No. God cannot be worshipped acceptably just any way we

choose. You see, we have no intrinsic right to come before God as sinners.

As people who have sinned, we've given up any innate right that we may have ever had as human beings to approach God. The wages of sin is death. We've lost all our rights.

We can't just innovate any religious system we want to and say, well, you know, the Buddhists and the Muslims, I mean, they're sincere too, aren't they? I mean, maybe they're worshipping the same God we are. Who knows? Are you telling me these people aren't acceptable to God? Well, I guess it's not a matter of whether I tell you they are or not. It's a matter of what God says.

That's the point. The point is whether these people have the assumption that God's word can be put aside in favor of a preferred method of worship that the people prefer, either because it's their ancestors or their culture's way, or, by the way, it's worst of all when it's done by Christians who know the word of God. Most Buddhists and Muslims don't even know what God said in the scriptures.

But it's very common in the modern church to innovate new forms of worship. I'm not talking about different musical styles and things like that. That's not what we're talking about.

I'm talking about just leaving the word of God in order to go along with whatever the new fad is, whatever is drawing crowds these days. And, you know, church growth seminars and those kinds of things are always looking for the sociological, psychological things that cause churches to grow. And rather than looking to God's word for instructions how to do things, rather than trusting in the Holy Spirit to grow a church, it's very common in the modern western church to find ways to manipulate crowds and to attract and to entertain and to do things so that more people come to God.

Now, they might say, well, this is good, isn't it? I mean, look how much larger our church is because of this. I used to live when I was single with another single man who was an evangelist. I was in actually a Christian band and he was in a different Christian band, but we were in the same organization and we shared an apartment.

And both of us preached. And most of the time when our band was playing somewhere I did the preaching, but there were times when I went with him and his band and he did the preaching and I heard him preaching and he would lie. He would tell these stories in his evangelistic messages and embellish the truth because it made for a better preacher story.

I mean, I can't remember his specific stories. He did it so often it shocked me. I mean, just to make his stories a little more sensational or to make them a little bit more, have more impact on people.

He would often misrepresent what really happened and give the story a different ending

or different details. And I would ask him from time... I asked him more than once. I said, Gary, how do you justify telling the story that way when you know that it's not technically true? And he said, well, people are getting saved, aren't they? How do you argue a soul being saved? And I said, well, maybe as many or more souls get saved if you told the truth.

You never can tell what God might do if you honored, you know, His ways. I mean, sometimes you can get results that you interpret as good results in the ministry or in church growth or whatever. People getting saved by, you know, doing things different than God's way.

But that's pragmatism. Pragmatism is the religion of the 21st century and of the 20th century too. And pragmatism is the philosophy that says the results are all we're concerned about.

The methodology is servant to the results or the end justifies the means. You know, if this gets good results, then that which got the results is good. Well, I know some people right now, Christian people, whose marriage was in great trouble some years ago.

And they remedied it by the wife, you know, threatening to divorce her husband and separating and doing things like that. And finally, you know, he came back to her more compliant and more willing to do what she wanted. And now their marriage is apparently happier than ever.

And they actually believe that this is a good thing that happened. And other women ought to do the same thing if they're not happy in their marriage. They ought to leave their husband, threaten to divorce him because that gets a response from the husband.

And look how good their marriage turned out. They were telling me this. And I said to them, you know, well, your marriage may be better because of that, but what you did was unbiblical.

That's not... The Bible doesn't approve of that method. And they say, well, we've got a happier marriage than we've ever had. I said, well, just... Who knows what God might have done to bless your marriage if you'd done it God's way.

Just because sin can sometimes get results that are seemingly good results doesn't mean that it was okay to sin. Because God might have gotten even better results. Who knows? If you had done the right thing.

Never can tell. God can work all things together for good, even bad things. In God's genius, He can work them together for a good result.

I mean, the brothers of Joseph selling him into slavery ended up... God meant it for good. But it wasn't a good thing they did and it doesn't justify them in doing it just because

God was able to manipulate the situation and bring a good result. God's ability, His ingenuity in taking even the rotten things we hand Him and bringing something good out of them doesn't mean that it's okay for us to hand Him rotten things on a regular basis.

He'd rather make good stuff out of good stuff. And our obedience is required. And really, pragmatism is always looking at the result.

And if the results are positive, the church grows bigger, more people come forward. An altar call doesn't matter how much I told lies, how many times I departed from the Word of God and the way we ran the church. We're getting the results we want.

Don't argue with results. You can't argue with results. Well, you can if you're not a pragmatist.

You can argue on the basis of principle. If God said, do it this way, do it according to My Word, then that's all we need to focus on. We don't have to worry about the results.

God hasn't told us to get results. He's told us what to do. If we do the right thing, we might not get immediately the results that we would like to get.

But that's not the problem. The results are God's problem. Our faithfulness to obey Him is ours.

Our concern is to make sure we're doing what He said to do. If we don't build a big church doing that, if we don't see as many people get saved because we preach a harder Word. I mean, look what Jesus did.

He had 5,000 people following Him. 5,000 men, not counting women and children. And then there were women and children too.

10,000, 15,000 people or more following Jesus. And He preaches a hard sermon in John 6 and then there's only 12 left. That's the opposite of church growth.

And if Jesus was into results... I mean, let's face it. Does Jesus want lots of people saved? Of course He does. But He's more concerned about being faithful, telling the truth, not compromising, and leaving the results with God.

And so He just told the truth and the results didn't look real good because His church shrank in a major way, real fast. But in the end, because He was faithful, God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name of every name and now millions of people serve Him faithfully the world over. Now, what I'm saying is this.

Cain made the same mistake that Nadab and Abihu did. Cain was disappointed when he found out that God didn't accept what he did. Nadab and Abihu, I dare say, were disappointed as well for a very brief moment.

And Cain was a presumptuous worshiper. Now, we don't read that Cain was an atheist. We don't read that Cain decided not to offer any sacrifices that year at all.

He could have just neglected the worship of God altogether. No, he was interested in worshiping God. And we have reason to believe he knew the right way to do it.

But he simply felt that God should be pleased with whatever way he chose to do it himself. That is, he didn't have to go by what God said as long as what he was doing had value in his own eyes, then God should appreciate that. And that is worship that puts man at the center and not God.

It assumes that man has some innate right to approach God and God should accept him. And that if man wants to make his own way to God, that's something God shouldn't have any complaints about. God should appreciate the fact that I'm coming at all.

It's human-centered religion. In the book of Jude or 2 Peter, we read of false teachers in the church and we're told that they have gone after the way of Cain, although we're not told there what the way of Cain is. But we can see that one thing about the way of Cain is that Cain innovated on the Word of God and changed it in his worship form.

He did not neglect worship altogether. He did not deny that God exists or that God should be worshipped or that sacrifices should be offered to God. He didn't deny any of that.

He just seemed to believe that God should be glad to get whatever He can get out of us. And there's a lot of people who feel that way about God even though we don't offer animal sacrifices anymore, but they believe that God should appreciate the fact that I gave up smoking and drinking and chewing and running with girls and those who do those things. You know, I mean, God should appreciate all the sacrifices I've made.

Maybe I'm not living in complete obedience to God. Maybe I'm not really reading the Scripture to find out if I'm doing it His way or not. But I mean, I know I've made some sacrifices.

Well, God should appreciate that. Well, God doesn't have to appreciate that at all. What God appreciates is wholehearted separation unto Him.

As it says in 1 Peter 1, As He who has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of behavior. God is holy. He told Aaron, Though I will be regarded as holy among those who approach Me.

And Peter says, We need to be holy in all manner of our behavior. Those of us who are living in America, especially those who are raised in Christian homes, we can take God for granted a great deal. People are converted at great risk in cultures where they might be put to death for being converted, or at great cost to themselves, or after a very sinful

life where they really know the value of grace because of the great sins they've committed and so forth.

They may not have the temptation to take God for granted as much as some of us do. But we get saved kind of painlessly, kind of without risk. I mean, an unbeliever on the streets of Canaan can get saved today and join a church and no one will take any notice.

It doesn't rock the boat too much of society and no one is going to come after them and arrest them or shoot them. And they may or may not take God for granted, but it's very easy to do so in a situation where really the only thing that changes much in most people's lives when they become Christians is they give up a few really ugly habits if they had any. And if they didn't have any, if they were already kind of decent people, the only thing that changes is they go to church and get baptized and now they do something different on Sunday mornings than they used to do.

And it's easy to think that following God only requires these few adjustments. So long as we're worshiping, it doesn't matter really whether we're doing exactly everything the way God said to do it, right? Well, that's not true. We're supposed to follow Him in all manner of our behavior.

We're supposed to be separated unto Him in our lives. And Cain simply did not regard God as holy. He was centered on himself and felt like God ought to allow him to do things His way.

This did not please God. And frankly, it didn't please Cain when he found out that God wasn't pleased with him. And so, we read in verse 6, So the Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry? And why is your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door, and its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.

Now, this word that God gave to Cain is a really insightful thing in terms of certain controversies theologically that you may not care too much about. But here's one that is really addressed here. In the theology of Calvinism, it is argued that God has unconditionally chosen some people to be saved.

And unconditionally chosen other people to be lost. That before anyone was ever born, God knew which side of the aisle each person was going to be in because God determined. God determined this one's going to be in, this one's going to be out, and so forth.

Now, Cain was, we're told in 1 John 3, we saw it a moment ago, verse 12, he was a child of the devil. He went to hell. He was lost, right? Cain was not a saved man.

But look what God said to him. If you do well, you'll be accepted too. Now, here's a man who clearly in his final destiny was a lost man.

Did he have a bona fide opportunity to be saved? Apparently. Or else God was just teasing. And that was not a very tasteful thing to do at a time like this.

Here's a man distraught because his form of worship is not pleasing to God. And God's not just there with a carrot on a stick to hold out before the man something he can't really have. Why would God even bother to speak to him if that were the case? What God is saying to him is, listen, Cain, I didn't accept your sacrifice.

I did accept Abel's. You know what the difference is? He did well. You did not.

Now, more than that, you can be like him. You can do well too. And if you do, you will be accepted just like he.

It sounds to me like Cain had every opportunity to be saved. As much as Abel did. That sounds like what God was saying.

And yet the man wasn't saved. Which indicates that all those who go to hell like Cain himself do so in spite of the fact that they have the opportunity, a real opportunity to be saved, to do what's right, to turn to God and be in God's favor. It is not that they were predestined unconditionally to go to hell.

But they had the same choice that Cain had and Abel had and everyone else had. If you do well, you'll be accepted. Now, if you don't do well, your troubles are going to increase.

Now, God uses what looks like a figure of speech. He personifies or either personifies or else describes as if it's a predator, an animal. Sin.

You know, the Bible does this from time to time in trying to explain the relationship of humanity to sin and to things like the law and grace and things. Sometimes the writers of Scripture will personify. Romans 5 is a good example of that where the human drama is presented almost like a play.

Sin entered, came on stage, and sin ruled. And then the law came, but the law didn't drive sin out. And the law was not the hero in this drama.

Then came grace, and it says at the end of Romans 5, grace came in to rule where sin had ruled. And you've got all this discussion like these are characters in conflict and supplanting and mankind is the victim. Mankind is the damsel tied to the railroad tracks.

And sin is the snidely whiplash, twisting his mustache saying, Aha! And then comes the law, and the law doesn't save the damsel. But then comes grace, and grace manages to do what the law could not. That's how Paul describes this whole situation in Romans 5. He personifies these concepts.

God here seems to be personifying sin. He says, Listen, Cain, if you don't do the right thing, then this is not an isolated situation. Any choice you make right now is going to

put you at risk of being totally victimized by sin's bondage.

He says, If you do well, you'll be accepted. But if you don't do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, which means it wants to master you.

It wants to control you. It wants to be your lord. It wants to conquer you.

He says, But you must rule over it. You must conquer it. He's saying, Cain, you're at a crossroads in your life here.

You've made one wrong decision just now in not obeying me, in worshiping me properly. And now you have an opportunity to rectify that. You can do right next time.

But if you don't, if you compound your guilt, if you begin to establish a pattern of disobedience in your life, your relationship with sin is not going to remain static. But sin is going to be like something that comes and conquers you. You have to conquer it.

Because if you don't, you'll be in much worse trouble than you're in right now. And Cain proved that God was right in the very next part of the story. But one thing this makes very clear is that we can't just sin with impunity.

A lot of times because we know that Jesus died for our sins, and if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, we figure under temptation, you know, if I succumb to this, if I just take the easy way and go ahead and sin, I can always repent and there will be none the worse for wear. You know, so I sin, but I repent and I'm okay with God again and it's like nothing ever happened, right? Well, not exactly. Sin takes its pound of flesh.

Sin is a master that seeks to exert total dominance over the life. And if you give it an inch, it wants to take a mile. Now, I'm not saying you can't recover from falling into sin.

Christians have done it many times. But not without greater difficulty than before. Every time you say yes to sin, you become more accustomed to saying yes to sin.

Every time you say no to sin under temptation, you become more accustomed to saying no to sin. And those habits are not... I mean, it's not just habits that are going on in a vacuum. When you say yes to sins, sin's power achieves a foothold more than it had before in your life and it will be more difficult to say no the next time.

And likewise, every time you conquer sin in the tension of temptation, it is easier to say no the next time. And that's what God is telling Cain. Okay, you've blown it once.

You have the opportunity to do it right next time. But if you don't, you need to be aware of something. Sin is there to take over.

Sin isn't just there to give you a good time. You may think that sin is just the piper that

plays the tune so you can dance and have a good time. But he comes out with his... He sends you the bill.

You have to pay the piper. And sin is not just there for you to have a great time. Sin is there to take over your life.

Giving you a good time is his strategy. And you need to be aware of that. It's not something that's right there confronting you.

It's crouching at the door. It's around the corner ready to leap on you unawares. Very few of us would really ever succumb to temptation if we could see clearly sin or the devil or what the consequences really are.

What really is at stake. It's by concealing those from us that the enemy gets us to make a foolish and unguarded move. And Cain is being unguarded and foolish at this point.

And God is saying, this is not a good time to be unguarded. There is an enemy at the door. It's crouching there.

It's ready to spring upon you. You are in grave danger. You need to turn around right now and start doing what's right instead of the course you're on.

Now, Cain doesn't take this advice. Verse 8, Now 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 killed him. There's no details given of how he did this.

I think we can assume there were not many sophisticated tools or weapons, probably, at this point in time. And therefore, you know, he may have just hit him with a rock or stabbed him with a sharp stick or who knows what he did. But he killed him.

Now, note, no human beings had ever died previous to this. So we might wonder, would they have even had a concept, a clear concept in their mind of what death was or what murder is? Probably not anywhere near as clear as we have because we have seen death all around and we know of death from wars and just from human history for thousands of years. I mean, this is the first instance of human death.

However, we shouldn't assume that they had no concept of death at all. For one thing, God had said to Adam and Eve before anything had ever died, you'll surely die if you eat that fruit. And he must have meant for that to communicate something to them.

They must have had some idea that that was a bad thing, that was possible to happen to them. But more than that, animals had been killed for sacrifices already at least twice at this time. So they knew that a living thing could have its life taken from it and could cease to be a living thing.

And I'm sure that Cain knew very well that if you applied enough damage to a human

organism, that human organism could die just like an animal could. And so he was getting rid of Abel. And he knew it.

And he was not concerned about the fact that the man was a human being. He's the first man to treat another human being as people had become accustomed to treating animals and to make no distinction in the value of human life. And he's the first murderer.

And Abel is the first martyr, martyred for his righteousness. That's what it says in the verse we read in 1 John 3. It says, Cain was of the wicked when he slew his brother. And why did he slay him? It says, because his own works were evil and his brothers were righteous.

So Abel died because he was righteous. It wasn't just because they didn't get along in general or they were rivals or anything like that. It was because Abel did the right thing.

He was killed for that. And he was there for the first martyr. Then the Lord said to Cain, Where is Abel your brother? Now, it's interesting that God asked this question rather than a direct confrontation saying, I saw what you did.

It's like when Adam and Eve sinned, they were hiding in the bushes. And God said, Adam, where are you? As if God didn't know. And then he said, I'm here in the bushes naked.

I was embarrassed. He said, How did you know? Who told you you were naked? I mean, He's given these guys a chance to fess up without directly nailing them. Going to see if this man is going to take his opportunity to confess his sin.

But he doesn't. He says, Where are you? Excuse me, Where is Abel your brother? And he said, I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper? It shows how little Cain really knew God.

And he thought he could lie to God. I mean, it's always embarrassing when you tell a lie like this, and then you find out within a few seconds that they knew you were lying all along. I don't think Cain would have said that if he knew how much God knows.

I think God had appeared to these people in a human form, in a theophany on many occasions possibly. But again, they made the mistake of thinking that God was a mere man and didn't know all things. I'm not sure how anyone could not know that.

Adam and Eve certainly must have been very aware of God being the great creator and everything. I mean, how much theology about God's nature they knew, I don't know. But Cain apparently does not know about God's omniscience.

And so he thinks he can fool God here. I don't know where he is. Am I my brother's keeper? And God said, What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out

to me from the ground.

Now, the blood of Abel cries out from the ground. Under the law that was later given by Moses, God said that a land would be cursed by the shedding of innocent blood upon it. And there were laws about how a city could go about being atoned for innocent blood that was shed in it or else that city would come under God's curse.

But there's even laws that say, if a dead body is found out in the field somewhere and no one knows how it died, the priests are supposed to come out and they're supposed to make diligent inquiry to find out if there's any evidence of murder, of foul play. And if they can't figure out the cause of death, what they actually had to do is measure the distance from the corpse to all the cities around it. Whichever city was nearest would have to take responsibility for it.

And they had to offer all kinds of offerings and so forth to atone for this, what would be assumed to have been the case of shedding of innocent blood, since they didn't know otherwise. I mean, just in case this was an innocent victim of foul play, the city nearest to the corpse had to actually do certain rituals to absolve itself from the curse that would ordinarily come upon them for being guilty of the blood of innocent people. It says in Isaiah that the people in Isaiah's day had brought a curse on themselves because they had defiled their land with blood, with innocent blood.

The blood that is shed of innocent people, it cries out to God. Not literally. We've got figurative language here.

Any more than sin was literally an animal crouching to conquer Cain. I mean, this is figures of speech. But the point is, when innocent blood has been shed, it is such a grievance in the sight of God that it's as if He cannot ignore it.

It's as if that bloodshed is just screaming at Him until He does something about it. It's calling out for some redress. And when we think about how much innocent blood has been shed in modern times, even in our nation through abortion, for example, I mean, that's a lot of innocent blood been shed, millions and millions of innocent human beings have been killed surgically by people who aren't going to jail for it, people who are murderers but are respectable citizens.

And everyone knows they do this for a living. I was reading something I got from James Dobson. I'm on his mailing list.

I don't know if you guys got it. Did you read it yet? I read it today. It was interesting.

I mean, the same kind of stuff he's been talking about for years, I mean, about the culture sliding and so forth. But he was talking about partial birth abortion, and he was even talking about a tenured Harvard professor of bioethics who said, I don't remember exactly his exact words, but basically he was saying that even after a baby is born,

sometimes it's the right thing to kill it. And there was another, Barbara Boxer.

She's a California senator or something like that. In a debate with somebody over, I suppose it was over abortion, she said that a baby is not really a baby until it actually leaves the hospital and goes home. So presumably it's okay to kill a baby anytime before it leaves the hospital.

Now, that's not necessarily the way the practice of the hospitals has come to be accepted yet, but I mean, this is how many of our legislators feel about things. And the killing of innocent people is something that doesn't even shock them anymore. That's the weird thing.

Not that murder is taking place. There's always been murders. But murder used to be shocking.

And now murder doesn't shock people anymore. It still shocks God. The blood still cries out to God.

It still leaves Him restless until some redress has been made, until there's some judgment come upon it. And so God, on this first occasion of innocent blood being shed, says, your brother's blood is crying out to Me. The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground.

There's a probable allusion to this in Hebrews chapter 12. I say a probable allusion. Preachers like to make the point I'm going to make because it's a good preaching point, though there is a possible other interpretation available, I think.

But in Hebrews 12 and verse 24, it says, We have come to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. The blood of Jesus with which we've been sprinkled, that blood speaks better things than the blood of Abel speaks. And I say preachers like to make this point because it sounds legit, and it could be very much what the writer of Hebrews is saying, and that is that the blood of Jesus that was shed also cries out.

That was also innocent blood that was shed. And that blood cries out to God too. But what it cries out is something better than what Abel's blood cried out.

Abel's blood cried out for vengeance, for justice, for the murderer to be punished. But Jesus on the cross prayed that his murders would be forgiven, and his blood speaks of forgiveness because it was shed for that very purpose, as a sacrifice, as a propitiation for sin. And therefore, Jesus' blood speaks of forgiveness where Abel's blood spoke of the need for vengeance and for judgment.

That could be what the writer of Hebrews means, and probably is what he means, when he says it speaks better things than the blood of Abel. An alternative, just so you'll know

another possibility, is that the blood of Abel might be a reference not so much to Abel's own blood that was shed, but the blood he offered on the altar, the blood of Abel's sacrifice. And it may be saying that Jesus' sacrifice is superior to the blood of all animal sacrifices, which had their beginning in Abel's and all those that it was a prototype of.

But that seems less likely to me. I mean, I can't really say. Either possibility is there, but just my own instincts would suggest that it's less likely that that second meaning is what the writer of Hebrews has in mind.

In any case, Abel's blood was crying out, as the blood of many innocents who have died since then continued to cry out. And you know what? When you read the prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and some of the chapters in Amos and Obadiah, you'll find that God didn't only speak words against Israel. He also spoke against Gentile nations, like the Philistines and the Moabites and the Ammonites and the Edomites and the Babylonians and the Egyptians and some of these.

And when he did, he said that judgment was coming to them. And almost always, the reason was because of the murderous behavior of these nations, of how they had very little regard for human life and how they shed innocent blood. And so, not only did Israel, its land be defiled by the shedding of innocent blood, but also God held other nations responsible for their shedding of innocent blood, and judgment came upon them because of it.

And here we have the first instance. Although, interestingly, Cain doesn't end up getting punished as severely as one might expect for what he has done. It says to him, this is what his punishment is, verse 11, So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth. Now, the guy should have been put to death.

He is a murderer. And as early as Noah's day, in Genesis chapter 9, God said, Whosoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. And of course, that became part of the law of Moses as well.

And it's basically a just law for any society to adopt. God would have been perfectly just to kill Cain here. I mean, the guy deserved it.

But instead, he didn't. Now, why didn't he? I don't know for sure. But as I said, there may be mitigating factors here that did not apply in later cases.

One is, when he killed his brother, he may not have really fully understood much about what human death is. There had never been one before. No one had ever died before.

He may not have fully understood the ramifications of bringing about the death of a

human being. It's also possible that since God had given no direct laws yet, forbidding murder, that nothing other than Cain's own conscience would have told him it was wrong and not having any law from God, maybe the punishment was less. Or maybe God just decided to be merciful, just like He did with Adam and Eve.

Adam and Eve deserved to die when they ate of the tree. But God instead offered animal sacrifices for them. Now, we don't read of God offering any blood sacrifice for Cain, and that's probably why Cain isn't in heaven today.

But Cain was not trusted around human society anymore. He was driven away from people. I guess it's sort of like putting a guy in solitary confinement, but not entirely solitary because he took a wife with him and started a family.

But he would not be able to live in the society he'd been in anymore. He'd be a vagabond, a fugitive. And Cain complained about this, although he got better than what he deserved.

He said, my punishment is greater than I can bear. Surely you have driven me out this day from the face of the ground. I shall be hidden from your face.

Which is, in one sense, admirable that that is his first concern, that he would not actually be able to see God anymore, that his relation with God was cut off permanently. He says, I will be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me. Now, some people say, well, why should he be concerned about that? There's no one else on earth but his parents.

I mean, there was his brother, but he's dead. But it's obvious that they are not the only two people on earth. And I'll explain that a little further in a moment.

And the Lord said to him, therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him. Sevenfold may be literal or it may not be literal, we don't know.

I mean, what it would suggest is if anyone kills Cain, then that person and six of his relatives would be put to death as punishment. But that would be if it's taken literal. Sevenfold simply may just mean to the ultimate degree, since the word seven is a number suggesting perfection.

In many ways in the Old Testament, especially the number seven is non-literal. The righteous man falls down seven times, but he gets back up again. I mean, seven, it just means a total number.

And so also, he may be saying, anyone who punishes Cain will get the utmost punishment at my hands for it. And he put a mark on him. And we know very little about this mark.

Everyone wonders, what is the mark on Cain? And no one really knows. It was apparently something that was visible that people who would contemplate killing Cain would see and say, oh, that's Cain, I'm not supposed to kill him. God has given that man a special dispensation of protection.

And that mark is there like an unmistakable fingerprint. You know, this is the guy I'm not supposed to kill. And that's really an act of mercy on God's part.

People who think God in the Old Testament is a vengeful, angry God and God in the New Testament is some kind of a flabby, easy-going kind of a God. And there are people who believe that dichotomy to be true. I mean, you hear it all the time.

They just don't pay very close attention to God in the Old Testament or, for that matter, God in the New. God has both His merciful side and His angry side in both Testaments. Here we see God being unexplainably merciful to Cain.

Not only does He not command that the man be put to death, but He actually says, I'm specifically forbidding anyone to put you to death. Cain is the only murderer in the Bible who had this kind of protection from God from being put to death for his crime. Why? I know of no answer except the inexplicable grace of God to him on this occasion.

Just like that unique grace that Jesus showed to the woman taken in adultery. She deserved to die under the law, and He admitted it. But at the same time, He just gave her a pass.

He said, don't do it anymore, but I'm not going to condemn you for this. That doesn't mean that everyone who commits adultery gets a pass from God or every murderer. We know of no other murderers who did, I mean, who didn't repent.

See, Cain didn't repent. That's the thing. I mean, the thief on the cross may have been a murderer, but he repented.

There are a number of people who are murderers in history who got saved because they repented. But here's a murderer who never repented, and God still let him live out a natural life, which is just a strange, very strange mercy that I don't have any explanation for, that God chose. But then God's mercy is beyond explanation at times.

Now, verse 16, Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod, which means wandering. On the east of Eden. Now, these people were not living in Eden anymore, but they still knew where it was, and it was still a reference for locating places, and the land of Nod was on the east of Eden.

Now, is it a coincidence that Cain, who had to wander, went and lived in a place that's called wandering? Well, in all likelihood, the land of Nod was not so called until Cain went there and wandered in it. In all likelihood, it's in retrospect that it came to be recognized

as the land of wandering, because it was the land that Cain went off to wander in. All that that area was known for was that the guy wandered there, and so it's the land of wandering, the land of Nod.

Wait, doesn't Art Bell live there, too, or something? Oh, it's not Nod, is it? Nod, that's right. I knew it was something like that. Okay.

Verse 17 is perplexed many. And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. Now that he would know his wife, or that she'd have a child is not what's so peculiar, the fact that he had a wife has really puzzled people.

This is brought up many times by people who think the Bible is inconsistent, because they say, wait a minute, there was Ab and Eve, and then they had two sons, Cain and Abel, and Cain killed Abel, and so now there's Adam and Eve and Cain. And then Cain knows his wife? Where'd she come from? You may know the story of the schoolteacher who challenged a Christian student, a public schoolteacher, challenged this girl who brought her Bible to school all the time, wanted to make fun of her in front of the class, and he said, did you believe everything in the Bible? You probably know the story. And she said, yeah, I believe every word in the Bible is true.

He said, well, have you read Genesis about how Cain went and knew his wife? And she said, well, of course. And he said, well, where did Cain get his wife? And she said, well, I don't know, but when I go to heaven, I'll ask him. And the teacher said, well, Cain wasn't a very good man, maybe he won't be in heaven.

She said, then you can ask him. It's no mystery where Cain got his wife, actually. Cain got his wife from among the family members.

Now, there's two things that have been suggested. Only one really works theologically. One suggestion some people have made is that Adam and Eve were not the only people God created, but there might have been over in the land of Nod, another population of human beings that God separately created.

And so Cain knew they were there, and he went over and took a wife from among them. But that doesn't work theologically. The Bible already has told us that Eve was the mother of all living.

So there were no other living humans but those that descended from Adam and Eve. Furthermore, we are told in Romans 5 that the whole human race fell or sinned through Adam, which is only a theological point that works if all human beings were born from Adam. You see, when Adam sinned, all of us were in him.

There weren't other humans that were unaffected by this fall. But more than that, there's no need to speculate or postulate another human population somewhere when we know that Adam and Eve had plenty of offspring, including female offspring, for Cain and Abel,

if Abel had lived, to marry. And their other sons, too.

If you look over at chapter 5 of Genesis, in verse 3 and 4, And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness after his image, and named him Seth. After he begat Seth, the days of Adam were eight hundred years, and he had sons and daughters. Now, that last line, and he had sons and daughters, does not necessarily mean he only had them after Seth was born.

Remember, Adam and Eve, when they were created, they were made sexually mature in all likelihood. Cain and Abel were probably born within the first year or two of Adam and Eve's life. Talk about being inexperienced when you have your kids.

A one-year-old couple having kids to raise. Maybe that's why Cain didn't turn out so well. But the point is, Adam and Eve, from the moment they were created, were told to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, and God gave them no birth control.

So, they lived hundreds of years. What would prevent them, especially since God made them fertile for the very purpose of filling the earth, what would prevent them from having hundreds of children? And why would they wait until they were a hundred and thirty years old to start? They obviously didn't. They were a hundred and thirty years old when Seth was born.

They had other sons and daughters, but Seth's birth is mentioned specially for what reason? Well, if you look back at chapter 4, we haven't gotten to this verse yet, but we'll find out that in verse 25 it says, Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth. Oh, that's the same guy. Now, hang on a minute.

We just saw, in Genesis 5, 3, that when Seth was born, Adam and Eve were how old? They were a hundred and thirty years old when Seth was born. Alright? Keep that in mind. Adam and Eve have been around, probably having kids, for a hundred and thirty years by the time Seth was born.

Sons and daughters, in all likelihood. And it says, they named him Seth, for God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel whom Cain killed. That's apparently what Eve said when her child was born.

She named him Seth. The word Seth means appointed. She says, well, God has appointed me a replacement for Abel whom Cain has killed.

Doesn't this suggest that Seth is the first son born after Cain killed Abel? Not the first son born after Cain and Abel were born, but the first son born after Cain killed Abel. I think it likely, because she says, this son is a replacement for Abel whom Cain has killed. Sounds like, I mean, there may have been other sons before Seth, and she just recognized prophetically this is the one, not these other ones, but it seems to me likely, knowing nothing more than what we do, that Seth was probably the son that was born after Abel

was killed.

And therefore, Eve said, well, this one replaces Abel whom Cain has killed. That doesn't mean there were no sons born between the birth of Cain and Abel and the birth of Seth. It just means that after Cain killed Abel, in all likelihood, Seth was the next boy born, judging from what Eve says.

Now, think about that. If Cain and Abel were born, let's say a year after the creation of Adam and Eve, or two, and Seth was born 130 years later, how old were Cain and Abel when Seth was born? Well, Abel was dead by then, but Cain was almost 130 years, let's say at least 125 years old. And if that is the point at which Cain had just killed Abel, and therefore Seth was seen as a replacement for Abel, you see that Cain and Abel must have been over 120 years old when Cain killed Abel.

And it was after that that Cain sought a wife. Now, if Adam and Eve had been having kids on a regular basis, which is very likely to suppose, for that 120 years before Cain killed Abel, they could have had hundreds of children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren before Cain needed a wife. And that would explain why Cain would say, if anyone finds me, they'll kill me.

Cain and his parents weren't alone on the earth. There was a whole big clan from which he could choose one to be his wife, and a clan of people who were related to the victim. After all, Abel was the older brother of everyone else on the planet except Cain.

And therefore, there would be concern to avenge the blood of their brother Abel. And that's why God gave special instructions not to avenge the blood of Abel in this case, because there would be people concerned to do so. Well, let's see what happened to Cain in the sequel here.

Cain knew his wife, verse 17, and she conceived and bore Enoch. This is not the Enoch that walked with God and was not. That's another Enoch from the line of Seth that comes up in the next chapter.

Perhaps the human language had not developed very much, and there was a shortage of names, so they got doubled up on. There actually are a number of names. Like there's a Lamech in Cain's line.

There's one in Seth's line also, repeated names. Okay, so he's got a son named Enoch, and he built a city. And he called the name of the city after the name of his son Enoch.

Now, a city seems to us to suggest population. But it needn't be that there was a very large population. It could have started out with just Cain's family, and then eventually grandchildren, great-grandchildren.

And he named the settlement after his son. Remember, people lived hundreds of years

at that time. So a man could live to see his great-great-great-great-great-grandchildren.

Adam lived long enough to see his great-great-great-great-great-great-grandchildren to the seventh or eighth generation after his own time. Think of how many thousands of his offspring he would be able to see in his lifetime. We don't know at what point in time Cain established this city after his son's name.

It could have been hundreds of years after his son's birth, and there may have been a pretty big extended family there. It could have been a fairly populous little village or city. He named it in honor of his son Enoch.

And to Enoch was born Irad, and Irad begot Mehujael, and Mehujael begot Methushael, and Methushael begot Lamech. Now Lamech, for some reason, gets some special attention in the narrative. It says, then Lamech took for himself two wives.

This may be the first case of polygamy, but it may not be. It's the first case mentioned, but it's many generations after Adam and Eve. We're talking, what, five generations now? With thousands of people on the earth, there might have been other polygamists.

We don't know that Lamech was the first. He's usually accused of being the first polygamist because he took two wives. Well, he was a polygamist, and that was not good, but he may have been doing something that other people had been doing for generations.

We don't know. We really don't know. The instructions, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, can be expedited by a man having children by a number of wives.

It's not the way God wanted it, and it's interesting that although God did want Adam and Eve to fill the earth, He only gave Adam one wife to do it with. She could only have one or maybe two kids at a time, in all likelihood, whereas if God liked the idea of polygamy, He could have given Adam ten wives, and boy, they could fill the earth a lot faster that way. By the way, for a woman to have several husbands doesn't increase the number of babies that are going to come into that family.

She can still only have the same number at a time. A man having several wives could grow a family faster, and that is no doubt the rationale that people used for that. You know, even in polygamist cultures, it's the men who get multiple wives.

The wives don't get multiple husbands. And I think the reason probably is, well, male chauvinism for one thing, but another reason is probably just the logistics, that a man can argue that he can have a bigger family faster if he has several wives bearing children simultaneously, whereas a wife could never make that claim about having several husbands. She could still only have one baby at a time, no matter how many husbands she had.

But we do see the beginnings, the first reference to polygamy. Whether this is the first instance of it, we don't know. But we can see that polygamy was now a part of fallen human culture.

And he took two wives. The name of one was Ada. The name of the second was Zilla.

And Ada bore Jubal. He was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock, not the literal genealogical father of all who do, but rather the first, like George Washington is called the father of this country. The word father is used in a non-literal sense here.

His brother's name was Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the harp and flute. And as for Zilla, she also bore Tubalcain, an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron.

And the sister of Tubalcain was Neama. So, we have three sons of this man Lamech, who is descended from Cain, who are, their professions are given because they were the first, or at least if not the very first, they were notable among those who did these various professions. Tent dwelling, nomadic, herdsman.

Now, we know that old Jubal wasn't the first guy to have livestock. Abel had had livestock generations earlier and probably a lot of people had since. But he was apparently one of the first nomadic shepherds.

Abraham later was such. And Isaac also and Jacob, they were nomadic shepherds. They lived in tents and they moved around.

Apparently, that was not what most people with livestock did until this time. And so, he became the first nomadic, you know, rancher. Jubal, his brother, apparently was the first musician.

And he was versatile. He played stringed instruments and woodwinds. And he may have invented them too, since it seems unlikely that anyone would invent them who'd never learn to play them.

And if someone invented them earlier, why would they do so since he's the first to play them? He must have invented these instruments. And then, of course, the other guy is a craftsman in bronze and iron. This either would speak of manufacturing metal tools or possibly even some kind of artistry, but probably tools.

In any case, these are the beginnings of certain aspects of culture, of industry and the arts. And they begin with people who are descended from Cain. As we'll find out in the next chapter, there's a different family that God was really blessing, not Cain's family.

And therefore, many of the distinctive things of human culture did not arise within the godly family, but within the family of the wicked. And while that doesn't mean that

Christians can't use those things to advantage for the kingdom of God, it suggests that culture, human culture, has often been developed in ways without guidance from morality that's inspired by God. And therefore, the arts and industry and many other things are often going in a direction that is not informed by God's standards.

And much of human culture, therefore, is set against God. Then we have this little song that Lamech wrote. He sang this song to his wives.

I say it's a song because it's poetry. In fact, it's the earliest known poem in all literature. And it, too, is from an ungodly man.

So, poetry, part of a literary style, part of culture comes from this man. And this is the earliest known poem in human history. He spoke to his wives.

Ada and Zilla, hear my voice. Wives of Lamech, listen to my speech. For I have killed a man for wounding me, even a young man for hurting me.

If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold. What's he getting at here? This may be the second actual case of murder in history. Now, it is several generations after Cain killed Abel.

And therefore, it's possible that there had been other murders. But just the way he speaks about it, and he sees Cain's murder as a precursor of his own, and even something that kind of guides the justice system with reference to this kind of an act. It may be that after Cain killed Abel, no one killed anybody for a very long time until this incident.

But this was different than Cain killing Abel, and Lamech makes a point of that. Cain killed Abel in cold blood. I killed a man who wounded me.

He attacked me. We were in a fight. I didn't just come against a man who was at peace with me and knock him over the head like Cain did.

I was in a life-and-death struggle with this man, and I happened to win, and I killed him. Therefore, if God would stand by Cain, who had done such an atrocity as killing a man who was at peace with him, and not in self-defense at all, and God would avenge him sevenfold, how much more should God avenge me? Because my act of murder, though it may resemble Cain's in that it is an act of murder, it is not the same. It is not the moral equivalent.

Because what he is saying is, my act was an act of self-defense. And therefore, I should be protected from the avenger of blood if Cain was. And much more so.

Seventy times sevenfold is what he seems to be arguing. Now, the names Ada and Zillah, I forget their exact meanings. They mean something like beautiful and comely or

lovely or something like that.

And some have suggested that, you know, they were so named as many people were named by their physical or other characteristics, that this man had unusually lovely wives and that he may have been warning them. You know, I'm a man capable of killing a man. And therefore, if any men come near you, you just bear that in mind.

You know, I mean, it's hard to say whether he had any of that intention or whether he was just trying to get his wives over on his side. I mean, come home, you know, hey, God save you, I killed somebody. How should I tell my wives I'm a murderer? I'll write a song about it, you know.

I'll sing it to them. So, like, hang down your head Tom Dooley or something, you know, it's a confession of murder set to music. Well, it wasn't murder actually.

And that's the point he makes. It isn't murder. It's self-defense in his case.

A lot of people, commentators are always trying to read things into the Bible that aren't necessarily there. I mean, they may be implied, but it's hard to tell. A lot of them try to say, well, see what this chapter is telling us is that Cain was a bad guy.

And look how much his line got corrupted. Look at this guy a few generations down from Cain. I mean, he's just really rotten.

Because first of all, he takes two wives. Cain didn't do that. And now he's boasting about killing a man and he's arrogantly saying that people should not avenge him, you know, bring vengeance on him.

And somehow commentators always want to talk about this guy as if he's, you know, like several steps down from Cain. I don't know that that's really a fair assessment. I'm not sure that that's what this chapter is trying to tell us.

I think this chapter is giving us a little more about this, giving us life history because some of his children became significant players. And because there were some of these special instances, like he may have been the second man to shed human blood, but if his story is true, he killed in self-defense, which is itself not really criminal. And that's the point he seems to be making.

Cain killed criminally and God protected him. How much more should God protect me? I didn't kill criminally. I killed in self-defense.

And as far as his polygamy is concerned, it isn't good. But there were some good men who did the same thing. Abraham, Jacob.

Jacob had four wives, essentially, two wives and two concubines. I mean, there were men better than David, had eight wives. I mean, Solomon, who can keep count of those? I

mean, even Samuel's father, who was apparently a pious individual in his generation, had two wives.

It was not stigmatized in the Old Testament like it is in the New. And therefore, even men who are otherwise good didn't always have a sensitivity about the wrongness of polygamy. And therefore, the fact that this guy took two wives, I mean, we can't really say for sure whether that's mentioned because it was considered especially a bad thing on his part or a rebellion on his part, or whether it's just a fact because it's mentioned who his kids are.

And they happened to be born by two women, just like Jacob's kids were born by four women. I don't know. In any case, we have this little vignette about Lamech, and then he's dismissed from the narrative.

And we have these closing verses, 25 and 26. Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son, and named him Seth, for God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed, she said. And as for Seth, to him also a son was born, and he named him Enosh, which means mortal, man.

Then men began to call on the name of Yahweh, the Lord. You know, it says men began to call on the name of Yahweh, or Jehovah there. It sounds like Enosh, either his birth or something about Enosh's life, was somehow connected to people beginning to call on the Lord.

It's very possible that as Seth was a replacement that God sent to replace Abel, who had been a prophet, that his son Enosh may have also carried on the tradition of being a preacher or a prophet and turned people to the Lord. We will find in the next chapter that ten generations of Seth's descendants are given to us there. And although we don't know any personal particulars about most of them, we know about a few of them.

And the few we know something about are all pretty good. I mean, Enoch, who walked with God, was descended from this line. Noah, the only righteous man in his generation, was descended from that line.

It seems as if that particular family line was one that God particularly blessed to raise up those that would be a remnant in a fallen world for Him. Now, there'd be many family lines from Adam and Eve going, you know, at the same time, different directions. But this particular man, Seth, who is a replacement, according to Eve's probably prophetic word for Abel, is the seed that God particularly blessed through which actually all of us have come.

All of us are descended from Seth because we've all descended from Noah. And Noah is from Seth. So, even though Adam and Eve had many, many, many, many children, sons and daughters, and maybe, you know, by the time Seth was born, there might have

been thousands of them, at least hundreds.

Yet, this one is the one through whom all survivors of the flood have come. And therefore, his family line becomes important enough to trace in the next chapter. And so, we find in chapter 5, ten generations documented from Seth to Noah.