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Genesis 4:1 - 4:17



Genesis - Steve Gregg

In this analysis of Genesis 4:1-17, Steve Gregg explores the conflict between Cain and Abel and the repercussions of Cain's disobedience. While God demonstrated favor towards Abel's offering, Cain's anger towards God's rejection of his offering suggests entitlement to God's acceptance. The mark that God placed on Cain prohibited anyone from harming him and Genesis 4 outlines the consequences of Cain's sinful act. Ultimately, Steve Gregg concludes that God's invitation to salvation is open to all who follow His prescribed way through Christ without the need for exclusivity.

Transcript

We have finally gotten past the first three chapters of Genesis. I don't know if you noticed, we took three sessions to get through chapter three, and similar length of time to get through the previous chapters. We should be able to move somewhat more quickly.

We're in chapter four. All of the most momentous things in the early part of Genesis are now, have been considered. And we've now got some personal conflicts between offspring of Adam and Eve, which are treated in the New Testament as if they are somewhat prototypical of the conflict between righteous and unrighteous people, as we shall see.

In chapter four, verse one, it says, Now Adam knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

And in the process of time, it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering.

But he did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. Now, it has sometimes been suggested that Cain and Abel might have been twins.

Because it says Eve conceived and bore Cain, then it says, and she, then she bore Abel. Doesn't talk about her conceiving twice, but bearing twice. This, of course, could just be an insignificant omission of the mention of the second conception.

Obviously, if they were not twins, then she must have conceived a second time to bear Abel, and that might be considered as something that would go without saying. But it has been suggested possibly they were twins. It's not important to know.

But we do know that God made Adam and Eve very fertile. I mean, they did have as their primary task in life to fill the earth with offspring. And so we have to assume that God made them very capable of having children, many children in their lifetime.

And perhaps they had quite a few sets of multiple births. I mean, they might have had twins, triplets, who knows. By the way, I think it's really important as we were talking about the creation of Adam and Eve as a sort of a defining paradigm for marriage in the Bible.

We will encounter before the end of this chapter the phenomenon of polygamy. And, of course, polygamy is one of those things in the Old Testament that disturbs us, and we wonder why God put up with it. And that will be something to discuss.

But the thing here is that if we look at the creation of Adam and Eve as the paradigm for marriage, as we are encouraged to do by Jesus, when he is talking about divorce, actually he's asked about divorce, he's talking about marriage. He is asked about divorce, he says, well, to answer that I have to talk about marriage. And he quotes from Genesis and essentially says that's how it was in the beginning, that's how God wanted it.

Well, we can see that God only gave man one wife. And this is particularly important to note because God wanted them to fill the earth with offspring. Now, one of the reasons that people had multiple wives in later generations was that a man might have a barren wife.

And it was very important to have offspring so he'd marry a second wife, so that he could have children. We see this happening with Abraham. We see something a little bit like that going on with Jacob and his women.

Because, you know, Rachel is barren, so she gives her husband another woman, her maid, to have children by. This is often what no doubt motivated polygamy. In fact, Samuel was born to a polygamous home, and it seems like this was the case because his father, Elkanah, loved Hannah, but she was barren.

And so there was another wife in the picture. We don't read that Elkanah really loved this other wife, but she gave him a bunch of kids. And it's very probable, but we don't have the details given to us, that Elkanah had married Hannah, wishing for her to be his only

wife, but because of her barrenness and because of the need to pass on the inheritance to other generations, he did what most people in that day would do, perhaps, in that situation, and that is to marry again, have a second wife.

And to, you know, have children by her. Now, the reason I point all that out is because I think the original rationale for polygamy was to have children. And there was no one more charged with a greater responsibility in the area of having children than Adam and Eve were.

And yet God, who wanted them to fill the earth with their offspring, did not make more than one wife for Adam. And think of how much more quickly that could have gone had he done so. A man with ten wives can have ten babies in one year.

A man with one wife can have one or maybe two or three babies if he has twins or triplets, but with only one wife, it definitely is a much slower process of populating the earth than it would be if he had multiple wives. As some later men did. And we read of men later in the Bible who had like 70 sons because they had so many wives bearing children by.

But God, although he wanted the earth to be populated by Adam and his offspring, there were apparently overriding considerations that dictated it must be a monogamous family that will produce these children. Obviously, God intended that monogamy would be the norm, even when there might be pressure or some advantage seen in having multiple wives so that they could populate the earth quicker. Still, there were other considerations more important than how quickly the earth is populated, apparently.

And that was that the paradigm of marriage should reflect the proper lesson, which is Christ and the church. Christ has only one church, only one bride, and therefore God made it that way. Now, Adam and Eve may have had multiple children at the same time, and some think that Cain and Abel could have been twins.

I don't think we could establish that from the little bit we're told, but the fact that there's only one conception and two births mentioned has led some people to think that is possible. Now, it's strange, too, that I mentioned those people who teach the serpent seed heresy believe that Cain was a product of a union between Eve and the serpent when this specifically says Adam knew his wife and she conceived and Cain was produced. I don't know how the Bible could be more clear.

I don't know what other phrases could be added to avoid confusion that Cain was clearly the result of conception that was because of Adam knowing his wife Eve. And she said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. Many commentators say that her statement suggests that maybe she thought this child was the promised seed.

You know, the promised seed from chapter 3, where God said to the serpent that the

woman's seed would crush the serpent's head. Of course, she might readily think that about any child, and perhaps she would even think it mostly about the first child. I don't know.

But many people feel that the way she said this, I have gotten a man from the Lord, suggests that she was actually hinting at this being the chosen seed. I don't really see that the statement itself would require that interpretation. I don't know whether Eve thought this was the one or not, but I don't see it demanded by the particular statement she made.

The name Cain means to get or to acquire. So this was a play on words. She named him acquire or get because she had gotten or acquired a man from the Lord.

Now this is really interesting when you think about it. We take it for granted that men come into the world this way, but they never had before. The first man and the only man that Eve had ever known before had been formed out of the dust of the ground, not from the womb of a woman.

And she hadn't been there to witness it. In her experience, she came and he was already there. She had never seen the origin of a man.

And now she gets to be the instrument through which a new man comes onto the planet. The first man was made directly by God. This was given by God to her.

She has acquired a man now from God as a gift of God coming through her own womb, which gives her a sense of ownership. I have gotten him. This one belongs to me.

Then she bore again and this time his brother Abel. Now we are told that these two young men, as they grew older, took on different professions. One of them became a farmer producing food out of the soil.

That was Cain. And one became a shepherd of livestock. And these became probably the primary vocations of people for thousands and thousands and thousands of years afterward.

Essentially until modern times. Until the Industrial Revolution, the majority of people were either farmers or herdsman. In other words, food production.

All other species of animals devote their entire lives to reproduction and finding and eating food. People for a long time were awfully close to that same pattern. Most of their activities had to do with producing and rearing children and producing food.

Again, fruitfulness. The fruitfulness of the womb, the fruitfulness of the ground. God made people to be fruitful.

And both Cain and Abel were doing legitimate fruitful activities. Now, actually, Abel in

raising sheep might not have been raising them for food. Because we are told in Genesis 1 that God gave mankind the plants as his diet.

And we don't read that God ever gave permission to man to eat meat until much later, after the Flood, in Genesis 9. So it's possible that the sheep were being raised for milk. Yeah, they do milk sheep. We don't.

But some people do. And also perhaps for wool. And maybe even for their hides or whatever.

After all, God gave hides to cover Adam and Eve. But as more children came along, they're going to need more clothes. Maybe they learned how to weave wool into cloth, or simply they tanned hides.

But in any case, it may not be that Abel at this point was thinking of his flock as food for human consumption. But they are productive animals for other human needs. Now, it says in verse 3, in the process of time.

Now, the expression in the process of time, it actually means at the end of days. And I don't know what that means. I don't know if there's a certain number of days that have been marked out at the end of which they were supposed to offer sacrifices.

But this is what they did. They brought sacrifices at the end of days. Some people feel this is a reference to Sabbath.

At the end of six days, on the seventh day, they worship God. It's possible. But it's not something one could demonstrate with certainty from that wording.

At the end of some measured period of time, it might have been years of time. It might have been when they reached maturity. It might have been at a point that corresponded with later Jewish practice of bar mitzvah.

Who knows? Whenever they reached the end of a season, the end of a certain number of days, it was their responsibility, apparently, to worship God in this way. So we see that even though the fall has occurred, people are worshipping God. This probably would suggest that Adam and Eve spent the remainder of their years trying to get right and worship God.

We don't read of Adam and Eve offering sacrifices, but Cain and Abel may have gotten the idea from Adam and Eve. There's not a whole lot of other places they could have gotten that idea. I mean, they could have come out of their heads, or God could have revealed it, or they could have learned it from Adam and Eve.

And we don't read any more of the activities of Adam and Eve after this, but only of their offspring. We do read of them having more children, but we don't read of them doing

specific things that would indicate whether they were righteous or unrighteous, whether they were awful people after the fall, or decent people, but sinners. But at least religion and the worship of God has not disappeared from the earth after the fall.

Both Cain, who we are later told was of the evil one, and Abel, they're both worshipping God. And yes, Cain is worshipping God. It says he brought a sacrifice to Yahweh.

He wasn't worshipping a false god, he wasn't worshipping the devil. He was worshipping God, but not acceptably. As we see, in the process of time, or at the end of days, it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord.

Abel also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of their fat. Now, this seems reasonable, does it not? I mean, Cain is a farmer, he harvests his crops. Abel is a sheep herder, and so he takes one of the firstlings of his flock and brings them to God.

Why would there be anything right or wrong in either of these actions? And yet, at the end of verse 4, it says, And the Lord respected Abel and his offering. But he did not respect Cain and his offering, and Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. Now, of course, this presupposes that God's favor toward Abel's offering and his disfavor toward Cain's was a public matter.

Cain knew it. It's not just a privately held sentiment that God had as he sat in the heavens and said, I like Abel's what he's doing, I don't like what Cain's doing. It was very obvious that God had favored Abel, not Cain, because it was obvious to Cain.

And he was angry about it. Now, we might ask, how was this made obvious? There are a couple of suggestions, both of which make some biblical sense. One, it has been suggested by some that when these two offerings were placed there, that God caused fire to come out of heaven upon Abel's and not on Cain's.

Of course, we know that this would be similar to what happened when two altars were made on Mount Carmel, one to Yahweh and one to Baal. The fire from heaven came and confirmed God's approval of Elijah's sacrifice and his offering by sending fire from heaven. That would certainly be one way where God would make his pleasure known for one altar and not for the other.

And some have thought that's what happened here. However, since we find God and Cain having a conversation, man to man, in the verses that follow, I am of the impression that God still in those days probably appeared in what we might call a theophany. We find it elsewhere in the Old Testament that it appears that God shows up in a human-like form to talk with people.

Certainly in the story of Abraham we have it. We are not always told the form in which God appeared to Abraham, but we are told at least one time in Genesis 18 that the Lord appeared to Abraham and Abraham looked up and saw three men and two of them were

angels and the other one was referred to as Yahweh. So we have what is called a theophany, God appearing in a human-like form in this case and that is apparently how he appeared to Adam and Eve also.

He came walking in the garden in the cool of the day. He had a conversation with them. I think what we would understand is not that they were hearing a booming voice from the sky in these stories, but rather God actually took on a human-like form.

He did so on many other occasions. He wrestled with Jacob all night in a human-like form at a later date and there may be many other cases. There are some in the books of Judges and maybe even in Daniel where there was a man in the fire furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, although we do not know that that was not an angel.

There are cases where God in a human-like form comes and meets and talks with men and this could be something he was still doing quite regularly. This is very soon after the Garden of Eden. God may have appeared at certain times as it were to officiate at worship of himself.

It could even be that Christ in a pre-incarnate appearance came as a priest of the order of Melchizedek to officiate at the altars. Who knows? I don't know. But it is possible that Cain was actually looking at God, that Cain and Abel could both see him on occasions that he appeared to them in a human-like form.

And in that theophany, God made it very evident which of those altars was the one he approved of. And Cain, however he knew it, was quite aware that his sacrifice had not received the approval of God and he was angry. Now it seems to me that if God doesn't do what you want him to do, rather than being angry, you ought to repent.

We are not told why God did not approve of Cain's offering, but we would have reason to believe that God is sensible and has reasons for what he does. Now, maybe if I was somewhat more of a Calvinistic stripe, I might feel like, well, it's just that God sovereignly chose Abel to be one of the elect and sovereignly chose Cain to not be one of the elect, in which case Cain just didn't have a chance. After all, the Bible says he was a child of the devil.

Remember, in 1 John 3, he was of the wicked one. And if my theology was somewhat more along those lines, I would probably say, well, Cain, you know, God didn't approve of Cain because God doesn't have to approve of anyone. God's not obligated to approve of any sinner, but God can sovereignly and graciously choose to approve of a man by grace and he just didn't extend grace to Cain because it wasn't his choice to do so.

That God wouldn't have to give any reasons for it, but the thing is, God does give a reason for it. Because when he speaks to Cain, he says in verse 7, if you do well, will you not be accepted? In other words, God is saying to Cain, you might at this moment be a

child of the devil, but you don't have to be. You can be accepted too.

There's not some divine decree that happened before you were born that decided you'd be a bad guy. If you do the right thing, you will be accepted just like Abel has done the right thing and was accepted. So, it seems clear that Cain had the opportunity, and God said so, unless God was just teasing.

God said that Cain really had the opportunity to be as acceptable as Abel. It was just a matter of what choice Cain would make in the matter. So, that statement of God, when he says, if you will do well, you too will be accepted, I think we have to understand that to mean that the acceptableness of Abel's offering means that he had done something right.

And Cain was not accepted because he had not done the same right thing. But what is the right thing that Abel did that was different? Now, there are three suggestions, all of them may be correct. I suppose the one that most comes to mind with evangelicals is the obvious fact that what Abel offered was a blood sacrifice.

Abel offered a lamb, and therefore blood. And we know from later revelations in the law, in Leviticus and so forth, that it is the blood that atones for sin, and therefore one would have to offer a blood sacrifice if it's an atoning sacrifice they're seeking. And obviously a sacrifice that is of the produce of the ground doesn't have any blood in it, and therefore would not be acceptable.

This is, I think, the most obvious suggestion. There are two other suggestions, both of them are good. But this one seems to be the one that comes to my mind first of all.

Because the nature of what was offered. Now someone says, but that's not fair because Abel had lambs to offer, Cain only had vegetables, you know. But I'm sure that by the time these young men had become adults and started their businesses that they'd learned how to barter.

I doubt if Abel, who did not raise vegetables, never ate any. And I doubt if Cain, who didn't raise sheep, ever lived without the products of the sheep herd. I'm sure that these men had learned how to trade off, and if Cain had wished, and had known that he should, he could have bartered for sheep and done the same thing Abel did.

So I mean, you can't really excuse Cain on that. One might say, well, how would Cain even know that he's supposed to bring a blood sacrifice? The law was not yet given. In answer to this, we might say, well, perhaps the precedent that God had set when he killed animals to clothe Adam and Eve would have served.

But that alone is pretty esoteric, you know. I mean, I'm not sure that I would be smart enough to figure out, okay, God killed animals to cover Adam and Eve, therefore we need to offer blood sacrifices for the atonement of sin. I mean, we can see that in

hindsight with Christian theology and even the law under our belt, but they didn't have all that.

I'll tell you why I think they knew what they were supposed to do. First of all, look over at Hebrews chapter 11. In Hebrews 11, we have this famous chapter about all these Old Testament folks who did the right thing and how that they all were men of faith.

And in verse 4 it says, By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he is righteous. God testified of his gifts and through it he being dead still speaks. Now notice it says God testified of his gifts, so this confirms that something God did gave testimony that God approved of Abel's gifts and not Cain's.

Although the writer of Hebrews doesn't tell us in what way God testified, he certainly made it plain. But notice it says that Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice by faith. One of the remaining suggestions about what made Abel's sacrifice acceptable and Cain's unacceptable is that Cain did not offer a sacrifice by faith and Abel did.

And this is the verse that is used. The reason they say that Abel's sacrifice was more acceptable was a more excellent sacrifice was not because of its actual component, but because of its being an offering of faith. This is possible, certainly Abel is a man of faith, the writer of Hebrews is telling us that.

Abel was justified by faith. I'm not sure that this makes it crystal clear that the thing that made his sacrifice better was simply the fact that it was offered in faith. The wording could also mean that there was a more excellent sacrifice, objectively more excellent, and by faith Abel offered that one instead of another one.

It's not clear that it's saying that the thing that made this sacrifice more excellent was his faith. It could be simply that there is a sacrifice that was a better one than another one to offer and by faith he chose, he made the right choice to do the right one. In any case, to say that Abel did it by faith suggests something even further back.

Because it says in Romans chapter 10 and verse 17 that faith comes how? Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God, or some manuscripts say the word of Christ, but the point is God must speak before we can hear. And we must hear him speak before we can have faith. Faith comes as a result of our hearing God's word.

I mean there is such a thing as faith in other things, not God, but the faith that is Christian faith, the faith that justifies, the faith that matters to God is a faith that is a response to having heard his word. Now if Abel offered a better sacrifice by faith, that means that some word from God must have previously been given. And Abel's response to that word was to believe and Cain's apparently was not to believe.

My suggestion would be that God had in fact revealed in one way or another that he

requires a blood sacrifice. Abel believed that and so he offered a blood sacrifice. Cain wasn't so sure that that was necessary.

So he did what was easier for him to do. He kind of innovated on it. He improvised a religious system.

That's entirely possible. In fact, if we were to say, well when did God speak it? How did this word from God come to them? There is a very likely suggestion found in the words of Jesus in Luke chapter 11. In Luke chapter 11 verses 50 and 51, catching Jesus in the middle of a sentence, but that's ok, this contains what we need to see.

Luke 11:50, Jesus says 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 notice the statement from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah is an amplification of the statement in verse 5, the blood of all the prophets. It seems clear that Jesus is saying that Abel was the first of the prophets whose blood was shed unrighteously and Zechariah was the last of them in the Old Testament whose blood was shed unrighteously.

And the unrighteous bloodshed is going to come upon that generation, but notice he indicates that Abel is a prophet. Now a prophet is one who receives words from the Lord and therefore just after the fall, God continued to communicate to that very small human family through a prophet. A prophet named Abel.

Now with a prophet in your midst it's not hard to see how God could get the message to you that you need to offer blood sacrifices for an atoning sacrifice for sin. Abel himself could well have received that by revelation and communicated it to his family and Abel believed it and Cain didn't. So by faith Abel offered the better sacrifice which was a blood sacrifice and for lack of faith Cain didn't.

So there are several things involved here. The faith issue is different between Abel and Cain. Probably the actual content of the sacrifice is significant, the difference.

There is also another point that has been pointed out and that is when it speaks of Abel's offering in verse 4 it says, Abel also brought of the firstlings of his flock. That is as soon as his flock began to have offspring he gave the first ones back to God. This is something that was much later encoded in the law that the first fruits belong to God and by giving God the first produce what you're saying is despite all the effort it took me to produce this I acknowledge that it's God's and therefore I'm going to give him as a token the first of it back to acknowledge that it's God's.

My indebtedness to him, my dependency on him and his intrinsic ownership of all that I have. To give the first fruits is what the law later required but this was long before the

law. This might have even been done almost intuitively because somebody who loves God wants to put God in first place.

Now we don't read whether Cain brought the first fruits of his field. We are told that Abel made God the priority. We could say in his business because that was his business.

He put God first in his business. He put God ahead of his own prophets. By giving God the first and the best he is showing where he esteems God.

By saying God you get the first of everything because you come first. And so that attitude toward God might also have reflected something in Abel that was different than Cain. It's hard to say.

At a later time Malachi chided the people of Israel because they were bringing sacrifices to God but in Malachi chapter 1 he says you're bringing blind animals and lame animals. He said you think God likes that? Try offering one of those as a gift to your governor and see if he likes that. That's what he says.

Give it to your governor and see if he'll be happy with you. And you expect God to be happy with that kind of thing? Now it's not like God is better off by receiving a sighted lamb than a blind lamb. It's symbolic.

It's that the sighted lamb still has some value to the owner who is offering it. The blind lamb is doomed to die anyway. It's easy to give God that which has no value to you.

But when you give God what is best, that tells something about your reverence toward God and the place you place God. You know the story too, I'm sure, but the farmer whose cow had two calves. Twins.

A well known story. If you've been in church long you've heard it. If you haven't been then this may be new to you.

A farmer, his cow was pregnant. She gave birth and to his surprise she had twin calves. He said out of gratefulness to God for this abundant provision I'm going to give one of these calves to God.

And that night it was very cold and one of the calves died. And the farmer went into the barn and he went back to the house and said the Lord's calf died. I'm going to give one of them.

Since there's one that's worthless to me I'll give that one to God. I remember back when I used to run the Great Commission School for nine months. I used to set aside a day of the week to fast.

And I remember initially I would look at the weekly menu to decide what day I wanted to fast. Then I got convicted about that. I thought if I pick the day that I don't like the food

anyway and I fast on that day, isn't that like giving God the blind and the lame sacrifice? So I'm giving up food that I wouldn't like anyway.

And so Abel seemed to have the right attitude in this particular thing. He brought the first fruits to God. And God respected that and didn't respect Cain.

Now Cain gets angry. And this is a reaction I've always found strange. People getting angry at God.

It's like either don't believe in God or believe in Him and don't think you have any right to be angry. I mean there's this middle ground I don't understand. I can understand people saying I'm angry at life and there's no God.

Because no God could possibly make life this bad so I don't believe there's a God I'm angry at life. Or I can see someone saying life is hard but God is good and you know I just gotta have to submit. I have to humble myself under the mighty hand of God and He'll lift me up in due time.

But in the middle there's this people who believe there is a God but they think they have some good reason to be angry at Him. To me that's just insanity. If God exists and if God is God then He's always by definition right.

You can't be mad at someone when they do the right thing. And if there's a conflict between me and this God it goes without saying I'm the one who's wrong. Because He can't be wrong.

God's always right. If you don't believe God's always right you don't believe in God. You believe in something else.

You believe in maybe one of the gods of Mount Olympus. They weren't always right. They did bad things and good things both.

But the God of the Bible is always righteous and right. And often He does what does not please us because He's not obligated to do what pleases us. And that's why it's not wrong for Him to do something that displeases us.

He doesn't have to. The only time someone does something wrong is when they deprive somebody else of what is their due. God did not owe it to Cain to accept his sacrifice.

And the fact that Cain got angry tells us that Cain thought that God did owe it to him. And this is where people get into a lot of trouble. They think God owes them something.

That God should accept my choices. Even in the area of worship. If I want to worship God let me do it the way I want to worship God.

God should appreciate the fact that I'm doing it at all. No I'm the one who should

appreciate the fact that God even is willing to let me worship Him because my sin entitles me to one thing. Death.

And the subsequent judgment and condemnation of death. That's all I've earned. All that is owed to me is condemnation.

That God would allow me to come before Him and worship Him and be on good terms with Him. If there's even one narrow, narrow way that He allows it. That's grace because He doesn't owe me any path to Himself.

People sometimes say it's not really fair to say that Jesus is the only way to God. You know, other people sincerely are trying other paths. Well, Cain was probably sincere.

He just wasn't doing it God's way. If God says, listen, all have sinned, none have the right to approach me, but I will allow you to approach me on these conditions. Well then God has every right to state the conditions.

And if you say, well I want to do it on my terms. Well then you're an arrogant rebel against your Creator. Why should God appreciate what you're doing? It's not an exclusivity on God's part to say you have to come through Christ because He said anyone can.

Anyone who wants to can come through Christ. It's like me saying anyone's welcome in my house, but I don't want you to climb through the windows, I want you to come through that door right there. Well how exclusive.

Why can't I take a wrecking ball and come through the wall if I want to? Why can't I climb through the window? Well, I don't allow that, but anyone can come through the door, but it has to be through the door. Not another way. I only allow entrance through one way.

And that's not exclusive because anyone can come through that way. God is in a sense exclusive in that He says you've got to do it my way. I will not allow people to approach me except the way that I prescribe for them to come.

Anyone who says I can come without doing it the way God prescribes is essentially saying God owes it to me to accept my own willful choices in this matter. Yeah, I'm going to give God something, He should be glad I'm giving Him anything. But I'm going to do it the way I want to, the way it's convenient for me, the way I choose.

And that's what Cain did. By the way, there's a reference to Cain in the book of Jude, the book just before Revelation. And it's talking there, it's comparing certain false teachers who were in the church in Jude's day with certain other people who were bad in the Old Testament, and Cain's one of them.

And it says of these false teachers in Jude verse 11, Woe to them, for they have gone in

the way of Cain. Now, nothing more is said about Cain here. It goes on to talk about Balaam and Korah, other bad guys.

But it says they have gone in the way of Cain. And He doesn't say what the way of Cain is, but He expects we know. We know the story of Cain.

Well, what was the way that Cain did things? He did things his own way. He didn't do things God's way. Given the choice to come to God on God's terms, he didn't come to God on God's terms, he came on his own terms.

That's what false teachers, that's what people who refuse to submit to Christ want to do. They say, God, just appreciate the fact that I'm coming at all, God. But no, God says, you need to appreciate the fact that I let you come at all.

And you need to do it the way that I prescribed. So, this is Cain's mistake, I believe. And the Lord actually graciously gives Cain a second chance.

He says in verse 6, The Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry and why has 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. We talked about that phrase previously. Sin here is being personified as a hostile party against Cain.

But Cain has to master it, rather than be overcome by sin. Now, Cain talked with Abel, his brother, and it came to pass when they were in the field that Cain rose against Abel, his brother, and killed him. It's interesting that it says he talked with Abel, his brother.

That could have been left out. It seems like, now was he having an argument with Abel? Or was he alluring Abel out into the field? Or was he maybe trying to even come to positive terms with Abel, and it didn't work out? We don't know. But he talked with Abel, and then he took him out in the field and killed him.

The first murder, the first ending of a human life, by any means. The first instance where the wages of sin has turned out to be death. Even though Abel was innocently killed, Abel, like all people, had sinned, and he's the first to experience death.

Although Cain and all others would as well, in their own due time. Then the Lord said to Cain, where's Abel, your brother? And he said, I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper? And then God said, you're not coming clean.

I'll have to tell you that I know what you did. He said, what have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now, this is a figure of speech, of course.

Blood doesn't really cry from the ground, but the idea here is there's been an injustice done. And the very presence of unredressed evil does not give God any rest. It's as if

there's a plaintiff at his courtroom saying, avenge me, avenge me, avenge me.

In the book of Revelation, chapter 6, when the fifth seal is broken, John sees under the altar in heaven, he sees the souls of those who were slain for the word of God, the Christian martyrs. And they're saying out, they're crying out, how long, O Lord, before you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell in the land. And so this is how it is.

There's unavenged evil, righteous people, righteous blood's been shed. It's like the cries of the plaintiffs are continually rising in God's ears. It's like their blood is screaming from the ground saying there has been an injustice here.

The judge must avenge. The judge must redress. And God says, I hear your brother's blood crying out from the ground to me where you slew him.

Now, there's an interesting line in Hebrews chapter 12 that probably is connected to this image because, although again, it's only a passing reference, it's an instructive one. In Hebrews chapter 12, verses 22 through 24, it says, The blood of sprinkling is, of course, a reference to the blood of Christ, which several passages in Hebrews and in 1 Peter tell us we've been sprinkled by the blood of Christ for cleansing. He says, Now, we usually don't think of blood speaking at all, but when it comes to the story of Abel, we did read about Abel's blood speaking.

Abel's blood was crying from the ground to God. For what? For redress. For justice.

For vindication. For vengeance. That's what innocent blood cries out for.

But Jesus' blood was innocent blood, but it speaks better things than the blood of Abel. Because obviously we know the blood of Jesus cries out for mercy for the sinner. And forgiveness, and not for vengeance.

In a sense, what Christ's blood speaks of is a better result than what Abel's blood spoke of. There's nothing wrong with Abel's blood crying out for vengeance. God says, vengeance is mine.

I will repay. And we should ask God to take vengeance into His hands rather than taking it into ours. But Christ's blood even has a better appeal than it makes to God.

It appeals for mercy and for forgiveness to those for whom Christ died. So back to Genesis. Because of this, God says in verse 11, Now you are cursed to receive your brother's blood from your hands.

When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. Now it was already hard once the thorns and thistles came along. But Cain was able to work hard in the sweat of his face and make the ground yield.

But it wasn't going to happen anymore. God's saying, I'm not going to let the ground

yield to you anymore. Now it's not clear whether God was going to supernaturally do something wherever Cain settled and say, oops, crop failure again.

Imagine that. God, you know, a miracle. God works a miracle wherever Cain goes and makes the crops fail.

Or whether it means that Cain will not be able to yield crops because he will not be able to settle long enough anywhere to really set up a farm and cultivate and raise and harvest crops. Either way, it would be true that the ground will not yield to him its crops. But he is going to be a wanderer, and that may be the reason that the ground isn't going to yield.

Not because the ground is going to experience some supernatural barrenness that God will put on it because Cain happens to be the farmer there. But because he's just not going to live that way anymore. You've been living by tilling the ground.

The ground has been producing its food for you. That's over. You're going to be on the move.

You're going to be a nomad. It would appear that is true because he says, when you till the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you because you'll be a fugitive and a vagabond. Maybe you'll till the ground, but people will chase you off before you get a chance to harvest it.

This happened, by the way, to the Jews many times when they were under God's judgment. In the book of Judges, they would plant crops. They'd till the ground, plant crops, raise crops, and then the enemies would come and eat them.

And the Jews wouldn't get to eat their crops. The ground did not yield to them. The ground did yield, but to somebody else, their enemies.

And Cain is going to be a vagabond. Why? A fugitive. Fugitives are running from somebody.

Now, who was chasing Cain? God wasn't chasing him. God could have thumped him right there if he wanted. He didn't have to chase him around.

Who was chasing Cain? Well, Cain knew that someone would be because Cain said to the Lord, 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.

I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth. And it will happen that if anyone finds me, he'll kill me. In other words, there's going to be people chasing me to kill me.

That's why I'm a fugitive. I'm running away from people who want to kill me. I'm a hunted man.

You've just declared it, God. I'm a hunted man. That's very severe.

Now, it's really not that severe when you consider that the wage of sin ought to be death. And especially of murder, because at a later time, not even as late as Moses' time, but it's just that in the time of the flood, God made it very clear. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man, his blood shall be shed.

And that principle that God instituted after the flood and reviewed in the law and even seems to be confirmed in the New Testament, God had that in his mind here too, but here he shows special grace. And the man's not even repentant, but the man begs for mercy. This is how gracious God is.

Obviously, God wants people to repent. He's not even repentant. Cain doesn't even confess when God says, where's your brother? He doesn't confess.

He's evasive. He neither confesses nor repents, but he begs for mercy. And God, to this man who has neither repented nor confessed his sin, but who begs for mercy, receives it.

Like the man in the story that Jesus told in Matthew 18, who owed a huge debt to his master, and he could not pay it. And it says, he just begged for mercy. He said, have mercy on me, give me more time.

I'll pay you when I can. And it says, the master had compassion on him and forgave him the whole debt. God is more forgiving than we expect him to be.

God hates sin, but mercy triumphs over justice with God. And if people humble themselves before him and even beg for mercy, they seem to always receive some. Now, Cain's sentence was not totally commuted, but it was modified.

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. Now, what the mark was on Cain, nobody knows.

And people claim to know, they don't know. We don't know. But sometimes we think of the mark of Cain as something that marked him off as someone to treat badly.

But actually, it was a mark that marked him off as someone not to treat too badly. Don't kill this man. Basically, the mark that God put on him communicated to everybody, you don't kill this man.

He's going to be a fugitive. No one's going to like him. He's going to move around, but you're not allowed to kill him.

And if you do, God will avenge him sevenfold. Now, this is mentioned by one of Cain's descendants later on as a pattern for what he wants done in his case. But what's it mean

to avenge him sevenfold? Apparently it means this.

You kill Cain, you and six other of your relatives get killed. That's what to avenge sevenfold would mean. So, I guess Cain probably didn't get murdered.

We don't know how long he lived or how he died, but he managed to live out a life of a vagabond. And it says in verse 16, Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod in the east of Enoch. And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch.

Now, we have a second time. The question arises, who else is around? He has a wife. He's afraid that anyone who finds him will kill him.

Who's really around here? And the answer is really not too hard to answer. Although it would be a little difficult to answer just from what we've read up to this point. But it becomes very easy to answer when you look ahead just a little bit.

Because in chapter 5, it says in verse 3, Adam lived a hundred and thirty years and begot a son of his own likeness after his image, and he named him Seth. Now, stop right there. Adam and Eve were a hundred and thirty years old when they had a son named Seth.

Now, look back at chapter 4, verse 25. Adam knew his wife again, and she bore his son and named him Seth. Okay, same guy.

And why did she call him that? The word Seth means appointed. And she said, I'm going to call him appointed, for God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain has killed. Now, I think from that statement of Eve, we could easily deduce that Seth was the first child born to Adam and Eve after Cain killed Abel.

Why else would she say that? Cain killed Abel, this one is appointed by God to replace him. It seems that Cain killed Abel, and then the next son born was seen as God's replacement for Abel. But that son was born when Adam and Eve were a hundred and thirty years old.

So we could say that Cain killed Abel sometime just short of a hundred and thirty years after the creation of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were almost a hundred and thirty years old when Cain killed Abel, because they were a hundred and thirty years old when Seth was born. And he was seen as the replacement for Abel, whom Cain had destroyed.

Does that make sense up to that point? Well, that means that Adam and Eve had been around for a hundred and thirty years before Cain and God had this conversation. What do you suppose they were doing during those a hundred and thirty years? Now, we're told in verse four of chapter five that after you got Seth, the days of Adam were eight hundred years. Now, it says just by way of summary of Adam's life, and he begot sons

and daughters.

Now, we're not supposed to believe he had all those sons and daughters after Seth, as if he and Eve were told to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, and a hundred and thirty years later they only had two kids. They didn't have birth control. They had an assignment to fill the earth with their offspring.

They were not abstinent. They had kids. That's what they were engineered to do.

That's what they were commanded to do. For a hundred and thirty years, Adam and Eve had been having sons and daughters before Cain killed Abel. So, when Cain killed Abel, what happened? The oldest son of the family had killed the second oldest son of the family, and all the other sons of the family, it would be their place to avenge their brother's blood.

And therefore, they would be motivated to hunt down Cain and kill him. But God said, No, I'm not going to let that happen. Put a mark on you.

No one can kill Cain. But those are the ones that he was afraid of. His own brothers.

They're the ones who would have incentive to kill him. And one of his sisters, no doubt, became his wife. And, if we say, Oh, he was the first incestuous person.

Not necessarily the first married person after Adam and Eve was the first incestuous person. And every married couple after Adam and Eve were incestuous by what we would call incest because everyone had to marry immediate siblings initially. Now, this later became forbidden in the law of Moses.

But for many centuries before that, people did marry people more closely related to themselves than was permitted that later. Abraham married a half-sister. That would be unlawful under the law of Moses.

Jacob married two women who were sisters of each other. That was forbidden later in the law also. You know, certain forms of marriage were okay in the early days that later were forbidden.

Why they were forbidden later, we'll have to worry about another time. Maybe when we come to those passages that forbid them because we're out of time today. But, we see that Cain had a wife, his sister, no doubt.

And he started a family. Next time, we'll just have to talk about that family and the other families of the earth that came from Adam's other children. All right.

Father, I thank you for your word. I thank you that we have your spirit also to, I trust, enlighten us and also draw us further into our life of discipleship, of our applying your word to our lives and seeking to conform to the purposes and the good pleasure of your

will that you make known in your word. So I pray, Father, that as we come into a weekend and then we have no more classes until Monday, that you will cause us to meditate on the things that you have said in your word that we encounter, either during our reading on the weekend or during things that we've read this week, that you will plant these things and water them and cause them to grow so that we will be drawn more toward the image of Christ as we seek.

In Jesus' name. Amen. [♪ music playing ♪ ♪ music playing ♪