

In the Beginning

Studies in the Book of Genesis

WEEK SEVEN – CAIN & ABEL GENESIS 4:1-17

Genesis 4:1-4 Note that Abel is keeping sheep

Animals are being eaten

1:29-30 Originally all plant eaters

3:17-18 Curse refers to eating crops

Mosaic-style Sacrifice

4:4 Brings Firstlings, separates the fat (CF Leviticus 3) – Peace offering (offering is eaten)

Peace offerings are being made, apparently in line with Leviticus 3

Not a sin offering, by any reasonable evidence – no sin or repentance is referenced

Leviticus 3:1-17 (1-6, 16-17)

Levitical devotee, not the priest, kills the animal

Levitical devotee, his family, and priest(s) share the meal

Note 1: While a burnt offering is for repentance of willful sin, i.e. blood (death) being the required payment for sin, a blood offering as a peace-offering seems to point to original sin, i.e., unable to approach God except with blood sacrifice – due to separation from God because of sin nature.

Note 2: Blood equated to life in Leviticus 17:11, and is identified as the means of atonement (cover, placate).

Genesis 4:3-7

Obviously, there was a right and wrong way to bring offering to God

Cain's offering was like Abel's in that it represented a portion of his labor, and in that he offered it up to God

God did not accept Cain's offering because it did not respect God's law that the shedding of blood was required

God did not accept Cain's offering because Cain was not following God's instruction

God does not rebuke Cain, but warns him of falling into sin and admonishes him to do right

Note 3: Cain's interactions with God are understood to be encounters with the Christophany. This is due to the first-family context of historic familiarity with the Christophany, the complexity of ongoing conversations in 6-7, 9-16, the act of God marking Cain in v15, and the absence of any reference to the contrary.

Note 4: The graphic warning of the nature of sin – God is communicating the destructive and addictive natures of sin.

Genesis 4:8 The act of murder – no notes

Genesis 4:9 Denial

Genesis 4:10-12 The curse:

Not able to farm anymore

A fugitive and vagabond – a wanderer, homeless

Genesis 4:13-14 Cain's interpretation of the curse:

v13 – Punishment unbearable

v14 - Adds "from Thy face shall I be hid" – broken fellowship understood

v 14 – Adds fear of reprisal/murder (guilt brings fear)

Note 5: Expectation of population beyond the existing family – no reference to any brother beyond Able and later Seth, but had a sister to marry...

Genesis 4:15 God's mercy – still reaching out to Cain, otherwise why protect him by mark and decree? Cain names his son "dedication", and his great grandson is named "God makes me live", and his son is named "Man of God" or "Man of Prayer".

Note 6: God's nature of mercy and forgiveness is vital to Christian life of continuous failure in our personal relationships with Him. 1 John 1:9

NEXT WEEK: ANTEDILUVIAN CIVILIZATION – GENESIS 4:16-6:8