

Genesis 4 | Cain and Abel

Genesis 4:1-16

Based on NLT

Introduction

After Adam and Eve left the garden, Eve became pregnant.

Genesis 4:1-2

...When she gave birth to Cain, she said, "With *God's* help, I have *acquired* a man!" Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel.

Genesis 4:2-5

When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to *God*. Abel also brought a gift—the best of the firstborn lambs from his flock. *God* accepted Abel and his gift, but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.

Genesis 4:6-7

"Why are you so angry?" *God* asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master."

Genesis 4:8

One day Cain suggested to his brother, "Let's go out into the fields." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him.

Genesis 4:9-12

Afterward *God* asked Cain, "Where is your brother? Where is Abel?"

"I don't know," Cain responded. "Am I my brother's guardian?"

But *God* said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground! Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your brother's blood. No longer will the ground yield good crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth."

Genesis 4:13-16

Cain replied to *God*, "My punishment is too great for me to bear! You have banished me from the land and from your presence; you have made me a homeless wanderer. Anyone who finds me will kill me!" *God* replied, "No, *because* I will give a sevenfold punishment to anyone who kills you." Then *God* put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him. So Cain left *God's* presence and settled in *another land/the land of wandering*.

Introduction

Genesis 2-4 gives us a picture of the human family both in and out of the garden. The story of Cain and Abel continues the narrative of Genesis 3 and is in a cause-effect relationship with it. Evil entered the world in Genesis 3 and God and people were separated. The face to face relationship with God that Adam and Eve enjoyed was replaced with bringing offerings of thanksgiving to God. People no longer had mastery over themselves; instead, they were mastered by evil to the point of daring to destroy each other—other people also created in God's image. Cain embodies the evil of Satan by killing the woman's seed (c.f. 1 John 3:11-12). Evil grows and grows, as we see that even in Cain's genealogy his son kills someone who is vulnerable. However, Seth's line (the son who replaces Abel) provides us with hope for the future.

Some scholars have theorized that the text of Genesis 4 came from two different traditions, mainly because of textual facts such as that Cain is banished to being a wanderer but ends up founding cities. However, previous controversy over the unity of Genesis 4 has been recently replaced by confidence in the integrity of the unity of the text. Genesis 4, in the larger narrative, exhibits similar discourse structure to chapters 2-3. In the larger Genesis narrative, genealogies are often interspersed with expanded stories at certain points about individuals in the genealogy.