

The Book of Genesis

Chapter 4

4:1 Now Adam knew [Hebrew: "yada" = "knew in a sexual sense"] **Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have gotten a man from the LORD."**

Prophesied Messiah

Eve's statement could also be translated "*I have gotten a man, the LORD*". She assumed that her firstborn son was the prophesied offspring who would undo what the devil had done (3:15). This false conclusion would drastically affect the way Cain was reared, as the following events show.

4:2 Then she bore again [Hebrew: "she added in bearing"], **this time his brother Abel...**

Cain & Abel

Adam Clarke states that the use of the Hebrew, "she added in bearing," means that the boys were twins, which may have been the case.

4:2 (cont.) ...Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

Tiller of the Ground

While neither vocation was better than the other, Cain [whose name means "get"] is assumed to have used farming methods that destroyed the soil, helping to bring on the curse pronounced in 3:17.

4:3 And in the process of time [Hebrew: "at the end of days" – possibly implying the Sabbath] **it came to pass that Cain brought an offering** [Hebrew: "minchah"] **of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.**

Cain's Offering

Cain's offering was that of a meal or grain offering (LEV 2:1), meaning this was a thank offering.

4:4 Abel also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected [NIV: "looked with favor on"] **Abel and his offering,**

Abel's Offering

The "also" indicates that Abel brought a thank offering, but also a lamb for a sin offering. This showed that Abel was thankful to God for what he had, as well as for what he would have through the Lamb of God, which his lamb only typified. It was both an acknowledgement of his sin and an affirmation of the faith that God had granted to him [HEB 11:4—"by *faith* Abel offered..."]. As a result of his attitude and obedience to God, Abel came under God's grace.

4:5 but on Cain and his offering He did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. (NIV)

Cain's Problem

Cain refused to bring a sin offering, he did not understand that he needed God's forgiveness which is only possible through the shedding of blood (HEB 9:22). His mother's misconception (vs 1) negatively affected his upbringing, causing him to think that he was the Messiah.

Since Cain was unwilling to yield himself to God, grace was not offered to him. The REB better defines the result: "*Cain was furious and he glowered!*"

4:6 The LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why are you scowling?' (REB)

God's Presence

We are not told how long God continued to have direct contact with Adam's family. Since both Cain and Abel brought Him offerings, it is clear He was acting as the priest to the Most High God, just as He later did with Abraham as Melchizedek (14:18). This conversation He had with Cain must have occurred at the same time Adam's sons brought their offerings.

4:7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." (NIV)

Treatment by God

God is not a respecter of persons (ROM 2:11), everyone is treated the same. If Cain would follow God's instruction, as Abel did, Cain would be treated just like his brother. If he yielded to the influence of the devil however, his actions would be counted as sin. He had to choose his master, and sin should not be the master of those under grace (ROM 6:14-16).

We are shown early in humanity's history that we have personal obligation and responsibility in resisting the influence of the devil.

4:8 Cain said to his brother Abel... (TAN)

Missing Quotes

What Cain said is missing from the Masoretic Text. However, the LXX, Samaritan Pentateuch, Vulgate and Syriac all have something similar to "Let's go out to the field." The Jerusalem Targum and Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel contain a lengthy conversation between the two brothers. They say Cain stated that God was playing favorites, to which Abel countered that God was merciful to the obedient. Cain's response was to murder Abel by striking him across his forehead with a stone.

4:8 (cont.) ...and when they were in the field, Cain set upon his brother Abel and killed him. (TAN)

Abel's Murder

According to 1JO 3:12, Cain murdered Abel because Cain's works were evil and Abel's were righteous.

4:9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" (NIV)

Cain's Character

God tested Cain to see if he would tell the truth. Instead of confessing the truth however, Cain showed his true character by asking whether he had responsibility toward his brother. His concern was only for himself; he was filled with self-pity.

4:10 The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground. (NIV)

Cain's Sin

The implication was that Cain buried Abel's body to hide the murder. God uses the metaphor of blood speaking to show Cain that he could not conceal sin from God.

4:11-12 Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth." (NIV)

Nomadic Cain

Cain would always be looking over his shoulder for an avenger of Abel's blood. Although he might plant crops, he oftentimes would need to flee the area before harvest time.

4:13-14 Cain said to the LORD, 'My punishment is too great to bear!' [Hebrew: "Is my crime too great to be forgiven?"] *Since You have banished me this day from the soil, and I must avoid Your presence* [REB: "I must hide myself from Your presence"] *and become a restless wanderer on earth—anyone who meets me may kill me!* (TAN)

Origin of Mythological "gods"

The REB "hide" is from the Hebrew "sathur," from which we derive the name "Saturn," the "hidden god" of mythology. "Saturn" or "Cronus" [the god of seed-sowing] was said to have come from the first male and female.

4:15 But the LORD said to him, "Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over."... (NIV)

God did not forbid Cain to be put to death, but the high cost for doing so would discourage most from attempting it.

4:15 (cont.) ...Then the LORD put a mark [Hebrew: "owth" = "sign," "token," "mark"] on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. (NIV)

Cain's Mark

The mark placed on Cain could have been some type of token worn on his person so that others would know he was to be avoided.

Prolific Man

We must not assume that there were only four people alive on the earth at this time. Since Seth was born 130 years after creation [the implication being that he was born shortly after Abel's death], it is logical that both Cain and Abel, as well as Adam had many other offspring, who also had many offspring by this time. Depending upon when the child-bearing age was reached, by the 128th year from creation there would have been a minimum of 1200 human beings. Keeping this in mind, Abel could have had dozens or hundreds of descendants who had the capacity to avenge his death.

4:16-17 So Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod ["wandering"], east of Eden. Cain lay with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was then building a city, and he named it after his son Enoch ["initiated" – the city stood as the symbol of the way of life he initiated on earth (JUD 11)]. (NIV)

Cain's City

This does not say Enoch was Cain's firstborn, but that he was born at the time Cain was building the first city. Josephus wrote, "*And when Cain had travelled over many countries, he, with his wife, built a city...he only aimed to procure everything that was for his own bodily pleasure, though it obliged him to be injurious to his neighbours. He augmented his household substance with much wealth, by rapine and violence; he excited his acquaintance to procure pleasures and spoils by robbery, and became a great leader of men into wicked courses. He also introduced a change in that way of simplicity wherein men lived before; and was the author of measures and weights...he changed the world into cunning*

craftiness. He first of all set boundaries about lands; he built a city, and fortified it with walls..."(Antiquities, I.II.2).

Antediluvian Genealogy: Cain

Moses now moves on to outline the most important of Cain's descendants—those who had great influence on pre-Flood society.

4:18-21 To Enoch was born Irad ["fugitive"], **and Irad was the father of Mehujael** ["smitten of God" – possibly attempted to re-enter Eden and was destroyed by the cherubim], **and Mehujael was the father of Methushael** ["man who is God"], **and Methushael was the father of Lamech** ["powerful" – the most powerful man in the pre-Flood world]. **Lamech married two women** [introduction of polygamy], **one named Adah** ["dawn"] **and the other Zillah** ["shadow," "dusk," "darkness" – Greek mythology's "Demeter" or "Black Demeter"]. **Adah gave birth to Jabal** ["stream" – possible reference to wandering streams, fitting the nomad lifestyle]; **he was the father** ["teacher" – may have taught methods of cattle ranching contrary to the laws of nature God established] **of those who live in tents and raise livestock. His brother's name was Jubal** ["music"]; **he was the father of all who play** [Hebrew: "to profane" – responsible for putting music to a wrong use] **the harp and flute.** (NIV)

4:22 As for Zillah, she bore Tubal-cain, who forged all implements of copper and iron... (TAN)

Tubal-Cain

Tubal-cain's primary production was weapons, not plows. Josephus says he "*exceeded all men in strength, and was very expert and famous in martial (military) performances. He procured what tended to the pleasures of the body by that method...*" (I.II.2) Here was the man from which the mythical Roman god Vulcan and Greek god Hephaestus were derived. [For more information about Tubal-cain, refer to Diodorus of Sicily who gives an account of Tubal-cain's great military campaign which he launched over all the inhabited world.]

Mythological Parallels

In Greek mythology, Zeus was the father of Hephaestus and Athena; in Roman mythology, Jupiter was the father of Vulcan and Minerva. The correlation to true personalities is that of Lamech [Zeus/Jupiter] being the father of Tubalcain [Hephaestus/Vulcan] and Naamah [Athena/Minerva]. Tubalcain's wife became the model of the Greek goddess Aphrodite, the Roman goddess Venus.

4:22 (cont.) ...And the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah ["beauty"]. (TAN)

Naamah

Jewish tradition holds that Naamah was famous as a weaver of cloth and was probably the wife of Ham [Plutarch records that Ham's wife was Namaus], although some traditions hold that she was the wife of Noah.

4:23 Lamech said to his wives, "Adah and Zillah, listen to me; wives of Lamech, hear my words. I have killed a man for wounding me,..." (NIV)

Threat of Cain

"A man for wounding me" represented Cain. Lamech saw Cain as the major threat to his attempt to become world dictator. In Greek mythology, Zeus [Lamech] crushed Cronus [Cain].

4:23 (cont.) ...a young man for injuring me. (NIV)

Threat of Tubal-cain

"A young man for injuring me" represented Tubal-cain because he became so powerful he challenged his father Lamech for world leadership.

4:24 If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times." (NIV)

Lamech's Boasting

According to Josephus, Lamech "was so skillful in matters of divine revelation, that he knew he was to be punished for Cain's murder of his brother..." (I.II.2) Jewish tradition states that Lamech, heavily influenced by demonic spirits, felt he was prophesied to slay his great, great, great grandfather Cain. The arrogance of Lamech is personified with the "curse" he pronounced on anyone who sought to take his life. This action was an affront to God, but then Lamech considered himself at least an equal to God, and much more important than Cain. He felt his greatness deserved to be avenged more harshly.

Duality of Scripture

This verse can also have a dual meaning; the one wounding and injuring could have been the same individual. During this period of world history, Enoch (JUD 14-15) was preaching against the perversion of God's way, which would have caused Lamech problems. As a result, Lamech murdered Enoch, cutting short his life (5:23).

4:25 Adam lay with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, "God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him." (NIV)

Seth

This verse picks up chronologically after vs 15. Seth apparently was more similar to Abel than to Cain because the name Seth means "Appointed" or "Compensation."

4:26 Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh ["mortal man"]. At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD. (NIV)

Call on the Name of the Lord

Several possible meanings can be attached to the latter part of this verse:

1. After the death of Abel and until some of Seth's children were grown, all men were going the way of Cain and refused to acknowledge God.
2. To "call on" can mean "to write" or "publish about," implying this was the time written records were begun.
3. Because Seth named his son "mortal man," it would seem Cain's descendants were calling themselves gods. The Hebrew can be translated "call themselves gods." As we have seen, this is the time that gave birth to the gods and goddesses of the ancient world.