

Background

As a reminder from our lesson on chapter 2, we don't know how much time has passed between 3:24 and 4:1. It may have been days, it may have been years or decades.

Read Genesis 4:1-5

v1 While it's obvious that Adam and Eve had (and likely were having for a while now) sex in this verse, the root wording is great. The literal term is that Adam "knew" his wife. Re-read 2:23-25 for the significance. God created sex as a sacred event (*Heb 13:4*) between a lifelong-married husband and wife. While God certainly intended sex to be pleasurable and for procreation, it is also part of the complete union of the couple. In short, failing to take God's purpose and timing for sex into account leads to broken relationships (as we see in the world around us and often from our own past).

v1-2 Adam and Eve received what they were promised: a seed. What high hopes they must have had in this first actual child on earth. The word Cain means "acquired" and appears to be related to the word for "craftsman." Her second child, Abel means "vapor" ...something fleeting, like a breath...which would only have been appropriately given after what was to come in v8 :(

This leads us to believe that Cain and Abel may have been named later in their life (like Eve, their mother) in description of their lifestyle, personality or purpose. Names were not given lightly in the ancient world, and a person often had more than one. Names had meaning and were often a pun or play on another word that sounded familiar. As we've discussed before, naming someone indicated having authority over them. Knowing someone's name indicated a familiar relationship. You'll see these important facts about names come up through the OT, into the NT (e.g., *Mt 16:18*, *Acts 13:9*) and ending in Revelation (*Rev 2:17*, *14:1*, *14:11*, *19:12*).

v3-4 Here begins the first of many examples of sibling rivalry (with the younger being favored) in the Bible. (e.g., Japheth and Shem, Esau and Jacob, Zerah and Perez, Manasseh and Ephraim etc)

We also have the sudden appearance of sacrifice, despite no record (for us) of God directing it.

Q (v3-4): Why did God respect Abel's offering, but not Cain's?

Read Genesis 4:6-11

v5-6 While we're not exactly sure how the boys knew their offering was or wasn't accepted, Cain was visibly angry that his effort did not produce fruit (pun intended) and clearly had no intention of repenting.

Q (v6-7a): Cain's behavior was an insult to God in many ways.

How did the purported "judgmental, violent God of the OT" respond?

Q (v7b&c): What did (does) God mean, "sin lies at the door and its desire is for you"?

v8 This was straight-up premeditated murder. One generation into humanity and murder has already surfaced. Remember this the next time someone tries to tell you that we're inherently good beings. Remember this the next time someone tries to tell you that God did not call the righteous to suffer at times. Note that Christ confirmed this event as historical fact (*Mt 23:34-35*), making Abel the first martyr. Further note that Christ publicly acknowledged his sacrifice and declared him righteous...a worthy reward (*Mt 25:21, Rev 2:10*).

v9-10 Cain has apparently reached a point of no return here and continues to defy God (despite God giving him yet another chance to confess). Cain was now a murderer and a liar...sounds familiar (*Jn 8:44*). In reality, as the elder brother, Cain was Abel's keeper in a way.

While God sees everything, the Bible confirms that He takes special note of cruel injustices (*Ex 22:21-26*) and the shedding of blood (*Gen 9:6, Jer 22:3, Heb 9:11-28*).

v11 The third curse in creation is awarded to Cain. No longer would the earth cooperate with Cain's labor; which was problematic since he was a farmer (*v2*). He would have to rely on others for food (everyone was still a vegetarian at this point) and that would be hard to do when he just murdered one of the only family on earth at the moment.

Read Genesis 4:12-18

v13-14 Suddenly Mr. Murder is worried about someone killing him. Cain expresses no regret at his action; only that he's going to be punished.

Q (v14-17): Wait, if Cain just killed one of the four people in existence, who was "anyone that finds me"?
And where did he get a wife in v17?

v15 We're not sure if this "mark" was something physical/visible or just an unseen "force" (for lack of a better term) that kept him stigmatized from others. This verse is part of what led to the punishment of branding or other marking for criminals/sinners throughout history (more recent examples such as Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Hitler's Jewish Badges, Ohio's "party plates" etc.)

Q (v15): Why did God prevent Cain's murder, going so far as threaten septuple punishment on an offender?

There are a number of likely reasons:

1. God didn't want to encourage more murder. See also *Deut 32:35*.
2. God was still being merciful to Cain, whom He loved, despite everything that had happened.
3. God had future plans for Cain and his offspring.

Q: What's the deal with seven anyway? I've heard it a lot in the Bible.

v16 The land of Nod may not be a literal location. It's just a wordplay on "vagabond", which is fitting for someone who "left the presence of God".

v17 This is not the more well-known Enoch coming later. But it does speak to how quickly the population was growing, if Cain was able to name a city after him.

v18 Here's the first little genealogy in the Bible. For future reference to new believers: you don't have to worry about pronouncing the names or locations in the Bible correctly. Just wing it. None of us say them correctly, either, regardless of how confident we may sound.

Read Genesis 4:19-24

v19-22 Not only was the population growing, it was accelerating in skill. People quickly picked up animal husbandry, carpentry, music, mining and metallurgy. Interestingly, these skills are only listed for Cain's line...the one alienated from God. Does that mean the faithful weren't innovators? No, but it may point to the fact that those without God tend to cling to their jobs, possessions and achievements as their measurement of fulfillment or success in life.

Q (v19-24): How is mankind progressing, in terms of sin?

Q: But there are a lot of examples of polygamy in the Bible! Even of godly people! How do you explain that?

Read Genesis 4:25-26

v25 After the downer of the past twenty-some verses, we get a bittersweet ending to the chapter. Having lost their two sons to exile and death, respectively, Adam and Eve have another son to carry on the God's promise of a Seed. Seth means "to place", as in, he was "in place" of the lost child(ren).

v26 "Calling upon the name of the Lord" wasn't just people praying. The root word indicates an invitation or a proclamation of praise. This was evangelism. This is what we are still called to do today: give glory, and point people to God in whatever ways and locations He's called us to.

While God has called some to be outspoken missionaries or preachers in foreign nations, many more He places in less auspicious...even mundane locations. Act with integrity at your job. Be polite and helpful at the grocery store. Be a loving stay-at-home mother. Face adversity with faith. Forgive often. Imitate Christ. Those around you will notice this. And if they don't already know that you're a Christian, they'll ask what makes you so different...giving you opportunity to "call on the name of the Lord."