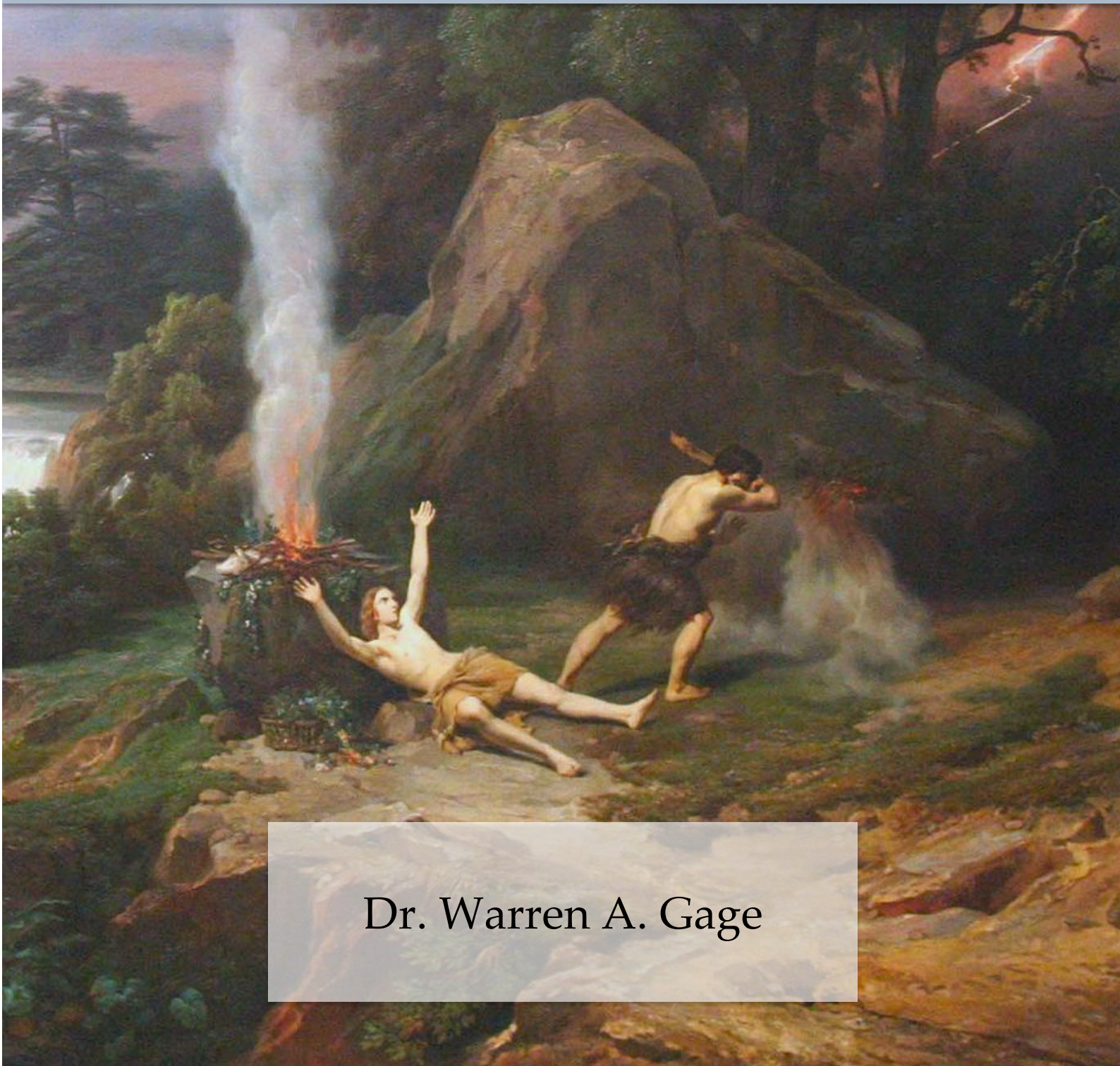




The Alexandrian Forum

THE GOSPEL OF ABEL

GENESIS 4



Dr. Warren A. Gage

Christ in all of Scripture

The Gospel of Abel

Genesis 4:1-17

Read the Passage



"Cain Killing Abel" by Sebastiano Ricci (1734)

Genesis 4:1-17

¹Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD."²Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.³And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.⁴Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering,⁵but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.⁶So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? ⁷If 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."⁸Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"¹⁰And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground."¹¹So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.¹²When you till the

ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth."¹³And Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear!¹⁴Surely 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 anyone who finds me will kill me."¹⁵And 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.¹⁶Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.¹⁷And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. And he built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son—Enoch.



Gospel Preview in the Text

ABEL & HIS SACRIFICE

1. Abel represented **the Seed of the Woman**; he was in the line of faith (Gen 3:15, 4:11).
2. Abel was a **shepherd** (Gen 4:20).
3. Abel offered the best of his flocks as **an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord** (Gen 4:4).
4. Abel suffered **the enmity of his brother**, who killed him out of envy (Gen 4:8).
5. Although he was a priest, Abel himself became the sacrifice (Gen 4:8). In death, **his blood cried out to God for justice** against his brother (Gen 4:10).
6. After slaying his brother Abel (Gen 4:8-10), Cain **founded the city of man** (Gen 4:17).
7. In Abel's place, God raised up Enosh, whose descendants began "to call upon the name of the Lord." Like Abel, they looked in faith to the **Heavenly City** that God would build (Heb 11:4, cf. 11:13-16).

JESUS & HIS SACRIFICE

1. Jesus is **the Seed of the Woman** (Rev 12:5).
2. Jesus is the "Good **Shepherd**" (John 10:11, 16).
3. Jesus offered himself as **an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord**, once and for all time (Heb 10:14).
4. Jesus suffered **the enmity of his brothers** (John 1:11), who delivered him over to death (Mark 15:12-13) out of envy (Mark 15:10).
5. Although he is a priest (Psa 110:4), Jesus himself became the sacrifice (Heb 9:11-14, 10:5-10). **His blood cried out to God for mercy** for his brothers (Heb 12:24).
6. By laying down his life for his brothers (1 John 3:16), Jesus **founded the City of God** (Rev 21:10, 22-23).
7. Jesus is the mediator, the architect, and builder of the **Heavenly City** (Heb 11:10, 12:22-24).

Prophetic Narrative of the Gospel in the Text

In Genesis 3:15, after the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden, God said that he would put enmity between the Seed of the Woman and the seed of the serpent. That enmity would ultimately find its expression in the conflict between Jesus, the Seed of the Woman, and the religious leaders in Jerusalem, the "brood of vipers" (Matthew 12:34), who would persecute him unto death. Yet we see that great conflict anticipated in human history as early as the story of Abel and his treacherous



brother, Cain. Abel's sacrifice, which was found acceptable before the Lord, identified him as belonging to the line of faith who trusted in the promise of Jesus, the Seed of the Woman. Meanwhile, Cain's lethal enmity toward his brother revealed his true nature as a seed of the serpent (1 John 3:12). The story of Cain murdering Abel is thus the first enactment in human history of the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 that would ultimately culminate in the crucifixion of our Lord.

In the story, Abel's blood is theologically significant for two primary reasons. First, Abel's blood clearly implies that there is life after death as early as this passage in Genesis. When God confronts Cain, he tells him that his brother's blood is crying out (in present tense) to him from the ground (Gen 4:10). Second, the apostle who writes Hebrews chooses to frame his entire discussion of the history of the faithful with the blood of Abel. The list of heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11-12 begins with Abel's righteous blood that cries out for justice (Heb 11:4). It then concludes with a discussion of the blood of Abel, in which the apostle reminds us that Jesus' blood "speaks a better word than that of Abel" (Heb 12:24). While Abel's righteous blood **cried out to the Lord for justice** against his sinful brother, the righteous blood of Jesus instead **cries out to the Lord for mercy** for his sinful brothers (Heb 12:24)!

Finally, we should note the importance of the story ending with Cain founding a city. St. Augustine observed that throughout history there has always been a perennial conflict between two alternative visions of a city: the city of God and the city of man. The city of God is promised to us from the beginning. It is the city that God envisioned in the garden when he commanded Adam to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with a righteous seed. After Adam and his descendants fell into sin, however, that city, the Heavenly City, could ultimately only be achieved by the Lord Jesus, who would to come to earth as a new Adam (Rom 5:14). The author of Hebrews tells us quite clearly that Abel and all of the other patriarchs were looking by faith to that Heavenly City, even though they died without receiving the promises (Heb 11:13-16).

When Cain founds his own city in Genesis 4:17, we find the origins of an alternative vision, the city of man. The city of man seeks to replicate the city that God promised, but it is a parody of paradise—entirely without God. Nowhere do we see this more clearly than in the nature of the city's founding. In deep irony, the city that Cain establishes, the city which is meant to represent the great community of man, is founded by a man who murdered his brother. In stark contrast, the Heavenly City, the great work of Christ and the hope of all the faithful, is founded by a man who chose to lay down his life for his brothers!

Gospel Takeaways from the Text

The story of Abel shows us the extent of the murderous hatred that the enemies of the gospel have toward those who believe. The persecution of the enemy is to the death. But in the face of persecution and suffering in this present life, we are able to persevere in hope of the glorious prospect of the Heavenly City, which we will one day inherit, just as the apostle assures us in Hebrews 11:1-12:24.





PLEASE HELP US KEEP OUR MATERIAL FREE!

The Alexandrian Forum is a nonprofit ministry that relies on the generosity of partners like you.

Our mission is to train believers to see Jesus in every story of the Bible, set hearts aflame for the Word of God, and equip disciples to share this life-changing message with others.

Our purpose in promoting a uniquely Christ-centered method of reading the Bible is to lift up the name of Jesus, that he might draw all peoples to himself (John 12:32).

If this message has been a blessing to you, would you **consider supporting us with a tax-deductible gift of any amount** in order to help us cover our costs of providing it to you for free?

To give online, please visit:

www.AlexandrianForum.org/give

We thank you for your generosity.

Every blessing in Christ,

Dr. Warren A. Gage
President of the Alexandrian Forum



The Alexandrian Forum

THE GOSPEL OF ABEL
DR. WARREN A. GAGE

COPYRIGHT © 2019