

Genesis 4

A Summary This chapter tells the story of Cain and Abel.

We see the different works that they did and we see what God favours and what he does not favour.

Cain's reaction towards God is anger.

God warns Cain that sin is at the door of his life and he must master it.

The murder of Abel and the punishment of Cain are described.

However Cain marries and his wife bears children including Lamech who will be the father of Noah the righteous one who build the ark. Adam and Eve have a son called Seth who will be a comfort after the death of Abel.

Cain and Abel are born

The Authorised version uses the descriptive word Adam knew his wife. Other translations speak of Adam making love to his wife. This is an interesting phrase and can only be adequate if there is mutual love in the intimate act. To know his wife speaks of a deeper and fuller union and speaks of an intimacy which goes beyond sexual union. Knowing one another makes it much clearer that this is to be a sacred union and in no way casual. Eve feels blest to have a son they call Cain and then another son called Abel.

Abel and Cain's working life.

I think it is reasonable to suggest their different roles were of their choice and not forced upon them.

Abel chose to keep flocks. He brought to the Lord the best of the flock and having sacrificed them offered the meat to God. This was a foretaste of the shedding of blood to be offered for sin and one day would lead to Jesus the Lamb of God being sacrificed once for all to atone for our sins.

Cain brought some fruits from the ground where he had worked hard.

However much effort we make our works cannot please God.

See Gods approval and warning to Cain.

The offering which involves the shedding of blood pleases God. Cain is very angry but God says do what is right and you can be accepted too! When we give to God we must do what He says. The temptation to do things our way is always there. We must humble ourselves to do Gods will. Sin always wants to take advantage of us we must be quiet before God to listen to His voice.

Cain's sin.

Going into the field was premeditated. Cain did not want to be seen. He attacks Abel with such ferocity that he kills him.

The Lord arrives and asks after Abel. Cain tries to avoid the Lord pretending he know nothing about what he has done.

God's judgement on Cain

You are under a curse. You will work hard but receive no crops. You will find no peace and be a restless wanderer. Cain is aware of what this means and is desperate but only God knows if he was repentant. To be separated from God is an awful state to be in. Cain fears anyone will be free to take his life. However God decrees he will protect him despite his sin. Cain goes to another place.

Cain's life after he kills Abel.

He marries, he builds a city and a line from him leads to Lamech who in time will father Noah the righteous servant of God who will build the ark. A generation emerges which will be the beginnings of an Iron Age. However polygamy and increasing sinfulness characterise the ancestors of Cain.

Curiously despite all this it seems some came together to call on the name of the Lord.

Points to consider

What deeper things are involved when you speak of knowing your wife?

Why was Abel's sacrifice met with approval and Cain's was not?

How do you define sin as crouching at the door?

How significant is God's judgment on Cain?

What was the outcome of Cain's generation?