

SESSION 4

SPREAD OF SIN

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I. PRAYER/REVIEW

A. Movements of the Old Testament (Panorama Timeline)

Nine (9) Movements of the OT

1. Prologue	6. Kingship: United
2. Patriarchs	7. Kingship: Divided
3. Redemption/Wandering	
4. Conquest	8. Exile
5. Apostasy	9. Return from Exile

Note the logical pairings of the movements;
movement 3 is a double movement (self-contained pair).

B. Movement# 1 "Prologue"



MYTH OR HISTORICAL?

Some scholars deny the historicity of much of Genesis 1-11, particularly Genesis 3 (e.g. talking serpent?). Yet this passage on Adam and Eve is written in the same straight-forward, narrative historical style as the later patriarchs (Gen 12-50). Jesus and Paul both referred to the garden couple as true, historical figures (Matt 19:4-5; Rom 5:14); OT chronology lists Adam as historical (1 Chron 1:1). The Bible records sons with genealogies, inexplicable if Adam and Eve were not real people with real descendants. Best to see these early chapters as historical (and supra-historical, i.e., valuable beyond their space-time lives).

II. REFLECTIONS ON GENESIS 1-3

A. General Account of Creation

Genesis 1:2-4^a and the seven days

Meaningful insights:

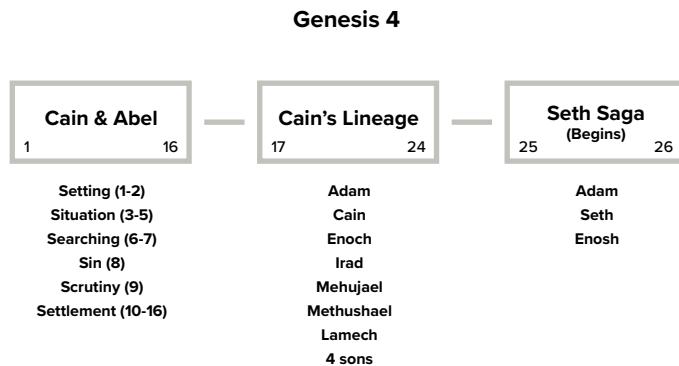
B. Special Account of Creation of Man

Genesis 2:4^b-25

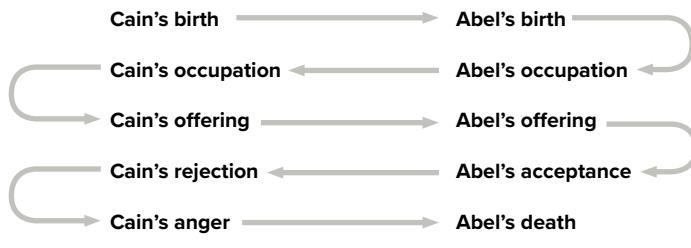
Meaningful insights:

III. OVERVIEW TO GENESIS 4

A. Genesis 4 : Horizontal Chart



B. Literary Development of Cain-Abel Saga



“Chapter 4 shows the spread of sin from Adam’s family to the larger society that his descendants produced. Not only did sin affect everyone, but people became increasingly more wicked as time passed” (Constable, 63).

C. Dramatic Structure: Scenes of the Drama

(Cain and Abel Saqā–Gen. 4:2^b-16)

- A **Scene 1** (narrative): Cain/Abel active; YHWH passive vv. 2^b-5
- B **Scene 2** (dialogue): YHWH questions Cain vv. 6-7
- C **Scene 3** (dialogue and narrative): Cain/Abel alone v. 8
- B' **Scene 4** (dialogue): YHWH confronts Cain vv. 9-14
- A' **Scene 5** (narrative): YHWH is active; Cain passive vv. 15-16

IV. EXPOSITION OF GENESIS 4

A. Cain and Abel Saga (1-16)

1. Setting (1-2)

GENESIS 4:1-2 NASB

Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, “I have gotten a manchild with the help of the LORD.”² Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

- a. The firstborn will be Cain (whose name in Hebrew sounds like the Hebrew word for “gotten” or “acquires”—a portent of his character/disposition?); next will be Abel (Heb. means “vapor” or “breath”—a portent of his brief life?).
- b. Cain’s profession is agricultural (“worked the soil”); Abel’s profession is pastoral (“kept flocks”). Both are aspects of God’s command to rule and have dominion (Gen 1:26-30).

2. Situation: Offerings (3-5)

GENESIS 4:3-5

In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD.⁴ And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering,⁵ but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

- a. “In the course of time” the brothers bring an offering to God. What kind of offering is this? The Hebrew word translated offering is *minha* (which later in Mosaic Law referred to a tribute, a cereal offering of thankfulness and gratitude, i.e. a bloodless offering). However, in spite of this later meaning, if this was intended to be a sin offering (Heb 9:2), then an acceptable animal would be required.
- b. Cain brought “some” of his produce; Abel brought “firstborn” (choicest) of his flock. Cain’s sacrifice was unacceptable; Abel’s was acceptable. One man went out of his way to bring the best; the other discharged an expected duty. (Theological lesson for today?)
- c. Why Cain’s rejection? Two most common explanations are:
 - (1) Cain did not bring required blood sacrifice (there was precedent for this—see Gen 3:21).
 - (2) Cain did not offer in faith (proper heart attitude—see Heb 11:4). In fact, his obligatory offering smacks of ritualism or tokenism.

INSIGHT

By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead (Heb 11:4 NIV 84).

The debate over the kind of offering required (best? or blood?) continues. What is not debatable is the central importance of faith in worshiping God (when making any kind of offering).

3. Searching (6-7)

GENESIS 4:6-7

Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 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 rule over it.”

a. This section introduces four searching questions of Cain from God:

- (1) “Why are you angry?” (6)
- (2) “Why is your face downcast?” (6)
- (3) “Where is your brother Abel?” (9)
- (4) “What have you done?” (10)

b. Whereas Eve had to be talked into sin (by temptation), Cain will not be talked out of his sin of anger (6). Unchecked anger can lead to serious consequences; note Matthew 5:21-22a:

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment...”

c. Note the warning to Cain.

“But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door; it desires to have you...” (7)

- (1) An appeal to his God-consciousness of right and wrong.
- (2) A warning of sin’s power to destroy (master, dominate).

1 PETER 5:8NLT

Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

- (3) An appeal for Cain to master (control) sin before sin masters Cain. (For a text highlighting the struggle to sin or not to sin, see Rom 7:15-25).

4. Sin (8)

GENESIS 4:8

Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.”

While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

- a. Scripture does not record Cain’s verbal response to God in audible words; the next recorded words of Cain are addressed to his brother. This is the key verse in the “Dramatic Structure” (see again p. 52).
- b. Cain attacks and kills his brother; note that the key word “brother” occurs 7 times in Genesis 4:2-11. The motive for this act is found in 1 John 3:12:

Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.

- c. In the first sin, man and woman sin by disobeying God's word; here, in the second sin, man (Cain) sins by killing his fellow man (brother). Sin can have both vertical (Godward) and horizontal (manward) dimensions (i.e. sins against God directly or against man).

5. Scrutiny (9)

GENESIS 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?"

- a. Adam sinned and tried to hide and conceal himself and his sin; Cain sinned and tried to feign innocence and avoid responsibility.
- b. The question ("Where is your brother Abel?") is an invitation to confess and repent; sin's grip will not allow such an admission.
- c. After the account of the Flood, retributive justice for murder will be instituted (Gen 9:5-6).

6. Settlement (10-16)

GENESIS 4:10-16

The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.¹¹ Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.¹² When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

¹³ Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear."

¹⁴ Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."¹⁵ But the LORD said to him, "Not so; anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him.¹⁶ So Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

- a. The Lord's judgment (10-12)

(1) What Cain has done in secret, God reveals openly.

(2) Cain is pronounced to be "under a curse"; wording hearkens back to the curse on the serpent (3:14).

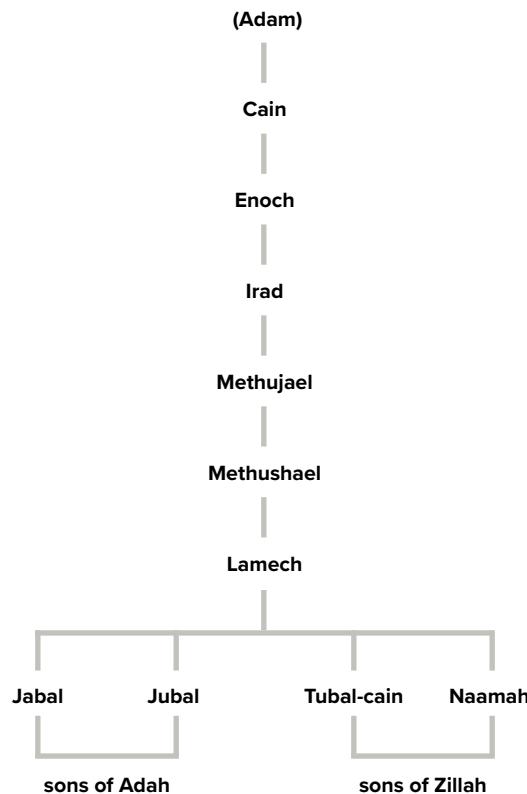
(a) The earth should have been fruitful for the farmer; now, it will resist and be the focal point of Cain's judgment. (cf. Num 16:30-35; Deut 11:6).

- (b) The land should have been his home; now he will be banished to a nomadic lifestyle.
- b. Cain's reply (to judgment) (13-16)
 - (1) "Cain responds with self-pity instead of repentance. He fears physical and social exposure but not the invisible God who has made him" (Waltke, 98).
 - (2) Cain's sin will drive him away from extended family, away from his past profession, away from God's presence, away from safety and security. Sin always has profound consequences.
 - (3) God placed a "mark" (tattoo? blemish?) on Cain as a gracious means of preserving his life. Commentators on the nature of the mark have been wide and various; the biblical text gives no detail.

B. Cain's Lineage (17-24)

A brief lineage of Cain is found in Genesis 4:17-24. The genealogy is linear (person A to B to C) and contains seven generations (counting from Adam to Lamech or beginning with Cain to the counting of the sons of Lamech as the seventh generation).

The genealogy with names follow:



Brief observations on the Cain lineage:

1. Within seven generations, the Scriptures speak of the first account of bigamy. While not condemned in Genesis 4:19, it is a deviation from the original institution commencing with Adam and Eve (Gen 2). It may very well document the growing, developing “cancer of sin” as it works itself out in the ungodly line of Cain.
2. Cain murdered his brother and bemoaned the curse/punishment placed upon him. By the time of Lamech, this descendant not only kills a man he has struggled with, but he boasts of his act (cf. 4:23-24).
3. Cain’s establishment of a “city” speaks of a settlement, whether very small or large. It anticipates the later city (cf. 11:4) with its ambitious tower to reach into heaven. Both cities may have been founded on ungodly hubris (“that we may make a name for ourselves” –11:4). It also may be significant that Cain named his city, honoring his son, rather than God (cf. Ps 49:10-12).
4. Also, note some “firsts” mentioned as civilization begins to develop (yet to what end or purpose?):
 - a. Cities (17)
 - b. Nomadic tent dwellers (20)
 - c. Music (stringed/wind) (21)
 - d. Metallurgy (primitive) (22)
 - e. Poetry (lyrical song) (23-24)

C. Seth’s Saga (Begins) (25-26)

GENESIS 4:25-26

Adam made love to 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.”²⁶ Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to call on the name of the LORD.

1. This portion of the biblical text is obviously out of chronological sequence. Most of the chapter has centered on the drama between Cain and Abel and the aftermath (and resultant genealogical record) of that basic storyline. Now, the biblical writer gives us a “flashback” to continue the story.
2. Seth (“granted” or “appointed”) is born to Adam and Eve in the hopes of producing the godly seed (refer again to the hope expressed in 3:15—offspring of the serpent [ungodly] vs. offspring of the woman [godly]).
3. At this point, only one son of Seth is mentioned, that of Enosh. The first son of Adam and Eve was eventually a murderer of his brother. The second son would likely have been the son of

promise/blessing, but he was killed. Now, Eve declares Seth to be the one to replace Abel and his intended destiny (4:25). The birth of Seth's son, Enosh, contrasts with the lack of a son by Abel; the line of blessing has not been cut off. It will proceed with the lineage of Seth.

4. Enosh ("weakness" or "frailty") represents not only the line of blessing but also the basic weakness of humanity; "As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field..." (Ps 103:15).

Abel (a brief "vapor" of a life), in faith, offered an acceptable sacrifice; Enosh (a man of "weakness"), in faith, offered an acceptable prayer ("at that time men begin to call [proclaim or pray] on the name of the Lord" – 4:26^b). A theological principle of strength through the Lord is built upon recognition of weakness in personal self.

TAKEAWAYS

1. In a sense the Garden was a "biological" Temple whereby man in innocence could worship freely and naturally. Sin destroyed that arrangement and God drove the couple out of that "Temple."

Application Point: Disobedience (sin) always drives man away from God's best.

2. The offerings of Cain and Abel instruct believers clearly.

Application Point: Bring my "best" to God and always bring it in "faith."

3. The effects of the first sin rapidly spreads like a cancerous growth. Humanity is quickly cataloged into the lineage of Cain (ungodly line; disobedience) and the lineage of Abel (godly line; obedience).

Application Point: Allowing sin to seed and root will allow sin to widely spread in my life—"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Ps 119:11).

4. Sin will not be allowed to continue unchecked (look ahead to Session 5 and 6).

Application Point: Keep short accounts with God (use 1 John 1:9 liberally in one's life).

◆ FURTHER REFLECTION

Man is born in trespass and sin (Eph 2). One man of the "godly" line was both a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14) and a man "prone to wander." That man was King David.

When this fallen man's sin with Bathsheba occurred, Psalm 32:1-5 may have been written as to what he or any believer experiences while in rebellious, unconfessed sin (see esp. vv. 3-4). Also, his formal confession of sin after being "called out" by the prophet, Nathan, is found in Psalm 51 (note esp. vv. 2-4, 7-9, 10-12).