**June 3, 2020 | A Study on Chapter 4 of the Book of Genesis**

**Cain and Abel**

In chapter 3 God had instructed Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply and in chapter 4 we see the beginning of their family.    Cain was the first born, then Abel and Matthew Henry points out that some believe they were twins just as Esau and Jacob, the elder hated and the younger loved but there is no evidence of that in the Bible.   While God brought Adam and Eve as mature adults, their sons come forth in the usual way.  David Guzik writes that since God had promised that their seed would defeat Satan Adam and Eve may have thought that prophecy would be fulfilled with their son.  As we are early in the history of man, there are many “firsts”.  In chapter 3 the first sin is recorded.  In chapter 4 we have the first children born and the first crime committed, murder in the first degree since it was premeditated.  We see the elements contributing to this crime:

**Their occupations:** Abel kept flocks of sheep while Cain worked the soil, one a rancher and one a farmer providing for an early division of labor.

**Their religion:** Both brought offerings to God.  There is no mention of offerings before this but it is probable that they learned this from Adam and Eve who despite their fallen state still worshiped God.  In verse 1 Eve acknowledges that the birth of her son is a gift from God.

**Their offerings:** The Bible says that Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering while Abel brought the firstborn of his flock along with the fat of the animal.

**God’s reaction:** God looked with favor on Abel’s offering but not Cain’s.  As I write this, I am still seething over my latest battle with my generator (won by the generator).  I went out to water my garden earlier which requires the generator to run the well but not today.  Watering my garden (or attempting to) is a chore that has been necessary the last few days since it has been hot and dry.  At least the weeds have been in abeyance unlike last week when I spent much time pulling weeds that flourished during the rain.  As God told Adam in chapter 3, raising crops is toilsome work.  Earlier today I was out at Todd Moore’s farm and watched the cows as they seemed happy to go about their day unsupervised feeding on the grass.  I’m sure that raising livestock is harder than it looks but in the days of Cain and Abel the sheep did not require any intervention by Abel to reproduce.  The point is that Abel brought an offering to God that was really a representation of the nature that God had created just taking its course.  Cain on the other hand worked long and hard to raise the crops and proudly presented them to God hoping for His approval, an early example of trying to earn God’s favor.  In the faith hall of fame (Hebrews chapter 11) Abel’s gift was recognized as a more excellent sacrifice than Cain’s because Abel made his offering by faith (11:4).  Here we see an early example of faith (Abel) vs. works (Cain). Cain’s response:   Cain was angry and his anger seems to be directed at God initially.  Vernon McGee writes that the root cause of Cain’s anger was pride.  Not only had God not honored Cain’s offering but he was shown up by his younger brother.  God appealed to Cain by telling him that if he did right he would be accepted.  Although little is written about Abel, in Matthew 23:35 Jesus refers to him as righteous.  God’s appeal to Cain also contained a warning of the danger of succumbing to sin as God told Cain that sin desired to have him.  In a similar way Peter referred to Satan as a roaring lion seeking those he could devour.  He instructed Christians to resist him standing firm in the faith (1st Peter 5:8-9).

Next we see lured Abel into the field and murdered him.  Murder is often a crime of passion, a sudden outburst of anger that is often followed by genuine remorse.  Cain’s anger, pride and jealousy resulted in his giving in to Satan (see 1st John 3:12).  This was not a sudden outburst of anger by Cain, instead it was planned in advance even after God’s warning.  In verse 9 God confronts Cain but I wonder, where was Adam, why did he not deal with his son?  A father cannot abdicate his responsibility to discipline his children.  I am convinced that many of the violent protests we are seeing this week are the result of failure of parents to discipline their children.  As He did with Adam, God starts with a question “Where is your brother?”.  Instead of confessing his crime and asking for forgiveness, Cain’s answer is “Am I my brother’s keeper?”, further evidence of his cold blooded nature.  God then asks Cain the same question he posed to Adam; “What have you done?”.  God then passes judgment on Cain by branding him as cursed and making him a vagabond.  Cain now displays sorrow, not for killing his brother but because he sees his punishment as too severe, beyond his ability to bear.  Although he actually deserved a death sentence, God spares him but Cain is too selfish to recognize that and he fears that his life is in jeopardy because others may seek justice for Abel’s murder.  Perhaps God wanted Cain to remain alive living a cursed existence as an example to others.  For some criminals a life sentence confined in prison is more painful than a death sentence.  Whatever the reason God reserves judgment on Cain to Himself (Deut. 32:35, Rom 12:19).

Just as Adam and Eve had to leave their home in the Garden of Eden, Cain leaves his home and goes east to the Land of Nod out of the presence of the Lord.indicating his alienation.  Nod in Hebrew means wanderer, exile or fugitive so some believe Nod is not a single location but wherever Cain traveled.  Much of the remainder of the chapter is devoted to the lineage of Cain.  Little is known about Cain’s family but there is another first among his descendants; Lamech is the first polygamist which may indicate what little regard Cain and his family had for God since having multiple wives is clearly not consistent with God’s plan for marriage.  While Cain’s lineage ended with the flood, the chapter closes on a positive note with the birth of Seth which no doubt brought great comfort to Adam and Eve since they had lost both of their sons.  The seed promised to Adam and Eve would come through Seth (see Luke 3:23-38 for the lineage of Jesus).