

Genesis 4:1-12

What Does God Ask Of Us?

A number of years ago when our youngest son Joshua was around 18 months old we had to make a trip to the emergency room. We had a cat that would hide on a dining room chair and wait for Josh to come by. The cat would box him in the head through the rungs of the chair.

One day the cat started the fight so Josh grabbed him. I heard a shrieking noise and when I came into the room it turned out to be the cat. Josh had him in his grip and wouldn't let go.

I thought the cat was being strangled so I pulled Josh's arm. When I did I heard a "pop" and he started crying. His arm was hanging there and he couldn't move it.

Off we went to the emergency room where I had to admit that I might have seriously injured my own child. The doctor came in listened to the story, gave a yank on Josh's arm, and it popped again. Immediately he stopped crying and had use of his arm.

The doctor said, "OK, he's fine. You can go home."

Now I'm not telling you this story so that you can be wowed by my parenting skills. Something else happened at the emergency room that I've never forgotten.

Josh was a cute toddler and all the nurses and people working that night stopped and smiled, they talked to him, and paid attention to him.

At the same time, there was an elderly woman that had been brought in on a stretcher. She was in pain and moaned repeatedly. That night no one seemed to even notice her. I'm sure everyone was very busy. It was a typical chaotic night in the ER.

But I thought at the time, what a contrast. The baby draws all the attention and all the smiles but the older person was alone and hardly noticed.

Here's my guess why. The baby represented life and the future. The older person represented the end of life and maybe the end of hope in people's minds.

Little children represent a future and a hope. But in the whole history of the human race there has never been a greater measure of hope for any child than the hope that Adam and Eve must of had at the birth of their first.

Turn with me to Genesis 4

Genesis is the book of beginnings. Today we're going to read about another first.

I. The First Children Are Born

Read verse 1

Here is the first child to be born on earth. What a wonder it must have been for Eve suddenly to have in her hands a little baby from her own body. Imagine her amazement as she looked at him and thought, "It looks just like Adam. I have gotten a man from the Lord."

We saw last week as we closed out chapter 3 and God banished Adam and Eve from the garden, that Adam had faith in God's promises. He had been condemned to death and yet he named his wife "Eve," which means "life giver." Adam and Eve both believed God's promises.

In Genesis 3:15, God had made one of the most important promises in the entire book of Genesis. It was spoken to Satan but although it contained a promise of judgment and condemnation for him, it spoke of deliverance and life for mankind.

Here God said, *And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.*

A human being would be born who would be a redeemer. He would bruise the serpent's head.

Adam and Eve believed God's promise and Adam showed his faith by naming his wife "Eve." She was the one through whom the promised salvation would come.

All of this happened before Eve had given birth. In fact, it happened before she had ever become pregnant. So when they left the garden and she experienced the miraculous wonder of birth, she and Adam must have been amazed.

Now Eve held this new human life in her hands.

God had promised that her seed would destroy the work of Satan and restore people to paradise once more. At last the child was born and Eve held in her arms the one

whom both she and Adam must have thought was the deliverer. How excited they must have been.

The thing they didn't know was that they held in their arms a little murderer and that the tragic history of the human race, written in blood, had begun.

The name "Cain" means "gotten" or "acquired" and Eve clearly recognized where he had come from. She saw what some people of our day refuse to recognize. Even though she and Adam had had sexual relations, this child had come from the Lord.

Eve, was praising God that He who promised victory to the seed of the woman, actually had provided that seed. All of this certainly shows Adam and Eve's faith in God's spoken word.

In verse 2 we read of the birth of a second child.

Read Verse 2

As they grow older Cain became a farmer and Abel a shepherd. Both were honorable occupations. Cain's crops provided food for the family. Abel's flocks' provided clothing. Human beings wasn't authorized until after the flood to use animals for food and so it is more likely that the sheep were used for clothing and for sacrifice.

Obviously, there is many more details that we would like to know here but were just not given. In chapter 5, which kind of gives us a recap of what went on, we learn that Adam and Eve bore many other children. The population of the earth is growing. God certainly gives commands and instructions to people, but as is often the case in Genesis, God focuses His account on the details of the lives of those who are most important from God's viewpoint of history.

The story of Cain and Abel, while being an accurate historical record, is also an illustration of the age long conflict of the two seeds. So God zeroes in on these two. Cain typifies the seed of the serpent, while Abel is a picture of Christ, the seed of the woman. In another sense, Abel represents those who, by faith, are, in Christ and born again, and who therefore are also the seed of the woman in a spiritual sense.

Cain becomes one who stands for mankind following Satan's way; man doing Satan's bidding in rebellion against God. Abel becomes one who stands for mankind exhibiting faith in God. And it is at this point that there's a split in the human race.

This story of the two brothers really becomes the story of us all.

I. The First Children Are Born

II. The First Offering Is Given

In verse 3 we find the first mention of an offering brought by human beings to God.

Read verses 3-5

I would take from this that God must have given some kind of clear instructions to Adam and Eve and their kids concerning the concept of sacrifice. This wasn't something that these guys dreamed up on their own, but was God directed.

After their explosion from Eden, God had made a gracious provision to continue to interface with people even though it was now at a distance.

He had shown Adam and Eve that an atonement required the shedding of innocent blood to provide a covering for the guilty.

Probably at an appointed time and place, people were able to meet God. But it wasn't going to be like it had been in the garden before sin. Now they had to approach God by means of a proper offering, especially marked by the principle of substitution, the innocent for the guilty.

When you worshipped God by means of a sacrifice you acknowledged your own guilt and helplessness as well as your trust in God for forgiveness.

There was nothing in this process that would appeal to the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, or the pride of life. That's the way Satan's appeal to Eve was made. That means it would require a complete subjugation of human pride to the will of God.

Now, what we find is that Cain and Abel brought two very different types of offerings to God. Cain brought the fruits of the soil as his offering, and Abel an offering from the firstborn of the flock.

In some way, God acknowledged that He received Abel's offering. But Cain's offering was rejected.

This whole passage has raised a lot of questions in people's minds, and looking at it from a humanistic viewpoint they can't understand why God would accept one and not the other.

Listen to this carefully. The point of Genesis 4 is a point that we desperately need to understand. God doesn't accept just any worship. There is acceptable and unacceptable worship.

Follow this. Cain did the best he could. He gave the best he had. In fact, I have to believe his offering was beautiful in comparison to a bloody animal.

And yet that's the real point. Abel's sacrifice involved blood and death. It testified to the death of a substitute. Abel was coming to God, God's way, not Abel's way.

When God killed animals in the Garden of Eden and then clothed Adam and Eve with their skins, God was showing that because sin means death, innocent victims must die for the guilty sinner to be pardoned. The sacrifices pointed to the future cross of Christ.

When Abel came with the offering of blood he was looking forward to the promise of the deliverer. When Cain brought his fruit he was rejecting that way.

I can just see Cain's offering. He put all kinds of time and hard work into making a beautiful presentation to the Lord. It was like the ultimate vegetable tray all arrayed in beautiful colors and patterns.

And his offering represents all the beautiful things of this world. The things that people want to put together and utilize to make themselves acceptable to God. We want to come our way.

We have these great service organizations whose members build hospitals and do all kinds of good works in the community. These are good things, beautiful things. But unfortunately some in those organizations think that somehow those beautiful things make them right with God. They think, someday God's going to let me into heaven because of the beauty of the works that I've done.

We have community groups and people who do volunteer work to help the sick and

the elderly. People who work in soup kitchens and shelters for the homeless and all kinds of other good things. Beautiful things. But they don't make those individuals right with God.

Then we have churches that are filled with good religious people. They give money to build beautiful cathedrals, with stain glass windows and huge spires. There are churches that have tremendous choirs and people sacrifice to give of their best to God. And they want to be received by God because of their beautiful offerings.

But according to the Bible, God rejects them and their worship. There's no blood, there's no Christ and there's no real Christianity, no matter how beautiful their service might be.

You say, "Whoa, wait a minute bro, that doesn't seem right. Doesn't God want our best? Doesn't God honor a beautiful offering? Doesn't he want us to meet the physical needs of people around us?" Sure, he does!

And if Cain would have first presented the animal sacrifice, confessing that he was a sinner, that sin requires death, that he was thankful to God for having shown that a substitute could die in his place and that he was coming on that basis - If he had done that and then also presented his offering of fruit as a loving extra, then God would have accepted that.

But when Cain refused to come with blood, God was obligated to reject both him and his offering.

And that's the way it is with us too. Sure God wants good works. We saw that last week. Jesus said, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.* Matthew 5:16

But first comes the blood and then comes the beauty. And God will be pleased because if we come trusting in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins then we are not trusting in those other things. We are just offering them up to God because we love Him and we want to show Him affection. We want to glorify Him and make His name famous.

There's nothing in a bloody animal that's appealing. When you see road kill on the highway you don't say, "Let's pull over. That was so beautiful I just want get out my

phone and grab a picture to email to all my friends.” If you do take me out of your address book.

There’s nothing in the rough, wooden cross and a bleeding Savior that’s humanly attractive.

The entire concept of the cross and God's way of salvation cuts right across the grain of our wisdom and what’s attractive, and what appeals to us.

When God instituted this way He was making it crystal clear that it was entirely His way and human pride had nothing to do with it.

But apparently Cain had a problem with pride. He probably thought, “Why should I have I have to depend on my kid brother for an offering? Isn’t my fruit just as valuable and useful as Abel's animals?”

Whatever was going through his mind at this time, we know that Cain's heart wasn't right before God and his offering wasn't of faith.

Hold your place there in Genesis **Turn to Hebrews 11 page 1069**

I'd like you to see the New Testament commentary on this passage. It is summed up in one verse. **Read verse 4**

Notice three progressive points in this verse: Because he believed, Abel offered a better sacrifice. Because he offered a better sacrifice, he was shown to be a righteous man. Because he was a righteous man he is, for all ages a voice, saying “righteousness is by faith.”

By faith Abel offered a proper sacrifice. Romans 10:17 says, *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* Abel was doing what God said, while Cain was disobeying God.

By faith Abel offered the proper sacrifice, which witnessed to his righteousness.

God didn't respect Abel for what was in Abel. There is nothing in Genesis 4 to indicate that Abel was any better than Cain. They were both sinners. The only thing that obtained righteousness for Abel was his faith and he demonstrated his faith by his offering.

And you know what, the only thing that can change our relationship to God is faith.

Now I'm sure that if someone would have asked Cain if he believed in God he would have said very emphatically, "Of course, I believe."

The average person in the average American church would say the same thing. In fact, they would be very offended if you implied that they didn't really believe in God.

But you'll notice that true belief comes God's way. True belief doesn't make up its own way.

Look over to I John chapter 5 page 1084 Read 9-13

God gave His Son as the complete and total sacrifice for sin. If we believe and come by faith through Christ's sacrifice the Bible says we're forgiven of our sins. We have eternal life.

To deny salvation by faith is to call God a liar. He's the one who's giving us the record of His Son. The issue isn't believing in God. Even Satan himself believes in God. The issue is believing what God has said.

Abel did. His sacrifice was a visible confirmation of that fact. Cain didn't. His sacrifice was a visible confirmation of that fact.

Now go back with me to Genesis 4.

In verse 5 we read about Cain's reaction to God's rejection. There is nothing worse than a religious, self-righteous, egotist getting put down.

And so Cain was very angry. The Hebrew literally says, "It became hot to Cain." Today we'd say, Man, Cain was hot under the collar." And then it says his countenance fell. Literally, "His face fell." He was down in the mouth. It was written all over his face.

And here's one of the greatest testimonies to the grace of God that you'll find anywhere in the Scriptures.

Although the offering of Cain was rejected, God didn't reject Cain. Rather he came after Cain tried to reason with him.

And so he says in verse 6

Cain, why are you getting hot? Why are you so down in the mouth?

And then verse 7 Read 7

This one of those verses that you can tell the translators wrestled with by looking at the differences in the various Bible versions.

Let me give you a literal word for word translation from the Hebrew.

“If you do well will there not be exaltation? And will not his subjection be to you and will not you rule over him? But if you do not do well, at the entrance sin is crouching.”

At this point Cain is angry about his younger brother getting praise over him. That becomes very obvious in the next verse where Cain kills his brother Abel.

What God is saying is this: “Why are you angry as though you were mistreated? If you would do well a sin offering is needed so that you can be exalted back to your rightful position of first born.”

There are several important components to this reasoning.

First of all, Cain shouldn't have been angry as if the problem was outside of him and couldn't be changed. It could be changed and the one person who could change it was Cain.

Do you see yourself in Cain? I see me too often. We want to blame others and situations and externals when it is us that needs to change.

Second of all, there's a reminder of the right action. God saying “if you do what is right” is just another indication that the way of approach to God by sacrifice had been made clear long before this. If God's saying to Cain “why don't you do the right thing” it's because the right thing had been explained to him.

Therefore, Cain rejected the right way, not for lack of knowledge, but for lack of humility, faith, and obedience. He refused to come with the proper sacrifice because he considered the confession of his need demeaning.

So finally, God gives a warning and the warning was that in Cain's refusal to come on God's terms he was flirting with disaster. The cause of his anger was sin and sin was crouching like a wild animal ready to pounce on him, and that is exactly what happened.

I. The First Children Are Born

II. The First Offering Is Given

III. The First Murder Is Committed

Read Verse 8

Here we have the first murder. And notice, this isn't negligent homicide or second-degree murder. This is murder one. A cold-blooded, premeditated murder.

Cain said to Abel, "Let's go out in the field" and then when they were out of the sight of others, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

The first entrance of sin into the world through the mere eating of a forbidden fruit had quickly resulted in a much more bitter fruit; brother murdering brother.

The seed of the serpent was striking at the seed of the woman, corrupting her first son and slaying her second. Satan was busy right at the beginning of human history, trying to prevent the fulfillment of the promise of the deliverer who was to come from the woman.

And that story continues through the rest of the Bible right up to Herod killing the babies.

Well Cain may have hid from other men, but he couldn't hide from God and so God calls Cain to account. This time Cain hadn't gone to the place of sacrifice to seek God. God had come to the field to seek him.

Read Verse 9

God wasn't asking this because He didn't know what was going on. This was just like His questions to Adam and Eve. God's asking Cain, "Where's your brother?" to give Cain a chance to confess and ask forgiveness.

See at this point God is still leaving the door open, but instead of acting in humility and the fear of God we find the first human lie and the first human question in the Bible.

The lie was Cain's denial that he knew where his brother was. He knew perfectly well. Sin had pounced and devoured Cain.

Adam and Eve tried to do some blame shifting when God confronted them with their sin but they didn't lie.

The second thing Cain does is ask a question? "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Talk about arrogance. He was saying, "What are you asking me for?"

Finally, God can't speak in mercy anymore, but only in judgment.

Read verse 10

In Luke 11 Jesus called Abel a prophet. Cain might have been able to quiet that hated, prophesying voice of his brother, but he couldn't quiet the voice of his blood. God had created life. Man was made in the image of God and God won't tolerate the indiscriminate, unjustified slaughter of a man.

So the blood of Abel cried out for judgment.

Abel, the type of the seed of the woman, was righteous before God, and yet he died violently at the hand of the first of the serpents' seed.

Abel's blood crying from the ground is the prototype of all the suffering inflicted on the righteous through the ages by the children of the Wicked One. It's climax and it's fulfillment are seen in the conflict of Satan and Jesus Christ on Calvary.

This conflict reached a tragic crescendo when those religious leaders to whom Christ had said "You are of your father the devil." cried out for His crucifixion saying "His

blood be upon us and upon our children.”

But Hebrews 12:24 says that the blood of Christ speaks of better things than that of Abel.

Abel's blood spoke of vengeance. Jesus' blood speaks of forgiveness and victory over Satan.

This conflict between the two spiritual seeds continues today and I believe is rapidly heading toward its final conclusion.

Sometimes we look out at our world and say “It sure looks like Satan is wining,” but Satan's defeat is as close as the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Even now we have this promise: Romans 16:20 says *And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.*

Here in just a few short verse Cain is accused, convicted, cursed and sentenced for the murder of his brother.

Read verses 11 - 12

Cain's false religion was marred by futility. God simply stripped away all the falsehoods and exposed Cain and his religion for what they were.

Centuries after this true faith would make Abraham a pilgrim and stranger on the earth. *He waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*
Hebrews 11:10

False religion made Cain a fugitive and a vagabond. He was a lost and cursed man who couldn't find rest on the earth. His life would be a wilderness, meaningless and wasted. Satisfaction would evade him.

His energies would be depleted, his life spoiled. He'd spend his days wandering from God. That is always the fruit of failing to come to God, God's way.

From this time on, Cain would no longer be able to produce the fruit of the ground, the very thing he tried to use to get to God.

And ultimately everybody who tries to earn salvation from God finds that all they can really produce is thorns and thistles.

The only works that God calls good, are those works that God does through us after we're saved as we depend on Him.

God's punishment of Cain is a picture of the ultimate crushing of the head of the serpent, when he will be separated from God forever in the Lake of Fire. Cain was forever driven out from the presence of the Lord.

And that will be the fate of all those who do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ.

II Thessalonians 1:9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.

Talk about sobering words. Jude wrote about those who would go the way of Cain. Cain's story is a horrible one, but what's even worse is that it has become a pattern for so many people who have followed him.

If you are walking in Cain's way, if you've rejected God's way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone listen to God's warning and come to Him while there is time. Reject Cain's way. Come to God by faith, believing that Christ died for you.

Let Abel speak to you, even though he is dead, and follow his example.