

## CAIN AND ABEL

I believe we will profit much by studying the stories of the Bible. In every story I see the Gospel message. In every story I see a practical application. Let's examine one of the oldest Bible stories and let's contemplate what the Lord is telling us. I pray He will open our eyes and heart to Genesis 4:1-16.

### I. Promise Is Desired

Genesis 4:1 introduces the first birth in the Bible. From the context of our Scripture text we see that Eve believes this child is the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15, the famous protoevangelium (the "first Gospel"). *"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."* When Charles Wesley wrote the famous carol "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing," he strategically placed a stanza based on Genesis 3:15. Many modern hymnals omit this stanza, which is sad, since it contains the protoevangelium announcing the reason of Christ's coming to earth:

"Come, Desire of Nations, come, Fix in us Thy humble home.  
Rise the woman's conquering Seed, Bruise in us the serpent's head.  
Adam's likeness now efface, Stamp Thine image in its place,  
Second Adam from above; Reinstatate us in Thy love,  
Hark, the herald angels sing, Glory to the newborn King."

Even as the acorn contains the mighty oak, so also Genesis 3:15 gives us the promised story of redemption through our Lord and Savior. The scholarly English preacher Charles Simeon called this verse "the sum and summary of the whole Bible." We can discern that Eve believed Cain was the fulfillment of that promise for his name means, "gotten, acquisition, possession." Donald Grey Barnhouse said she was saying, "Here he is." So deep in her heart, hope was born.

#### A. Hope for Herself

Can you imagine the guilt that overwhelmed her when she saw the ramifications having willingly initiated the fall? I Timothy 2:13-15a teaches us, *"For Adam was*

*first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing...."*

#### B. Hope for Her Marriage

Sin corrupted everything, including the institution of marriage. Genesis 3:16 says, *"Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."* With all that she must go through, the promise of the Christ-child gives her the assurance she can overcome all difficulties and challenges.

#### C. Hope for Mankind

Even though these words were written long after Christ was born, the truth was already in the "acorn" by Genesis 3 and 4. *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time"* (I Timothy 2:5,6).

## **II. Progeny Are Different**

In Genesis 4:2 we see another brother is born, Abel, which means "vanity or vapor." Already Eve is realizing the temporalness of man and the element of death already working in us. This verse shows us two very different young men. They had:

#### A. Different Desires

One is a shepherd, the other is a farmer. Compare the siblings of the Bible and you will see again and again, all children are different, even in the same family. Here is a good example as found in Genesis 25:27, *"And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents."*

#### B. Different Worldviews

Later we discover the views of Cain and Abel are diametrically opposed to each other. *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"* (Proverbs 14:12).

#### C. Different Eternities

In the New Testament the Bible records, *"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was*

*righteous...*" (Hebrews 11:4a). *"Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one..."* (1 John 3:12a). Jude, verse 11a reveals Cain went his own way, not God's way, *"Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain...."*

### **III. Paths that Duel**

Genesis 4:3 and 4 disclose Cain offered his fruits and vegetables to God while Abel offered the blood of his animals. These are two different paths that are in a duel or at war with one another. One path is:

#### A. A Sacrificial Path

The sacrificial path is the path of Abel. He takes not only a representation of his animals; he takes the "firstlings," the first-born and gives it to God. He doesn't wait to see how the livestock will turn out and then give God seconds; he takes the risk and gives sacrificially to God first. The other path is:

#### B. A Selfish Path

The selfish path is the path of Cain. He witnessed the fact that his mother and father were clothed in the skins of animals. The fruit of the ground could not cover man's nakedness. Fig leaves will not do, blood must be shed before we can be covered. *"...And without shedding of blood is no remission"* (Hebrews 9:22). Cain decided to go his own way, *"...we have turned every one to his own way..."* (Isaiah 53:6). The path we take is not trivial, it is:

#### C. A Significant Path

Webster said in his 1828 dictionary that "significant" means, "Betokening something; standing as a sign of something." It is no little message being given in the stark contrast of offerings given to God by Cain and Abel.

### **IV. Proposition Is Disclosed**

In Genesis 4:5-7 we see God telling Cain to do the right thing and he will be accepted. I marvel at the longsuffering mercy of God that will go above and beyond in attempting to reach us with the Gospel. We observe that God desires:

#### A. A Response that Agrees

*"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"* (Amos 3:3). Instead of coming to an agreement with God, Cain gives:

#### B. A Response that Is Angered

*"For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God"* (James 1:20). Again, God holds out the possibility of peace with Him and asks for:

C. A Response that Is Auspicious

God warns Cain that sin, like a lion was crouching at his door. But if he would reject his selfish path for the sacrificial path he would be accepted before God. If he would just trade off some of his best vegetables for some of Abel's flock, he would rule over sin, rather than sin ruling him.

## **V. Premeditated Death**

Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17 commands: *"Thou shalt not kill."* The Hebrew wording for "kill" bears the unmistakable meaning of killing a human being with premeditated malice, which is murder in the first degree.

A. A Mysterious Encounter

In Genesis 4:8 before Cain took Abel's life, he talked with him. We are not privy to the conversation, but I speculate it was Cain's last chance to do the right thing.

B. A Malicious Decision

In Genesis 4:8 and 9, Cain kills his brother and separates himself from any responsibility. This is the antithesis of repentance.

C. A Mercy Denied

In Genesis 4:10 we see God now withholds mercy and ministers justice.

## **VI. Punishment Delivered**

In Genesis 4:11-16 we witness the punishment given by God to Cain for his deliberate act of taking his own brother's life. We see:

A. A Design Interrupted

*"The first man is of the earth, earthy..."* (I Corinthians 15:47a). Instead of nurturing the life of a man taken from the earth, Cain took the prerogative that belonged to God alone and took a life and returned it to the earth--but not without consequences. We cannot interrupt God's design and be blessed!

B. A Dispute Instituted

Already the earth is under a curse and man must live by the sweat of his face (Genesis 3:19). But Cain is going to have an extra hard struggle because God is putting him at war with the ground that used to be his friend.

### C. A Distance Instilled

Cain is remorseful but not repentant. Remorse comes from the Latin word which means "to bite again"; a morsel is a little bite. Sin does bite the sinner, but the remorseful person Barnhouse says, "will use any kind of opiate to stop the pain."

Cain only thinks of harm that may now come his way, not the crime against the brother he was supposed to love or the hearts of his parents that he broke. His life becomes a commentary on Proverbs 13:15: "...the way of transgressors is hard."

Perhaps the saddest phrase in the story is "*And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD...*" (Genesis 4:16a). The manifested presence of God is what makes heaven paradise and the absence of God is what makes Hell torture.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal flourish at the end.