

What Can We Learn From Genesis?

Cain and Abel – Part 2 of 4

Frank Giudici

Transcribed by Mary Salama, December 2019

I. Background – The Bible Answers Basic Questions

The Cain and Abel story is obviously a continuation of the Adam and Eve story. The Adam and Eve story is an attempt by early writers to show us how things came about, how man got here on earth, and it has many implications, many practical applications of Truth, as I've said. But one of the ways in which the writer attempts to explain things in *all* of these early stories – Adam and Eve, in Cain and Abel, the story of Noah and the flood, the story of the Tower of Babel – is, as I mentioned last week, to answer some basic early questions that might have been asked and *were* asked, not might have been, but in some way were asked by mankind way, way back there.

Once again, remember that what happens in the infancy of an individual is the same thing that happened in the infancy of mankind. Mankind started asking questions about itself, just as that little child does somewhere in its growth and unfoldment starts asking some basic questions.

And one of the basic questions that a young child asks when it begins to ask questions is, “Who am I and where did I come from?” And then we have the very simple story of Adam and Eve that says, “Well God made us and placed us here in the Garden of Eden.” And isn't that a nice answer to, “Where did we come from?”

And then we have the Cain and Abel story that also answers some basic questions that early mankind had to ask somewhere along the line, once again, *just* as a child does in its infancy. Okay, we've got *that* question answered, we might say: “Where did we come from?” God made us and placed us here. And of course last week in the story of Adam and Eve we brought out other ideas that were in that story and other motivations that the writers had for presenting that story, we're going to do the same thing with Cain and Abel tonight.

Well someone else asks, somewhere along the line, “You know, if God made us and placed us here in the Garden of Eden and everything is supposed to be good and perfect, then where did all this *evil* come from?” And we dealt with that last week, where we said the writer of the story of Adam and Eve also said, “Well, evil arose because of man's disobedience to God” – and this is the story of Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. Isn't that a nice, clean-cut, very simple, basic answer? Because we disobeyed God and so evil came about as a result, and last week we expanded on that.

II. Basic Questions in the story of Cain and Abel

Well Cain and Abel too also deals with a basic question, several basic questions, but certainly one can be this ... as we grow up in life and we take a look at all the experiences that we have in life and we see what other people are going through, there can be a tendency somewhere along

the line to ask a question such as this: “You know, if I have brothers and sisters and I’m growing up in the family and we’re all supposed to love one another like *you* say, mom and dad, then why is there dissention in the family? Why can’t I get along with my brother, my sister, my cousin, my aunt, my uncle?” – whatever the case might be. The *basic* question can be something like that: *Why* is there dissention in the family? And so the writers say, “Oh, well that’s very simple. Once upon a time there was Cain and Abel, and here’s the story of Cain and Abel,” which we will tell in just a moment.

Another basic question that might be asked too is this: “I’m taking a look at the world as I grow up and I see that many terrible things are happening; there’s crime that’s running rampant in the world” – and so the basic question that someone asks: “If we’re all children of God, once again, if everything is supposed to be good, then how come we have crime in this world?” And the writers are saying, in effect, “Well, let me tell you the story about Cain and Abel. Here’s where it all started. Because of what happened between them, we now have crime in the world.”

Now don’t take these as final and complete answers, but take them as attempts in a very simple, elemental, and basic way, to answer some basic questions of life. There’s more to the stories and we’re going to be seeing that, but don’t you see that this can have the appeal to the child, and it has an appeal to the child in us?

Somewhere along the line all of this got started, and what these early stories are doing, in part, are tracing the origins of things that the writers were aware of in their times, and that we are aware of today in our time. Where did evil come from? Where did crime come from? How come there’s dissention in a family? And so then these stories are told as an attempt to answer that.

III. The story of Cain and Abel

A. The story

Now let’s get to the story of Cain and Abel, it’s a familiar one. Cain and Abel were the offspring, of course, of Adam and Eve. We saw last week that when Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden, they went out into the world and all these things had happened to them, and it looked like because of their disobedience to God in the Garden of Eden that things were going to be kind of tough for them from now on.

And so out in the world they went and then finally they began to have children! Cain was the firstborn and then along came Abel – the two sons. You’ll notice in the story that Cain was a farmer, right? Abel was a shepherd. Now in the experience of the Hebrew people they were certainly attuned to the idea of farmers and shepherds; this was part of their experience.

Many of them were farmers, and originally when they came out of Israel led by Moses, they in a sense were a nomadic people, they were wandering. And so they were more used to being shepherds and wanderers and they carried their flocks along with them, and even when they finally got settled in the Promised Land, some of them began to settle down and became farmers but some still worked as shepherds.

And so you have these two different occupations, you might say, that the people of that day were very much tuned into. There were other occupations as well, but the farmer and the shepherd were two occupations that they were very used to.

So what do we have here? We have the story as it unfolds, that one day Cain brought some of the offerings of the firstfruits – the firstfruits of his offering to God; the firstfruits of the ground to God, in other words, some of his crops, and then Abel brought some of his. And what were the fruits that Abel was bringing to God? Sheep, lambs – the flock. And the story tells us that God accepted Abel's offerings but He rejected Cain and his offering (Gen 4:5).

So right up to this point, let's just take the story this far. I think most of you are probably familiar with it because later on what happens is Cain gets very angry and upset about the whole thing, and so he takes his brother out into the field one day and he kills his brother Abel, and then the story unfolds from there. But let's just take it right up to this point where both of them are bringing gifts to God, and what do we have here?

B. The Context of the Story

All of these stories in one way or another have their roots in events that took place *way* back in the history of the Hebrew people, and this is one of the events that you have to tune into when you're discussing the story of Cain and Abel.

As I mentioned a few moments ago, when the children of Israel came out of Egypt – when Moses led them out of Egypt and into the Promised Land – they were a nomadic people; basically they were shepherds. When they finally got into the Promised Land, under Joshua, you might remember the story – Moses got them after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, he got them *right* up to the Promised Land, but Moses does not enter the Promised Land; Joshua takes them into the Promised Land.

And when they get in there what do they find? They find other people already occupying the land, and the people who were occupying the land had their own gods, just as the Israelites had their God.

Now when Moses was called to service by God way back there in the 3rd Chapter of Exodus, also at that time the special Hebrew name for God was revealed to Moses – this is in the 3rd Chapter in the Book of Exodus – and the special Hebrew name translates, as far as we can tell, into something like “YaH-Vay.” It was a special Hebrew name for God, it was a sacred name.

And the concept of this God was that this God was the God of everything; the Hebrew God was the Lord of the universe. But when they got into the Promised Land they found that there were farmers there, and what is of interest to the farmer? Good crops, right? And to have good crops what do you have to have? Good weather conditions. You have to have good soil, you have to work the ground, you have to have rain to nourish the crops.

And so when the people came into the Promised Land, this great cultural clash took place between the farmers and the shepherds. And it wasn't just between farmers and shepherds like the old story of the West, you know, the cattle man and the sheep man and all the battling that

they did, it was the battle really between the concepts of two different types of god, because the people in the Promised Land who were all the farmers and were looking to good crops, the god that they worshipped was a god called “Baal” – B-A-A-L, it means, ‘lord of the earth.’ The Baal god was a fertility god. You can read all about this in the early chapters of the Book of Judges and in the Book of Joshua. And when you’re reading many of these things that have to do with this particular period of time, all of this is set in this cultural clash between the Baal god and the Hebrew God, YHWH.

So when the Israelites came into the Promised Land and the people began to settle down – the Israelites became farmers – guess what kind of a god many of them started turning to? The *Baal* god. Why? Because they too had become interested in fertility and good crops.

And of course this became an abomination to the Israelite religious leaders because they said that their God, YHWH, was the God of fertility ... He was the God of everything, very much as we say in Truth: “There is only One Presence and One Power, God, the good, omnipotent.”

Sometimes what we do by giving power to certain things and certain conditions in our lives, we make graven images. And we give so much power to a thought, a negative thought, that we make a god out of it, when in Truth we know there’s only One God, One Presence, and One Power.

This was the same thought that the Jewish religious leaders had also, but their people now becoming farmers were beginning to turn to the Baal god and this became an abomination. And there are many details of Baal there that would really be too much to go into now.

So you see, what you have here is Cain who is the farmer and Abel as the shepherd, right? So all of this is set within the context of that ancient cultural clash between the farmer and the shepherd, because this story of Cain and Abel and *all* these other early stories – Adam and Eve and so forth – while they were probably told sort of around the campfire for *years* and years, if you will, they were told orally as folklore for many, many years, then finally, later on in history, much after the Exodus, they were finally crystalized in writing.

This story that you have here of Cain, in Chapter 4, was probably written down by what scholars call the J-writer, and that would be around 950 B.C., something like that – during the time of David and Solomon; all of this took place much later on. So you see, when you understand that historical context, it’s going to help you to gain some lessons out of it as well. Because what all of this represents – historically now we’re talking about the context of this *ancient* cultural clash between the farmer and the shepherd – and the writers *use* that ancient cultural clash, *use* that context to begin to make certain points today in their story of Cain and Abel.

IV. The Metaphysics of the Story

What it tells us metaphysically, what the practical value for us can be is this: that sometimes within our consciousness we have that same type of a clash, the clash between materiality and spirituality. It has to do with the idea of giving power to outer things and material things, and not giving power to the idea of One Presence and One Power in our lives – God, the good, omnipotent.

A. You Can't Serve Two Masters

What did Jesus have to say about this? He said, **“You cannot serve God and mammon”** (Mt 6:24). You can't serve God and mammon. He said, you can't serve two masters. That gets to be a pretty tough proposition, doesn't it? If you've got two people out there telling you what to do and you're trying to do *exactly* what each of them wants you to do and they're telling you to do something different, it gets pretty rough, doesn't it? And finally you have to go one way or the other.

That's what this story, at least up to this point, represents to us: the clash that sometimes goes on within our *own* consciousness between spirituality and materiality. When sometimes you know that you're doing something other than giving full attention and power to your concept of God, that One Presence and Power in your life, and all of a sudden – and it doesn't mean necessarily that we're giving power to money and material things and putting them before God, it *can* mean that, but it can mean a lot of other things too – that sometimes we place all our faith in certain channels of God's good out there and not in God as the Source of our good.

Let's take somebody with a job and a position. Sure it's rough to lose a job, everybody knows that, but if you get *so* worked up about it, in effect what you're doing is this: You're saying that that job in itself is the *source* of your good, but it *isn't* the source. The Source is God and that job is only *one* channel through which your good can come to you.

And when you start giving power to that job and saying, “Gee, if I lose that, then I've lost everything!” – I know it's rough, I've had that experience in the past and it's rough for the moment, but as long as you center your attention on the Truth that *God* is the Source of all of your good, then another channel will appear, another job will come into the picture, or some other channel through which your good can come to you.

But can you *feel* that pull, that conflict that goes on within your consciousness every once in a while? That's the story of Cain and Abel on a practical level for us.

Abel – it's pretty difficult to come up with a true definition of each of these names. When scholars work with the etymology of words, the root meaning of words, it's not always that simple and clear, but ‘Abel’ pretty much means breath, the idea of life and spirituality. ‘Cain’ means more ‘possession, to acquire, or to buy something.’ And sometimes we have that kind of a clash, once again, within our *own* consciousness, between our tendency to give power to material things and make a *god* out of material things rather than give power to the true God; that there is but One Presence and One Power in our lives.

So in a sense that's what the story is doing, and Jesus picked up on the same thing once again when He said, **“You can't serve God and mammon,”** and **“You can't serve two masters”** (cf. Mt 6:24). That's *one* level of interpretation for this story and it's one way in which we can be helped by it, when we see that very often that same clash takes place within us. What do we do about it? You step back and you work with your basic concept: look to God as the Source of all your good.

B. Responding Instead of Reacting

No matter what has happened to the outer channel, if it seems to have disappeared from your life for the moment, center your attention on the Truth that God is the Source of all of your good, and the job you have or a particular person that's been a part of your life or some *outer* thing that you have seen as a channel of good, if it's no longer there, then there is something else or someone else that will be there. Otherwise what are we doing? We might react something like Cain and get pretty uptight about the whole thing. Of course this story here is carried to what? To the extreme, where Cain goes ahead then and *slays* his brother Abel; this is exactly what happens as the story unfolds.

So let's go ahead with it just a little bit. My eyes just went down here and I looked on this part where it says, **"So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell"** (Gen 4:5), in other words, he *reacted* to it. He *reacted* to the situation instead of doing what? Responding.

I love what I think is the difference between reacting and responding. Maybe one of these days I better look those two words up in the dictionary and see if I'm right on target, but I have a feeling for those two words. When something happens in your life and you react to it, it means that you are giving power to your emotions being out of control, in other words, your emotions are running you and you're not running your emotions. But when you let yourself *respond* to something, it means that you are in *control* of what you're doing and what you're going to do because of that experience.

To react means to give power to your emotions and let your emotions control you, but when you *respond*, can you just feel that difference? You're the one that's in charge and you're going to *choose*, to make the conscious as to exactly how it is that you want to respond to that situation, and always through the Presence and Power of God within you, you can choose your response.

So you have a choice, we all have a choice. When something happens and we find ourselves all of a sudden reacting, responding to it, we find that something is happening within us, and right at that moment you can take dominion of your consciousness and say, "I am not going to react but I choose to respond."

It would appear in our story here that Cain chose to react and not respond; he became angry. In a sense there's nothing wrong with becoming angry, it's a normal human response, it's what we *do* with the anger that counts, and we see what Cain did with his anger? Because he let his emotions run *him* instead of him running his emotions, and we *all* have power within us to take charge of our emotions.

C. Am I My Brother's Keeper?

Well as I said, the story goes on. He is angry and he has taken Abel out into the field and he *kills* him out there, okay? And then finally, as the story goes on, God comes into the picture and He says to him, He says, **"Where is Abel your brother?"** (cf. Gen 4:9). And here now we get into his response – not a reaction. I think that really – *well*, might have been a bit of a reaction here, but I think that he knew what he was doing when he (Cain) asked this question and it's one of the toughest questions that we have in all of our history, in the whole history of mankind. And you know what that question is? God says, **"Where is your brother Abel?"** and how did he

respond? “**Am I my brother’s keeper?**” (Gen 4:9). It’s one of those age-old questions that we’re still trying to work with.

A couple of Sundays ago I talked on the Book of Job at the 11 o’clock service and how that also deals with a very important and challenging question that we are asked in life, *all* the time: “Why do the righteous suffer? Why does this happen to me?” And the writer, or *writers*, whatever is appropriate of the Book of Job, attempt to explain that. And I’m not going to go into that tonight because that’s on the Book of Job, but they offer a number of different explanations, a number of different explanations.

And what you have here with this question, well, there isn’t really a solid answer to it. The question is just sort of left hanging. And this is one of the great questions like that question that we find in Job: “Why do the righteous suffer?”, is one of the great questions and one of the challenging questions that mankind asks.

So how about your answer? Are you your brother’s keeper? Your sister’s keeper? How far are we supposed to go in helping someone else? And I would think that somewhere along the line we all have to come up with some kind of an answer that at least will satisfy us for the moment, because it keeps coming up all the time! You know, where does my responsibility begin and where does my responsibility end?

I don’t claim of course to have a final answer to that, but you know, through my own experience I guess I finally had to evolve something that was important to *me* and that was helpful to me and that I could work with.

And I believe, of course, yes, as I’m sure that you all believe, the answer to that question is, “Yes,” but there is a qualification, and this is the qualification that I attach to it: I am my brother’s keeper to the extent that I really can be; to the extent that I really can help someone else, I feel that I have a spiritual responsibility to do so.

Sometimes with that word ‘responsibility’ we get such a heavy feeling. A ‘responsibility’ need not be a burden, and a responsibility, a true responsibility is *never* a burden because when you see that you have a responsibility toward someone or in a certain experience of life and at the same time you know that if you have a valid responsibility there, that everything that you need to *fulfill* that responsibility is already right there within you, then it doesn’t become a burden.

It isn’t something that you’re “forced” to do against your will; you’ll see that it’s a valid responsibility, as a parent has to raise a child. Without getting into all the details and specifics, or trying to support that idea, or trying to defend it, isn’t it just something that’s natural to us, that a parent has a responsibility to help a child along in life? You know, we don’t have to argue for or against it or what, it’s just something that’s *natural* to us, isn’t it?

Well then if you also know that’s not a burden to a parent, although maybe every once in a while in raising a child it may feel like a burden – things can get kind of heavy every once in a while – but you know that it’s something that is right and good that you have that child, and you also know something else, at least as a student of Truth, that everything that you need to fulfill that

responsibility is given to you, through you, from the Christ within you, then that takes away any sense of burden.

And if the sense of burden begins to come into the picture, if you start feeling a burden, then it means that we *do* need to make some adjustments in maybe the way that we're fulfilling our responsibility. Sometimes we go too far, sometimes people, because of the experience they had as children, are over-responsible, and some are *under*-responsible. Some of us need to learn to be a little more responsible and some need to learn to be *less* responsible.

You know, usually when you're talking about responsibility, I *think* – I'm going to make an assumption and I think it's fairly safe – that when most people think of responsibility they probably – and responsibility being a challenge – they think of people being *irresponsible*. And *sure* that can be a challenge, I don't think I have to speak too much about that. If we act irresponsibly *we* know it and we sort of pay the price because we brought it upon ourselves.

But what you don't hear too much about is *over*-responsibility also being a problem, and *oh* boy, how many people "suffer" from that! Once again, I think as I mentioned ... no, maybe in the talk on Job, I can't remember now, but Ed Rabel's idea on "useless, unnecessary suffering." Whoa, do we put ourselves through a lot of useless, unnecessary suffering.

And sometimes being over-responsible is the same thing, you know, when, "I've *got* to do this," and "It's all up to me," and we carry that sense of responsibility too far. And where did this come from? You weren't *born* that way, that's something that you acquired.

Can't tell you how many times I have heard in talking to people, "Well you know, I was the oldest in the family and my parents depended on me to take care of my brothers and sisters," which was right and *good*, but sometimes the child at a very early age was conditioned to be over-responsible. We don't think in terms of anybody doing something *wrong* and terrible; those were the conditions in the family at that time and something had to be done.

Sometimes there was only one parent in the family and so children at an early age were asked to take on *more* responsibility than maybe they really should be taking on at that time. And what happens is that sense of responsibility carries through in *life*, it carries through, and so you want to be responsible for everything, including the running of the world. You know, you gotta get up in the morning and give the world a shove – you know, with one foot – and get her rolling once again. And we have to stop and remember that even while we're sleeping, that world is doing just fine, you know, doing its turning and so forth.

But can you ... I'm *sure* you can identify and you have a sense of what I'm saying, this thing of being over-responsible. So to *me*, you know, the answer to the question: "Am I my brother's keeper?" – I think, yes; this is what I suggest, but *only* to the extent that I honestly can be.

Sometimes we try to go too far with our responsibility to others and you know what happens? We botch up the whole thing. We try too hard to help somebody else. I always remember that commercial that used to be popular on T.V. some years back, where the daughter is there cooking at the stove and mother is right there behind her. And I can't even remember the product – that's not important, nor the words that led up to this – but I always remember the daughter's

words right there to her mother, kind of exasperated: “Mother, I’d rather do it myself!” you know?

And mother’s, we’re not trying to lay any kind of a trip on you of course, I know you know *that*, but that sense of over-responsibility that mother had, and when we go too far with it, it just botches things up.

Somewhere in one of Emmet Fox’s books, I can’t remember if it’s *The Sermon on the Mount* or one of his other writings, he’s talking about the idea of salvation and what you can do to help another person; it’s along that line. And of course ... it must have been in *The Sermon on the Mount* because one the basic ideas that Emmet Fox always used to bring out was this, that if you can have a high enough realization, a sufficient enough realization of the Presence and Power of God in a certain situation, then as you just *know* the Presence and Power of God in that situation, and if you can raise yourself in consciousness to a high enough realization, then that situation will resolve itself.

If you see a problem out there, rather than try to attack it directly as we often do, he says, if you can sort of stand there for the moment and gain a high enough realization of the Presence and Power of God at work in that situation, in other words just see God right *in* the situation, not separate and apart from it, he says, “*Then*, that situation will work itself out, sometimes almost miraculously it seems to resolve itself.”

Sometimes the way it works out is that you are also led to do something, to take some kind of outer action. And the example that he uses is that if you’re walking along a river bank and all of a sudden you see someone out in the river or the creek or whatever it is, and the person appears to be in trouble and is drowning, alright, you stand there for a moment. And he says, if you have a *high* enough realization of the Presence and Power of God *right* there in that apparent drowning situation, then something will happen, in effect, okay, and that person will be saved.

Sometimes what happens is that just because you have gained a high enough realization, in some way we touch consciousness with that person and in some way that person is able to gain greater ... you haven’t *given* them the greater strength, but I think you have established a condition for an *environment* that makes it easier for that person to turn within *himself* and draw greater strength out from within himself, and then maybe he’s able to paddle to shore.

You know, it’s a simple idea. If you’re in a tough spot and you think you’re there all alone, it can be pretty tough sometimes to work through it, but if you feel somebody is standing by you supporting you, even though they’re not doing anything directly, they’re just standing by and supporting you, then what happens? I don’t think that they’re *giving* you strength. In some way they establish a condition that’s more conducive to *you* turning *within* yourself and pulling out greater strength.

Maybe I’m saying it in a complicated way. Very simply, when you know you’re going through a situation alone and you don’t have any outer help, it can be tough, but when you know that somebody is standing by helping you, then don’t you draw on greater strength from within yourself? So Fox is saying, if you have a high enough, sufficient enough realization, then that

might happen just because you're there knowing the Truth for that person, that person maybe can paddle to shore, or maybe salvation will come about in some other way.

Maybe you'll get the idea to jump in and swim out and rescue that person, or, if you can't swim then what you might do is look around and all of a sudden there's a log, a piece of wood, there's a life preserver or a tire, and you can throw it in and help that person. The exact method, the exact way in which salvation comes about for that person we're never quite sure of, all that you know is that it *will* come about.

Well let's go back to this "responsibility" idea. I said that sometimes we act over-responsibly in being our brother's keeper. If I see someone – to use the same example that's in the river – and that person is drowning, and then I feel I have to do something and all of a sudden I react and I don't respond and I *rush* out there and I jump in the water and I start paddling away, well, you know all things are possible with God (cf. Mt 19:26), but suddenly I may realize that I can't swim and I'm not supposed to be out here, you know?

Once again it's something like Peter, when Jesus called Peter to walk out on the water, he was doing fine until what? As long as he kept his attention centered on the Christ he was able to walk on the water, as soon as he became aware of these outer circumstances when he saw the wind and the waves, plunk, down went Peter. As soon as he gave his attention to something other than God within him, you know, then he no longer was accomplishing the so-called "impossible." Well it's the same thing here, if you try to jump out and go after that person and then suddenly you realize you can't swim, well you're both in a pickle – you've acted over-responsibly.

I've gone kind of a long way around to bring out an illustration, but I think that it really speaks to the point: sometimes with our sense of responsibility we go *too* far in helping somebody else and then we both of us get into a jam as a result of it, and I think that in some way we can all identify with that. We try too hard and the other person can react against that, the other person doesn't want that much help; there are *all* different kinds of circumstances. So there is a *degree*, there is an extent to which we can truly be our brother's helper, and I guess it's being sensitive to that and it's not always easy to know how far to go, right? But when you work with it you'll see that, yes, you can fulfill your responsibility to the extent necessary.

Once again, if we're talking about *not* taking responsibility, well that speaks for itself. I don't know if I even have to give any examples of that because I think that very often we're pretty sensitive to whenever it is that we're acting irresponsibly. Not something to be condemned and not something to be negatively criticized but once again, just something to be *understood*.

Usually when a person will not take responsibility for something, what's the bottom line? What does it really mean? Oh that person can *act* out in all kinds of ways, like a young little baby or child acting irresponsibly, but what it means is that that person is really in fear, that person is afraid that he or she can't do it, whatever it is there before them to do, and when you understand that then I guess you can be helpful to someone else.

I think that when someone acts irresponsibly they're acting out of fear. No matter what they might do, but down deep what that individual is saying is, "I'm afraid of this responsibility. I'm

afraid I won't be good enough to do it." Yeah, we know the *Truth* and the Truth is that we *are* good enough to do it, we *do* have the Power, but sometimes because we don't let ourselves work with that, well, we'll act irresponsibly.

Gee, the question was, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Once again, an age-old question and not an easy one to deal with. I'd like to suggest this once again as a possible answer: Yeah, we *are* our brother's keeper, but only to the extent that you honestly feel you can be, and sometimes that's not an easy thing to gauge.

Sometimes we may really be copping out or we may think we're copping out and we're not, but I think as we work with this idea as you go through the experiences of life, you'll find that overall you'll be fulfilling your sense of responsibility to other people. But it's an important one and it keeps coming up all over the place: "How far am I supposed to go in this? Should I be doing more? Should I be doing less?" And as long as we stay sensitive and tuned-in to our own indwelling Guidance, over the long-haul, in the long run you'll find that you are acting responsibly. Sometimes we go too far and sometimes we don't go far enough.

Well that's another lesson that's involved in the story of Cain and Abel, maybe it's the most challenging one that we find here in the whole story. Let's go on a bit, just take a few more moments, there are a few other – well not a few, but there are *many* other lessons.

D. God's Love and Protection

Well what happens here of course when God finds out that Cain has killed his brother Abel? He says, "Well this is it, now you're going to be **"cursed from the ground"** (Gen 4:11), He says, "and off you go." And Cain is then kicked out, something like Adam and Eve, and He says that, **"From now on the ground shall no longer yield to you with strength and you shall be a fugitive and a wanderer"** (Gen 4:11-12), and so he's kicked out.

And Cain says to God, he says, **"My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, Thou hast driven me this day from the ground and from Thy face I shall be hidden, and I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on earth, and whoever finds me will slay me"** (Gen 4:13-14). Now this also has its origins in some old tribal customs that go way back, and one of the customs was this: the idea of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

In the old days, and this is still prevalent you know in some societies today, if somebody injures a member of your family, then by this old tribal custom someone is obligated to *avenge* that injury. If someone killed someone in your family, in the old tribal custom, the old vendetta idea, you are *obliged* to kill someone else. You see, Cain had killed someone in his family – his brother Abel, so he's afraid that somebody else is going to do the same thing to him.

And you might ask at this point, "But how can that be? There were only three people on earth," if you take this literally – we haven't even touched on that, have we? Just supposed to be Adam and Eve. Abel has been killed and now there's Cain, then who is going to do him in? Well once again the historical details – the writer was not trying to tell you *history*, he wasn't writing for the purposes of history.

The writers are going back and taking many ancient customs and stories that were told and trying to *build* up something and answer some basic questions. All of this goes on and unfolds, and then they explain how *this* came about and *that* came about. In a sense, that was not important to the writer and we're going to see that again here in just a moment, but this idea of the vendetta was prevalent.

Alright, so what happens? God does something here, and God places a mark on Cain. Many of the tribes in those days had special marks and it meant maybe that one tribe was more fierce or ferocious than another. It goes back *even* before the time of the Israelites and the Hebrew people; it goes way, way back into the dark recesses of antiquity, for all practical purposes. And so the writers were aware of this and they pick up on that idea and use it as a part in the story. Now what helpful, practical lesson is involved there? And I think it's a *beautiful* lesson.

You know, when you look at it, on the surface it would appear that God is very angry with Cain – you know this was the concept of God in those days – but then God places a mark on Cain and this is a mark of protection, a mark of protection.

“Then the Lord said to him, ‘Not so, if anyone slays Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold’” – not just an eye for an eye but seven times over – **“And the Lord put a mark on Cain lest any who came upon him should kill him”** (Gen 4:15). In other words, what is this telling us among a number of other lessons? No matter how much we may foul up in life, no matter how far off the path we may get, the protecting Presence and Power and the love of God is always there.

In a sense we might see that the love of God in the story of Cain and Abel is portrayed in kind of a primitive fashion, right? Kind of a primitive fashion but it's still the same idea. “In a primitive fashion” I mean, because first of all God says, “You're kicked out” – God would never do anything like that but it was the understanding that the people had – and then God changes His mind and puts a mark on him. God isn't the One who changes His or Her Mind. Who does the mind-changing? You and me.

In this sense here, God is made in the image and likeness of *man*; it's *man* who does this and then changes his mind and does that, okay? It's man who loves one minute and then *withholds* love the next minute. So once again here, this is kind of a primitive example you might say of the love of God, but nevertheless it's still there.

No matter how much we may stray from the path, we always carry with us the protecting Presence and Power of the love of God, why? Because we're the children of God, made in the image and after the likeness of God. I like to say that God has no problem with that – you know, God's love for us is constant. Who are the ones who have the problem with that? You and I. Once in a while if we feel we've made a mistake or messed up in life, one of the first things that we do is to begin to condemn ourselves.

If you'll listen to some of the lessons I've given you probably hear that idea coming through all the time. I talk about self-condemnation so much because it's the *one* thing that can push us down and hold us down more than anything else, lack of forgiveness for oneself.

Sure, condemnation of other people gets you in trouble, lack of forgiveness towards others gets you in trouble, that's true, but you know, very often, people when they begin to work with this idea, they find it easier to forgive people out there, they find it easier to stop condemning people out there, but where they *really* have difficulty is applying that to themselves – we *all* do, in one way or another.

There is no need for self-condemnation. God's love for you is constant, you always have this protecting mark on you; it's always with you no matter how far you may stray from the path. That's something that you and I need to know because every once in a while we start kicking ourselves because of a mistake we made. So you've made a mistake, okay, so accept it and learn the lesson from it and start moving on. But, working with that self-image that we have that needs improvement, we start giving power to self-condemnation.

But just remember, Cain here, because he killed his brother, can we say that maybe that represents straying from the path to the extreme? The taking of a life, you know, that's pretty heavy, and yet what happened? God still puts His protecting mark on Cain, something that we can all relate to.

Well, just a couple of other things here. Cain then goes out – this is the part that I made reference to in sort of a veiled way just a few moments ago – it says, **“And the Lord put a mark on Cain lest any who came upon him kill him. Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod, east of Eden”** (Gen 4:15-16). ‘Nod’ is a word that means ‘wandering,’ in other words, he went forth and he became a wanderer.

E. Stories Explain the Origins of *Some* Things

And in the very *next* line it says, **“Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch”** (Gen 4:17). Well, if they were the only three people, then where did his wife come from? You know, if you take it literally then how do you explain that? I'm sure that somebody who is a literalist with a Bible will have some kind of an answer, but it was never *meant* to be taken literally. These stories were written here to answer some basic questions and to explain the origins of things, not everything, but the origins of some of the things that were important to people of that day.

Okay, so he took his wife and Cain has children, it goes on down – Enoch is born and then Lamech. And you go a little bit further on here and I'll give you an example now of how these stories now explain the origins of things, in this little genealogy of the descendants of Cain that are given here, in verse 20 it says, **“Adah bore Jabal, and Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock”** (cf. Gen 4:20), so you have here in this story the origin of the tent-dwellers, because in the history of the Hebrew people they lived in tents for many, many years, and that idea was something that they were very much used to.

So in this way the writer explains, in a very simple and elemental way, where all the tent-dwellers came from ... and have cattle also.

“His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe” (Gen 4:21) – musical instruments. So here we can trace all the way back and you see the origin

of where all the musicians came from! Do we have any musicians here this evening? Well here's your great granddaddy and all the rest, okay? All the way back here following up from Cain and his story – Jubal, who plays the lyre and the pipe.

And then Zillah, one more here, **“Zillah also bore Tubal-cain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron”** (Gen 4:22). I guess the blacksmith was important to the Hebrew people – the forger of bronze and iron. And so once again in this simple, basic, elemental way, in the story of Cain and Abel you see where all the blacksmiths came from, and then the story unfolds from there.

F. Divine Compensation

Well the last point we'll make and then we'll close right there, is this, in verse 25, let me read this: **“And Adam knew his wife again”** – now we jump back to Adam and Eve, okay? – **“and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, ‘God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain slew him.’”**

And then to Seth also a son was born and we go on down the line again with the genealogy. But you see then, Adam and Eve have another son and that's Seth, and once again, the meaning of the name Seth will vary, scholars aren't too sure. It might have something to do with this whole idea here of, “God has appointed for me another child instead of Abel,” it may have carried the connotation of compensation– they were *compensated* for the loss of their son, that's one of the possibilities. But what practical value does it have to us again? And this is the great practical value, it kind of goes back to this idea of when we mess up in life, when we make mistakes.

G. Spirit Is Eternal

Seth metaphysically can also, like Abel, represent the spiritual aspect of life, and the spiritual always rises, you can't kill it out. Put this in quotes: “We can destroy the physical, we can kill out the physical, but you can never kill out the spiritual because the spiritual is eternal.” The spiritual always has been, is now, and always shall be, and Seth represents that.

So no matter, once again, how we may mess up in life, no matter how many mistakes we make, we are still spiritual beings. No matter what we try to do to ourselves in an outer way – some people do all kinds of crazy things to the body, sometimes very severe. Well yes, we can injure the body, there's no question, but there's no way that you can kill out the spiritual because you are an eternal child of God.

The Spirit within you is truly that which continues on. The body is simply a channel, is simply an instrument through which the Spirit within us expresses, and when you get a hold of that idea you can do an *awful* lot with it, because we get into that concept that you are *more* than you appear to be.

Remember how Jesus said, **“Don't judge by appearances but judge with righteous judgement”** (cf. Jn 7:24)? Well, part of the righteous judgement is knowing that you are *more* than your outer body, you are more than this collection of chemicals that represents your body. This is not to put down the body or demean the body because the body that we form – if we

believe in Truth all the way – the body that we form, friends, is the understanding of our spiritual aspect. The body that we form is formed through our understanding of our own spiritual selves, and all of us I guess in one way or another feel that we have some work to do along that line, but hey, no matter what it is or what it isn't, it's you and a very integral part of you.

The body is not something to be cast aside and gotten rid of, the body is something that is to be spiritualized; I think we talked about that last week. It's the process that Charles Fillmore was working with of regeneration – spiritualizing the body through the spiritualizing of our thoughts, as you purify your consciousness.

And let me put it this way to be very simple: As you get rid of all the negative thoughts and think just positive thoughts, then something also happens to the body, because the Law of Mind-Action says that thoughts held in mind produce in the outer after their kind, and part of the outer is your physical body.

And as you purify your thoughts you also purify your body so that the body continues to change, and years from now it will not look like what it looks today. Sometimes we say, "Thank God to that!" you know? For now, you gotta accept yourself right where you are. You see, the body is the instrument through which the soul and the Spirit expresses but it's an integral part of our whole experience in life, and as you bless it and work with it, okay, it's going to purify itself because we are purifying our consciousness.

But once again coming back to Seth, and this is a good place to close right here with this section, is that, know that no matter what we do in the outer, to ourselves or to conditions out there, you can never kill out the spiritual. The spiritual always rises and that's a beautiful thought.

V. Conclusion

Well those are just some of the ideas that you can take with one short story, really, the story of Cain and Abel. And I hope that some of the ideas maybe have been of help to you this evening but more than that, I hope that in discussing Cain and Abel it sparked *you* to go ahead and get in touch with the story at a little *deeper* level of consciousness and pull out the interpretations that are right for you.

Whenever you're studying Bible interpretation, don't look for "*the*" interpretation, don't look for the one interpretation that's going to end it all for you. That's the whole secret, you know? There are a lot of interpretations and the one that is "*the*" interpretation is the one that is right for you right at that very moment, the one that your consciousness reads into it.