

Bible Basics Conference 2012: “Genesis 1-12”

Part 6

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Place	Catfort
Date	11.11.2012
Duration	00:30:31
Online version	https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/hc004/bible-basics-conference-2012-genesis-1-12

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[00:00:00] Let's read Genesis chapter 4, Genesis chapter 4, And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived, and Bear came and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering. But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, [00:01:06] shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. And Cain talked with Abel his brother, and it came to pass when they were in the field that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him. And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not. Am I my brother's keeper? And he said, Why, what hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength. A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is [00:02:01] greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth, and from thy face shall I be hid. And I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth. And it shall come to pass that everyone that findeth me shall slay me. And the Lord said unto him, Therefore, whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden. And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived, and bare Enoch. And he built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son Enoch. And Adam knew his wife again, and she bare a son, and called his name Seth. For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew. And to Seth, to him also there was born a son, [00:03:07] and he called his name Enos. Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.

As I'm sure all of the other speakers have found, there's quite a lot in each of these chapters to cover in a short period of time, and I'm sure that all of us have appreciated that from the sessions that

we've had already. The slides that I've put together don't do justice to the whole chapter, and even the time available doesn't do justice to the slides that I have put together. But the things that they cover are set out on this slide that we have before us. We start off with a look at the people who are involved in the events of this chapter, and then we consider the offerings that are brought by Cain and Abel, [00:04:01] and then Cain's murder of Abel, the consequences of that next, and then Cain's response to all of that. But then we see God's intervention and man's proper response to that. As I said, there won't be time to go through all of the points that are on the slide, but what I hope to focus on are the things that we see in this chapter illustrating wider truths, the details of which are set out elsewhere in the Bible, and also some of the things that we have in this chapter that are types of other things presented in the Bible. Now, when we come to the people involved in the chapter, I think our little white books that we have list four people, Eve, Cain, Abel, and Seth. I've actually added a few people or a couple to my list. The first one, and we have him mentioned at the very beginning of the chapter, is Adam. I think it is important [00:05:06] to see the role, if you like, that Adam plays in the things that take place in this chapter, because really he is, in one sense, the very reason why all of these things come to pass. Through Adam, or in Adam, we see the truths that we have presented elsewhere in the Bible illustrated. In particular, what we have in Romans chapter 5, verse 12, by one man sin entered into the world, and verse 19, by the disobedience of the one man, the many have been constituted sinners. Adam and his sin is the reason why all of the things that we read about in this chapter came to pass, because his sin and the consequences, insofar as he was concerned, [00:06:02] he was constituted a sinner, and that was passed on to his descendants, Cain and Abel. Now we also have Eve mentioned in this chapter, and just to follow on from some of the things that Paul was speaking about, we see in the first verse that, like Adam, Eve has some belief in God's promise in chapter 3, because she describes Cain as a man with Jehovah. It would seem that Eve had this idea in her head that Cain was the promised seed, the one that God had mentioned in the previous chapter. Perhaps just by way of an aside, it is interesting to note that Adam and Eve, and Satan as well, believed literally in the promise that God had made in chapter 3. We've [00:07:01] already had the importance of a literal or natural interpretation of scripture brought before us, and that's perhaps emphasised, or we see a good example of it in the fact that Adam and Eve, and also Satan, believed God's promises literally. Now Eve had some belief in that promise, but sadly she trusted in the flesh to accomplish what God had said would come to pass. She says, I have acquired a man with Jehovah. Sadly, she doesn't realise that any effort of any man, and I'm using that term to cover both men and women, is never going to be successful, never going to be pleasing to God, never going to bring about the blessings which God has promised. She doesn't realise that that which is born of flesh remains flesh. Now, we also have Cain, of course, in this chapter. Perhaps worth noting, though, that to [00:08:12] all outward appearances, Cain was a good man. We don't read that he was caught up in any great moral corruption. Rather, everything about him looked good. He was certainly a man of natural abilities and natural strength. He was a husbandman, as it says in verse two, or a farmer, we may say today. So he must have been diligent and hardworking because, again, as we saw in chapter three, the ground was cursed and God had said to Adam that with toil he would eat of the ground. So Cain must have been a hard worker. He also did have a knowledge of God, and I do say a knowledge deliberately because there is this interaction between Cain and God in the chapter. [00:09:04] And perhaps worth noting that in the way that that's recorded, God is described as Jehovah, the name that's associated with his relationship with man. So there was some knowledge on Cain's part of God. But notwithstanding all of these outward things, when it comes to the inner man, that's where we see Cain's deficiency. His worship of God was only ceremonial. It was only outward. It was only about going through a ritual and doing something significantly. He had no relationship with God through faith, and as has just been alluded to, he was in reality the child of Satan. We have a great contrast in Abel, of course, but [00:10:01] before going into that, I just want to

reiterate a point that I've already made, and that is that Abel was a sinner just as much as Cain. By nature and by birth, there was no difference between the two of them. In God's sight, again, as they stood, by birth and by nature, there was no difference between the two of them. Abel was born in iniquity, to adopt David's words in Psalm 51, just as much as Cain was. But there is this difference on the part of Abel. He realised that his life was but transitory, and that's the figurative meaning of his name. The things of this life, the things that he could do in this life, were meaningless. He knew what was important, and that was to know God through faith, as it says in Hebrews 11, verse 4. Now, we don't know [00:11:04] the basis of Abel's faith, and precisely what had been said to him, but it's clear that he had learned that one can only stand before God through the death of another. No doubt he would have heard God's promise about the deliverer who would crush the head of the serpent, but in so doing, would have his heel bruised. No doubt he would also have heard about the animals who were killed, so that Adam and Eve could be clothed. We know that God is a rewarder of those who seek him out. So, perhaps just on the basis of those two things, there was enough for Abel to come to this realisation that he could only stand before God through the death of another. Now, in addition [00:12:01] to his faith, Abel knew what God respected, and we see that in the offerings, which we'll come to in a moment, and he devoted his life to what was associated with what gave God pleasure. He was a shepherd, as it says in verse 2, and he was a shepherd at a time when men did not kill and eat animals for food. That didn't come about until Noah's time. So, I think we can draw the conclusion that he was a shepherd, tending lambs so that there would be something to be offered to God. And Abel, not Adam, interestingly, is the first one that we have in the line of faith in Hebrews chapter 11. Now, the other person that I've added as being active in this chapter, even though he's not mentioned, is Satan. No doubt he was the real player behind the scenes, doing what he could to thwart God's plans for his own glory and for man's blessing. And again, [00:13:08] we see evidence of John chapter 8 verse 44, Satan being a murderer from the beginning in this chapter. Now, we come to the offerings, and if we look at things from an outward perspective, Cain's offering may not seem so bad. It was something that he'd worked to prepare. It was the fruit of the ground, and it was something that belonged to him. So, in some sense, he was making a sacrifice to God. But again, outward appearance doesn't really mean very much.

In substance, what he was offering was a cursed offering, because the ground itself was cursed, as we have in chapter 3 verse 17. So, the offering, the fruit of the ground, was also cursed. [00:14:01] But perhaps more importantly than that, the principle underlying Cain's offering was flawed, and because it was an offering based on his own strength, something that he had done, had done, something that he was seeking to bring to God so that he could give God pleasure. But something that the Bible makes consistently clear is the things that we do cannot bring any pleasure to God. No flesh can glory in his presence. Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and many other verses. It's perhaps worth noting that it says in verse 5 that God didn't even look upon Cain's offering, and the reason for that being that it wasn't what God had said he wanted, and it wasn't what God wanted, and so God couldn't even look upon it at all. It's perhaps also important to note that this is the first sin of fallen man. When we read Genesis [00:15:09] chapter 4, we probably focus on Cain's murder of Abel, which was certainly a very terrible thing, but this act of false worship in God's sight, I think it would be right to say, must have been even more terrible. It wasn't a mistake on Cain's part. He should have known better, and there are serious warnings to people who proceed down this path of merely getting involved in religion or ceremonial things, and Cain is mentioned in connection with the warnings that we have in this regard in Jude's epistle, verse 11, and Cain is a picture of religious [00:16:06] Israel, but perhaps he's also a picture of those in Christendom who have a mere form of godliness, and perhaps at this point it is just worth pausing and again emphasising the seriousness of what we're talking about, because I think it is very easy to adopt a mere form of godliness, even very easy amongst the

meetings that most of us are associated with, very easy to grow up amongst the meetings, very easy to go along to them, and perhaps even to start breaking bread, perhaps even to give out a hymn or pray from time to time, relatively easy to do these things without there being any reality in the heart, and I think perhaps it is just worth us reflecting on that. If there's one here who has been coming along to the meetings, perhaps for a very long [00:17:05] time, but is like Cain, is only doing these things out of show, then he should take the time to get right with God. Again we have a contrast between Cain and Abel in terms of the offerings. Cain brings an offering of the flock, which is the pattern that God had established in chapter 3, and as it says again in Hebrews chapter 11 verse 4, he does this by faith, and God looks upon Abel, it says, but it's Abel and his offering, and I think that is the key part, that Abel is accepted as righteous, again the way it's described in Hebrews chapter 11, by virtue not of himself or of what he had done per se, but by virtue of the offering which spoke of the Lord Jesus Christ [00:18:04] and his work upon the cross, and similarly we are accepted before God in the beloved, as it says in Ephesians chapter 1, not by virtue of anything that we have done, and this is the first offering of faith that we have in the Bible. Now the details of the murder, we probably know very well, I don't want to spend too much time on them, but I think it is just worth noticing the bottom point here, that really the reason why Cain proceeded to murder his brother Abel, is because Abel had spoken to his conscience, that's really what first John chapter 3 verse 12 brings out, it was because Abel's offering had been accepted, that Cain proceeded [00:19:01] to murder him. Cain couldn't stand the thought that there being someone else that was accepted by God when he was not. This is of course the first murder that we have recorded in the Bible, and notwithstanding my earlier comments, we can't overlook the seriousness of this. CHM, in his commentary on Genesis, makes a remark to the following effect, that if there was ever a time when man could have proved himself worthy to stand in God's presence, if there was ever a time when man could have done something to bring him back into the state that he was before the fall, this was it, the very beginning of his history. But what happens at this time? Well man just simply proves what he is, that he is wholly sinful, that as the Lord [00:20:05] Jesus says, out of the heart that proceeds murders amongst other things, and that's true of every human heart, not just of Cain's, but all of us by birth and by nature had that sinful heart, that only sinful things proceeded about. It's not a case of the world starting off maybe only a little bit bad and gradually getting worse, or the same being true of mankind. Mankind and this world have been ruined from the beginning.

Perhaps more importantly than just the mere historical details of this chapter, we see in a picture of Cain's murder of Abel, the Jews' conduct in putting the Lord Jesus to death. Cain killed his brother and the Lord Jesus was rejected by his own and then put to death by his own. [00:21:03] Cain doesn't kill his brother in the house or nearby, but kills his brother in the field. Similarly, the Jews took the Lord Jesus away from the city, away from where their ordinary life was, away from where their religious life was, and they took him outside the city to be crucified. Both Abel and the Lord Jesus came to an unnatural end and they were both cut off out of the land of the living. There are many other similarities as well, but of course there is this great difference in terms of what the two events speak of. God, in speaking to Cain, talks about Abel's blood crying out from the ground. If we compare that language to the language of Revelation chapter 6, we'd see that Abel's blood was crying out for vengeance, [00:22:02] whereas the blood of the Lord Jesus, as it says in Hebrews chapter 12, speaks of much better things. We have come to the blood speaking better things, probably speaking there what that's referring to is probably the new covenant and the forgiveness of sins that we enjoy through his blood. We now come to the consequences. Again, we'll need to move through this fairly quickly, but worth noting perhaps the counterpart to the question that we had in chapter 3 that Paul mentioned. The question there was, where are you? Here the question is, what have you done? The one having to do with state and the other having to do with conduct, and as a

result of these things and many other things, every man, every man and woman, boy and girl is deserving of God's judgment. But the consequences, again, over and above the historical [00:23:07] details where Cain goes out from God's presence, they are a picture to us of things concerning the Jews. Cain complains against God about the punishment that God has given him, even though it was what he deserved. Similarly, the Jews in a future day when they are suffering during the tribulation will complain against God. We have an example of that in Psalm 44. They will do this even though they made that terrible statement, let this blood be upon us and upon our children. They on the one hand were willing to accept the consequence of their actions, but in a future day will blame God when this comes to pass. Just as Cain was marked so that he would be separate from the rest of the world, the Jews are distinguishable from the rest of the world. [00:24:08] It's remarkable how distinguishable they are and have been over so many centuries. But over the same lengthy period of time, they have been fugitives on this earth. Even now, Israel is not really Israel. The Jews don't really enjoy their land or the land that God has promised them. What we see represented in Cain being a wanderer and a fugitive. In a future day, just as God promised to take vengeance on any who attacked Cain, God will take vengeance on those who have attacked his earthly people. We'll have to skip over the details of Cain's response, but perhaps worth noting that it [00:25:02] culminates in him going to a place away from God and away from things that would remind him of God and making himself comfortable, building a city, making a name for himself because he names the city after his son. In that city, agriculture and industry flourish and music is developed as well. Things which aren't necessarily wrong in and of themselves. There's nothing wrong with cities per se, just as well for those of us who are city people. God has given a special place to one city on this earth and that is Jerusalem. Similarly, music is not bad in and of itself. It was prescribed as part of worship of God in the Old Testament. Of course, it has no place in New Testament worship or the reliance upon it doesn't. [00:26:04] There are grave dangers associated with these things, particularly for the people of the world because all of these things can occupy an unbeliever and keep their mind off the fact that this earth is cursed and that they will come under God's judgment, but they can be very real dangers for believers as well. Cain's line culminates in Tubal Cain, whose name means son of Cain. The end of this line, we could say, is just like the beginning. We might ask, what happens next? Does this mean that Satan, through his activity in this chapter, has been victorious over God? Has he destroyed the seed of the woman? Has he prevented God's [00:27:03] promises of a deliverer from coming to pass? Of course, the answer is no because God is never defeated, not by Satan and not even by Satan's greatest weapon, that is death. He will always keep his promises and every time Satan comes in to attempt to thwart what he wants to do, every time man fails, that is just another opportunity for God to act in grace. We see that here when he appoints Eve another seed, Seth. This time, Eve seems to recognise that true blessing comes solely as a result of God's grace. She says, this time God has appointed me another seed. Perhaps in this further seed for Eve after the death of Abel, we see in Seth a picture of [00:28:09] Christ raised from the dead. It's important as we consider this chapter to take note of where it finishes. It finishes with this lovely statement, then people began to call on the name of Jehovah. This statement is associated with the way it's recorded in the text with the birth of Seth's son and the meaning of the name that is given to him is weakness. That's an essential principle for us to grasp, that great blessing, true blessing, comes as a result of realising one's weakness. In some ways that's the way to salvation, recognising and perhaps to adopt the [00:29:03] words of the prodigal son, that we are not worthy to be called God's son, to realise that there is nothing good in us and that we need the way of salvation and that God has opened to us. It's also the way to blessing in the Christian life as well. We need to come to a realisation of the truth of what we have at the end of Romans chapter 7, a wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me out of this body of death, to realise that there's nothing in me that can do any good and to realise that it all comes from God through Jesus Christ our Lord. It's also the secret to true worship and the

acceptable worship of God, not the ceremonial worship of Cain, but worship by faith, to be those who don't trust in the flesh and don't try to bring anything of ourselves or do anything ourselves [00:30:07] to please God, but to be those who worship not by ceremony but by the Spirit of God and to be those who boast not in our works but in Christ Jesus. you