

THE FIRST MURDER

Genesis 4:6-16

INTRODUCTION

- Cain and Abel started out life in very similar circumstances, and as they grew, there was probably very little difference between them.
- But there was a difference, perhaps imperceptible at first, but which became more and more evident as they grew into adulthood
- Abel set his compass to follow God and righteousness and he stayed true to it until his dying day
- But Cain's course diverged from Abel's, to follow Satan and unrighteousness
- Where did it begin?
- Was it an evil thought that came into his heart, and instead of repenting of it he allowed it to settle there and take root?
- Sin begins in the heart before it manifests itself in actions (Proverbs 4:23)
- Family relationship breakdowns are rampant in the world today – dysfunctional relationships between spouses, parents and children, and between siblings
- There are countless books written on the subject, there is a whole industry of counselling services to help solve these relationship problems
- But most of these experts fail to grasp the root of the problem, and therefore fail to give the right solution
- Here in Genesis 4 we are shown the starting point for all human relationship problems – a breakdown in a person's relationship with God
- Notice the progression in Cain's failure:

- ✓ He failed in his theology – his thinking and understanding of God
- ✓ He failed in his worship – shown by his proud, self-righteous offering
- ✓ He failed in his ethics – his sense of right and wrong in his treatment of others
- It wasn't Cain's self-esteem or childhood trauma that led him to kill his brother, it was his broken fellowship with God
- This is why the Gospel is the only true solution to man's relationship problems – the Gospel first brings reconciliation between man and God, then it brings reconciliation between man and man
- Last week we studied the account of Cain and Abel bringing their offerings before the Lord
 - ✓ Abel obediently brought a sacrifice of blood, in faith and humble repentance
 - ✓ Cain disobediently brought a bloodless offering, without faith, in pride and self-righteousness
- God received Abel's offering but rejected Cain's, and this marks a pivotal moment where Cain's deplorable spiritual state had now been exposed
- There are only two ways that Cain can go from here:
 - ✓ Humbly confess his sin and repent of it, and be reconciled to God
 - ✓ Harden his heart and set his face against God

I. CAIN'S STUBBORN REFUSAL OF GOD (6-7)

A. His anger

1. He was "very wroth" – literally, "it burned with Cain exceedingly"
2. His anger burned against God in resentment

3. His anger burned against Abel in envy
- B. God's appeal to Cain
1. As God had questioned Adam after his sin, so God questions Cain, probing him to self-examination and repentance
 2. Why was Cain angry and his countenance fallen? It was God who ought to have been angry with Cain for his impudence, and yet God shows mercy to him
 3. "If thou doest well" – that is, bring the required offering
 4. "Shalt not thou be accepted" – accepted with God by virtue of the blood
 - a. This is the essence of the Gospel call – come to God through Christ, the only offering he approves, and you will be accepted with God and be blessed here and hereafter
 - b. ddd
 5. "If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door" – sin is likened to a vicious beast, waiting at the door, and if opened, sin enters and gains control of its victim (1 Peter 5:8; Ephesians 4:27)
 6. "And unto thee shall be his desire" – had Cain chosen the right way, he might have retained the right of firstborn and been the line through which the Messiah would come
 7. *"God hates nothing that he has made, denies his favour to none but those who have forfeited it, and is an enemy to none but those who by sin have made him their enemy: so that if we come short of acceptance with him we must thank ourselves, the fault is wholly our own; if we had done our duty, we should not have missed of his mercy. This will justify God in the destruction of sinners, and will aggravate their ruin; there is not a condemned sinner in hell, but, if he had done well, as he might have done, had been a glorious saint in heaven"* (Matthew Henry)
 8. No word of response is recorded from Cain, indicating his defiant rejection of God's appeal to him

II. CAIN'S SLAYING OF RIGHTEOUS ABEL (8)

A. Abel's counsel to Cain

1. A conversation took place between the brothers, though we are not told the details of it
2. We know that Abel was a prophet (Luke 11:50-51) and a prophet's role is to speak forth God's word to others
3. It is likely that Abel's message was essentially the same as God's message in v.7 – repent, do what is right and be reconciled to God
4. Abel's reproof shows his faithfulness both to God and to his brother (Proverbs 27:6)

B. The murder of Abel

1. Cain waited until they were in the field – out of view and earshot of any witnesses
2. The reason Cain slew Abel is given in 1 John 3:12 – “Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.” (1 John 3:12)
3. Cain was of that wicked one – Satan, bearing the traits of his spiritual father (John 8:44)
 - a. Proud
 - b. Liar
 - c. Murderer
 - d. Hateful of the righteous
4. Cain's works were evil, and his brother's righteous
 - a. Cain's offering was not an honest mistake but a deliberate rejection of God's prescribed offering
 - b. Abel's righteous works were like a light that exposed Cain's evil

- c. Instead of receiving reproof from the light, Cain sought to extinguish it by killing its source
5. It is noteworthy that Abel is called Cain's "brother" six times throughout the passage, highlighting the heinousness of the crime – his own brother, born from the same womb, raised in the same home
6. In this act Cain has established himself at the head of the ungodly line, the serpent's seed (Genesis 3:15)
7. The "way of Cain" (Jude 11) describes the spirit that drives the ungodly in their hatred of the righteous, seeking to destroy them by any means they can – sin, error, persecution

III. CAIN'S SENTENCE OF RETRIBUTION FROM GOD (9-16)

A. God's examination of Cain (9-10)

1. As God confronted Adam after his sin, so he confronts Cain – God does not overlook sin, it must be dealt with
2. Though no man saw Cain's crime, God saw it, and the righteous blood of Abel cried out unto God
3. Cain lied directly to God, saying he didn't know where his brother was
4. Cain mocked Abel even after murdering him by his snide reference to "keeper"

B. God's curse upon Cain (11-12)

1. When Adam and Eve sinned, God did not curse them but cursed the creation generally
2. But Cain is directly cursed by God, showing the heinousness of his crime
3. The curse of a fruitless ground
 - a. Formerly Cain was a successful horticulturalist, but now Cain would be unable to grow crops

- b. The ground which was once his source of pride was now cursed because of the righteous blood he spilt on it
 - 4. The curse of being a fugitive and vagabond
 - a. No longer able to sustain himself from the ground, he must go abroad seeking any means of survival
 - b. This involves his separation from his family and all those ties that he had once enjoyed
- C. God's marking of Cain (13-15)
 - 1. Cain is sorrowful for the punishment he must suffer
 - a. The loss of his ability to farm
 - b. The removal from God's presence
 - c. His existence as a fugitive and vagabond
 - d. His fear of being murdered himself
 - 2. Note that Cain's sorrow was not for his sin, or for the loss of his brother, but for the consequences of his sin
 - 3. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: **but the sorrow of the world worketh death.**" (2 Corinthians 7:10)
 - 4. Cain ought to have responded as David did in the 51st Psalm, but he did the opposite, refusing to acknowledge his sin
 - 5. God marked Cain with some sort of visible mark
 - a. This mark would identify Cain so that others would know not to harm him, lest they receive a sevenfold vengeance from God
 - b. This was an act of God's mercy – even after of Cain's wickedness and his impenitence, God makes this provision for him – even in wrath God remembers mercy (Habakkuk 3:2)

- c. This was an act of judgment and warning – for the rest of his life, Cain would be a visible warning to all that sin will be punished by God
 - d. *“God’s intention was clearly to impress the sanctity of human life and the enormity of the sin of murder upon mankind.”*
(Leupold)
- D. God’s expelling of Cain (16)
- 1. The visible presence of God seems to have been located at the entrance of the Garden of Eden, but now Cain would no longer be able to approach it
 - 2. Note the difference between Adam and Eve’s expulsion – they were driven out (3:24), seemingly unwillingly, but Cain simply “went out”, as a rebellious child glad to forsake his father’s presence
 - 3. “Nod” means “wandering”, so it may not necessarily be a specific location, but simply the beginnings of his wanderings

CONCLUSION

- 1. It is hard to fathom the great wickedness of Cain in his actions
- 2. Yet greater than this is God’s mercy shown towards him, continually calling him to repentance
- 3. “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” (Romans 2:4)
- 4. The riches of God’s goodness, forbearance and longsuffering should lead sinners to repentance
- 5. Yet most, like Cain, despise these and choose the path of sin and destruction
- 6. How have you responded to God’s goodness towards you? In repentance or in despising?
- 7. What did Abel do to provoke his brother to murder him?

- ✓ Obeyed God
- ✓ Worshipped God
- ✓ Believed God
- ✓ Sacrificed unto God
- ✓ Preached the word of God

8. What can you expect to happen, when as a Christian you obey, worship, believe God, sacrifice unto him and preach his word?
9. We could spend all day giving examples of this happening to God's saints all through the Bible
10. The serpent's seed hates and persecutes the righteous seed even unto this day
11. "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;" (Philippians 1:29)
12. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. (2 Timothy 3:12)
13. The spirit of Cain says, "Am I my brother's keeper?", with no regard for the welfare or suffering of those around him
14. The spirit of God says, "I am my brother's keeper", and seeks to help those in need, especially among the people of God
15. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1:27)
16. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." (1 John 3:16-18)