

***Lesson: Genesis 4:1-16: Are You Your Brother’s Keeper?***

Genesis 4 offers us the consequences of Adam and Eve’s actions in unexpected ways. God punished them with death but it came through murder and not natural causes. After the fall, sin enticed Cain to kill his brother, Abel. This bloodshed would forever alter the course of human history. It challenges us to look deep within to recognize when we choose not to care for each other we inch closer to the prospect of destroying one another.

**Biblical Takeaways (4:1-16)**

1. The Birth and Roles of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1-2)
  - a. Cain in Heb. is *qayin*. It literally means “possession.” He is named as such to give credit to God for his birth.
  - b. Abel in Heb. is the word *habel or hebel*. The word literally means “breath” or “vapor.” The word will also show up throughout the Bible to signify something transitory, temporary, here today but gone tomorrow. It is used all throughout the book of Ecclesiastes when it says “vanity of vanities.”
  - c. Both take on roles initially given to Adam in tilling soil and keeping animals (Gen 2).
2. Cain and Abel’s Offerings: What Counts with God (4:3-5)
  - a. “In the process of time” Cain and Abel were to give offerings based on their jobs.
  - b. Cain’s offering was a **mere** offering from the ground. There was nothing special about Cain’s offering.
  - c. Abel’s offering was of the firstborn of the flock and its fat parts. This is important because he gave God his best offering. The firstborn signified priority, the best of strength. And the fat was the most delicate part of the animal. God will later claim the fat for himself in the sacrificial system (Lev 3:16).
  - d. The lack of respect and acceptance from God for Cain’s offering was due to his lack of regard for God. By not giving him his best, Cain showed disrespect to God.
3. The Problem of Anger and Murder (4:5b-7): Cain became angry with his brother out of jealousy. Abel was accepted with God while he was not. His anger opened the door for something much worse. Sin was lying at the door and overtook him while he was supposed to defeat sin. When we fall out with God, we fall out with each other.
4. You are your Brother’s Keeper (4:8-10)
  - a. Cain killed Abel out of his anger. The sin in the garden rapidly progressed in severity leading to the death of the second born.
  - b. God asked Cain where is Abel (Gen 3:9). Again, not because he did not know but because this was an indictment of Cain. Cain’s flippant response showed how far he had fallen. It was his job as the older brother to take care of Abel but instead he killed him.
  - c. Yet, though Abel was dead, his blood still cried to God. He was precious in the sight of God both living and dead.
5. God’s love for Loveless People (4:11-16): Cain’s fugitive action mandated that he be banished. His only job stopped producing. God hid his face from him which was the worst punishment of all. God placed a mark on him (not the color of his skin) so that others (see Gen 5:4) will not kill him, to stop the cycle of violence.