

Cain and His Crime



SABBATH—APRIL 9



All these births and deaths show us how the promises of God in Genesis 3 start to happen just as He says they will.

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 4:1, 2; Genesis 4:1–5; Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 3:12; Genesis 4:9–16; Genesis 4:17–24.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘You know that if you do what is right, I will accept you. But if you don’t, sin is ready to attack you. That sin will want to control you, but you must control it’ ” (Genesis 4:7, ERV).

WHAT DO WE READ ABOUT IN GENESIS 4? We read mostly about people being born and then dying. All these births and deaths show us how the promises of God in Genesis 3 start to happen just as He says they will. If you compare Genesis 3 with Genesis 4, you will see many of the same ideas and words. Both chapters talk about sin (Genesis 3:6–8; compare with Genesis 4:8). Both chapters talk about curses from the ground (Genesis 3:17; compare with Genesis 4:11). We also read about people who are forced to leave their homes (Genesis 3:24; compare with Genesis 4:12, 16).

After Adam leaves Eden, he becomes a father. The birth of Cain fills Adam with hope. Eve believes Cain is the promised Savior (Genesis 3:15).

Then we learn about the awful crime of Cain. Later, we read about the crime of Lamech. We also see how the lives of humans grow shorter. We read about how evil fills the earth, too. All these things are part of the curse that God announced in Genesis 3.

Yes, many bad things happen in Genesis 4. But God does not forget His promises to humans.

CAIN AND ABEL (Genesis 4:1, 2)

Read Genesis 4:1, 2. What do we learn from these verses about the births of these two brothers?

What do we first read about after God sends Adam and Eve away from Eden? Adam and Eve have a son. Eve announces, “ ‘I have gotten the man that the LORD promised’ ” (Genesis 4:1, GW). Who is this promised Man? He is the Savior who will save humans from sin (Genesis 3:15). The words written as “the LORD,” in Genesis 4:1, are connected closely to the words “a man.” So, what Eve is really saying is, “I have gotten a man, yes, the LORD Himself.” The International Standard Version shows us this Bible truth: “ ‘I have given birth to a male child—the LORD’ ” (Genesis 4:1, ISV).

Eve shows us by her words that she remembers the promise of God in Genesis 3:15. Eve believes she has given birth to her Savior, the Lord: “God tells Adam and Eve about the future Savior. When Adam and Eve first learn about the promise, they expect God to send the Savior right away. So, Adam and Eve are so happy when they have a baby boy. They hope their son will be the promised Savior.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 31, adapted.

The name “Cain” comes from the Hebrew word “qanah.” In the Hebrew language, “qanah” means “to get.” “Qanah” shows us that Adam and Eve believed they got something precious and powerful from God. The name “Abel” in the Hebrew language is “Hebel.” “Hebel” can be written in English as a “puff of air” (Psalm 62:9, ERV) or “breath” (Psalm 144:4, Nlrv). “Hebel” shows us something that we cannot hold on to or something that is not worth much. King Solomon uses this same word “hebel” again and again to show us something that is “a waste of time” (Ecclesiastes 1:2, ERV), is “no use,” (Ecclesiastes 1:2, NLV), and does not have “any meaning” (Ecclesiastes 1:2, Nlrv). We do not want to make any wrong guesses about why Adam and Eve named their second son Abel. At the same time, the names show us that Adam and Eve believe that Cain, and not his brother, is the promised Savior.

What things in life are “hebel”? That is, what things in this life are a waste of time? Why is the answer to this question so important for us to know?



“Qanah” shows us that Adam and Eve believed they got something precious and powerful from God.

THE TWO OFFERINGS (Genesis 4:1–5)

For sure, Cain and Abel are very different from each other, as their names show us. We see how different they are in the jobs they do. “Abel became a shepherd, and Cain became a farmer” (Genesis 4:2, ERV). As a farmer, Cain needed a lot of strength to plant his crops. As a shepherd, Abel showed that he had a tender and loving heart for his flock.

Cain grew fruit. Abel took care of sheep. The jobs of these two brothers help us understand why they bring different gifts to God. These gifts also show us the different feelings in the heart of each brother. The gift of Cain shows us that he works hard to get the fruit he grows. Abel is careful to keep the sheep God gives him.

Why does God accept the offering from Abel and reject the offering from Cain? For the answer, read Genesis 4:1–5 and Hebrews 11:4.

“God cannot forgive sin without an offering of blood. Cain and Abel must show their faith in the blood of Jesus. Jesus will pay the price for their sins in the future. So, Cain and Abel must give God an offering from their flocks. They must bring God the sheep that were born first. Also, God commanded Cain and Abel to bring Him a thank offering. This offering must be the first ripe fruit from their crops.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 71, adapted.

Abel obeyed God. Abel brought both the plant and animal gifts that God asked for. But Cain did not. Cain brought only “some of the food that he grew from the ground” (Genesis 4:3, 4, ERV). Cain did not obey God. This story shows us two different teachings about how we are saved. The gift of Abel shows us that we are saved by the mercy of God. The gift of Cain shows us the false teaching that we can save ourselves by our own good behavior.

The gifts from Cain and Abel are word pictures that show us deep Bible truths. But we must remember that the gifts do not have any worth on their own. They show us the God who takes care of our personal needs and saves us.

Read Micah 6:7 and Isaiah 1:11. What important rule do you see in these verses? How can we show this rule in our lives and in our worship?



Cain grew fruit. Abel took care of sheep.

THE CRIME (Genesis 4:3–8)

In Genesis 4:3–8, we read the sad story about Cain and Abel. Why does Cain kill his brother? How does this crime happen? Read also 1 John 3:12 for the answer.

God does not accept Cain or his gift. “So Cain became very angry, and his face was sad” (Genesis 4:5, NIV). Cain is mad at both God and Abel. Cain gets mad at God for not accepting his gift. Cain feels that God is not fair.

Cain is mad at Abel and feels jealous. Why is Cain jealous? Because God blesses Abel. God accepts Abel’s offering. But God does not bless Cain. God does not accept Cain’s food offering. So, Cain gets upset.

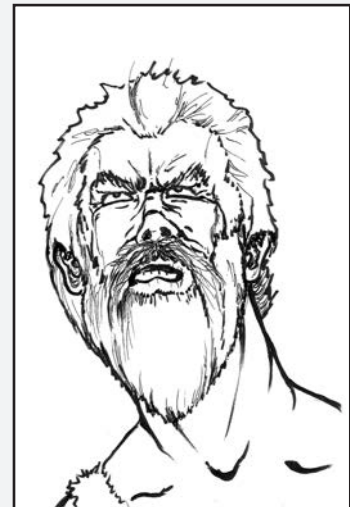
God asks Cain questions (Genesis 4:6). Do you see that God doesn’t accuse Cain? Does God ask Cain questions because He doesn’t know the answers? Of course, not! God wants Cain to look inside his heart and understand the reasons for his evil feelings. God wants Cain to confess. As we see from this story, the Lord always tries to save us, even when we fail Him. After God asks Cain questions, God gives Cain some advice.

First, God tells Cain to “do what is right” (Genesis 4:7, ERV). God wants Cain to change his behavior. God wants Cain to turn away from sin and the evil feelings in his heart. God promises to forgive Cain and accept him if he does the right thing. But Cain will be accepted only if he obeys God and not the evil wishes in his own heart.

God also warns Cain about what will happen to him if he does not change his behavior. “But if you don’t, sin is ready to attack you” (Genesis 4:7, ERV). God shows Cain that the real reason for his problem is the sin deep inside his heart. Again, God shows Cain that he must change.

Second, God tells Cain that he needs self-control. If Cain does not control himself, sin will attack him: “Sin will want to control you, but you must control it” (Genesis 4:7, ERV). So, Cain must control his thoughts and feelings. James also warns us not to let sin control our hearts and minds: “You are tempted [when you feel a wish to do wrong] by the evil things you want. Your own desire [thoughts, feelings, and wishes] leads you away and traps you” (James 1:14, ERV). But we have hope. Jesus promises us forgiveness. He will help us win the war against the sin in our hearts, too (1 Corinthians 10:13).

What does Cain’s sad story show us about how God made us free and never will force us to obey Him?



God wants Cain to look inside his heart and understand the reasons for his evil feelings.

GOD PUNISHES CAIN (Genesis 4:9–16)

Read Genesis 4:9–16. God asks Cain, “ ‘Where is your brother Abel?’ ” (Genesis 4:9, ERV). Why does God ask Cain this question? Why does Cain’s sin cause him to become a wanderer who always travels from “ ‘place to place on the earth’ ” (Genesis 4:12, NLV)?

God asks Cain a question that helps us remember the question that God asked Adam after he sinned: “ ‘Where are you?’ ” (Genesis 3:9, ERV). This question helps us see that Adam’s sin and Cain’s sin are much the same. We also see that Cain’s sin happens because of Adam’s sin.

But Cain is different from Adam in many ways. Cain refuses to feel sorry for his sin. What is more, Cain, too, lies to God. Adam did not do that. Sure, Adam blamed Eve. But Adam did not lie to God about what he did wrong. Cain not only lies to God. Cain also refuses to respect God. God does not waste any time at all doing His work as Judge. God asks Cain a third question, “ ‘What have you done?’ ” (Genesis 4:10, NIV). God does not wait for an answer. God shows Cain that He knows everything. God says to Cain, “ ‘You killed your brother and the ground opened up to take his blood from your hands. Now his blood is shouting to me from the ground’ ” (Genesis 4:10, ERV). Of course, blood does not shout. This word picture helps us to see that God knows about the crime. He also will punish Cain for it.



Cain is different from Adam in many ways. Cain refuses to feel sorry for his sin.

Cain says to God, “ ‘I will be hidden from Your face’ ” (Genesis 4:14, NLV). What does this verse show us?

“Hidden from Your face” is a word picture. It shows us the punishment that Cain will get. Cain will no longer “ ‘be near you [God] or have a home!’ ” (Genesis 4:14, ERV). Cain gets this punishment because he killed Abel. Now God will no longer be near him. So, Cain is afraid that someone will kill him. “Then the LORD put a mark [sign] on Cain to show that no one should kill him” (Genesis 4:15, ERV). What was this “mark”? We do not really know. Whatever this mark was, it shows us that God gives Cain mercy.

What is “hidden” from the face of God? Nothing, right? God sees everything. At the same time, we can choose to turn away from Him, the same as Cain. What is the only way that we, as sinners, can stay with God?

HUMANS BECOME MORE AND MORE EVIL (Genesis 4:17–24)

Read about Cain and his future children in Genesis 4:17–24. How does the crime of Cain cause evil and sin to grow worse on the earth?

Lamech is from Cain's family line. Lamech kills a man, the same as Cain does. Then Lamech compares his crime with the crime of Cain. We learn important Bible truths about the way sin works when we compare these two crimes. Cain does not talk about his crime. But Lamech brags about his crime. Lamech makes a song about his sin (Genesis 4:23, 24), too. Cain asks God to show him mercy. But Lamech does not ask God for any mercy. God promises to pay back seven times anyone who hurts Cain. But Lamech brags that God will pay back 77 times anyone who hurts him (Genesis 4:24, Nlrv).

Let us compare Cain and Lamech some more. Cain has one wife (Genesis 4:17). But Lamech is the first man to marry more than one wife (Genesis 4:19). Lamech and his sins show us that the children of Cain grow more and more evil.

But humans continue to have hope. “Adam slept with his wife again. She gave birth to a son and named him Seth. She said, ‘God has given me another child. He will take the place of Abel, because Cain killed him’ ” (Genesis 4:25, Nlrv). The name “Seth” comes from the Hebrew word “**’ashet.**” This Hebrew word can be written as “ ‘I will make’ ” (Genesis 3:15, ERV). So, the name “Seth” shows us that God “made” another son to replace Abel. When God says “ ‘I will make’ ” in Genesis 3:15, He also shows us the future work that the Savior will do. So, we see that the name “Seth” is a promise. It shows us that the Savior will come from the family line of Seth (Genesis 5:3).

In Genesis 6, we read about the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” (Genesis 6:2, Nlrv). The “sons of God” show us the children from the family line of Seth. They are named the “sons of God” to show us that God chooses them to show His love and be His people (Genesis 5:1, 4). But the “daughters of men” (Genesis 6:2) show us people who do not follow God. Sad to say, the “sons of God” married the “daughters of men” (Genesis 6:2). These marriages show us that humans start to turn away from God.

Read Genesis 6:1–5. These verses are a powerful warning against sin. Why must we do all that we can with the help of God to get rid of the sin in our lives?



She [Eve] gave birth to a son and named him Seth.



Enoch spent time with God every day. This friendship between Enoch and God was so special.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: The Bible says that “Enoch walked with God” (Genesis 5:22, 24). This word picture shows us that Enoch had a close, personal friendship with God. Enoch spent time with God every day. This friendship between Enoch and God was so special. That is why “God took him” (Genesis 5:24, ERV). This verse does not support the idea that Enoch died and went to heaven. Noah walked with God (Genesis 6:9, NLV), too, right? But Noah died the same as any other human, including Adam and Methuselah. Ellen G. White writes about Enoch: “Enoch was a preacher. His sermons were about the forgiveness and mercy of God. Enoch told people the things that God showed him. Many people who respected God went to Enoch to learn Bible truth. Enoch prayed for these people, too. Enoch also worked in public. He shared the messages from God with everyone who wanted to hear what he had to say. Enoch not only helped the people from the family line of Seth. Enoch also went to the land of Cain. Cain ran away to this country after he left God. Enoch told the people there about the wonderful visions that God gave him. ‘Look, the Lord is coming with thousands and thousands of his holy angels to judge everyone. He will punish all those [people] who are against him for all the evil they have done in their lack [not showing enough] of respect for him. Yes, the Lord will punish all these sinners who don’t honor him. He will punish them for all the evil things they have said against him.’” ’ Jude 1:14, 15, [ERV].”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 86, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Why did Cain kill his brother? Maybe we have not killed anyone, but we have been jealous. How can we stop feeling jealous?
- ② The people who lived before the Flood lived for a very long time (Genesis 5). Compare their long lives to the lives of the men who lived after the Flood. The men after the Flood lived much shorter lives. Modern science says that humans keep getting better and better. How does the change from longer to shorter lives in the Bible show us that these modern ideas from science are false?