

## Cain and Abel | Genesis 4

*from the series, Worldview Matters: Studies in Genesis 1-11*

**MAIN IDEA: Humans are born broken into a broken world.**

Genesis 4 gives us a snapshot of what life was like between the fall and the flood, the only human record of this period. It helps to explain one of the foundational questions asked by any worldview: what's wrong with the world? It does so through two lenses—an up-close view of the working of sin in the life of one family, and also a broader view of the legacy of sin in the world.

### 1. Arrogance in the son (v. 1-7)

Marriage was instituted in chapter 2 of Genesis—therefore, it is pre-fall, and it is also pre-political. It is part of the creation mandate. Marriage makes family and families make society. Therefore, problems with society can be traced back to the family and ultimately to problems with marriage.

We see problems in the family first played out in the lives of Cain and Abel, the first two humans born into the world. Practicing what their parents must have taught them, they bring sacrifices to God—Cain from his work farming the ground, and Abel from the firstborn of the animals he keeps. While there is not necessarily anything about the content of Cain's offering that causes God to reject it, it is likely the attitude with which he brings it—not in a spirit of worship, offering the very best he had, as is the case with Abel.

Cain's reaction is telling. He doesn't become sad at the rejection of this offering—he becomes angry. This indicates a case of idolatry in his life. It is also following a pattern already set. Just as Adam blamed Eve and even God when called out for his sin, Cain also strikes out at Abel when his sin is called out.

### 2. Murder in the family (v. 8-16)

God's question, "Where is your brother?" echoes the question he asks in Genesis 3 of Adam and Eve: "Where are you?" In both cases, God knows the answer already. The question Cain asks, "Am I my brother's keeper?" reveals a callous audacity.

The punishment Cain faces in being sent out east of Eden is, in a sense, what he thought he wanted all along: to be left alone by God. Actually sentenced, Cain acknowledges, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." To be left alone by God is a picture of the reality of hell.

### **3. Corruption in the generations (v. 17-24)**

This passage shows the legacy of corruption that will be carried forward in Cain's descendants. Cursed with wandering, he can only begin the building of a city, leaving the rest of its construction to the son for whom the city is named. Two generations later, sin has taken root. Cain's descendent Lamech is a polygamist who dominates his wives and brags about killing a young man. Murder is still part of the family, and instead of repentance, we see only escalation and hardness of heart.

### **4. Second chances and restoration (v. 25-26)**

Meanwhile, Adam and Eve have to begin again. A third son is born, Seth, from whom a godly line will descend, leading, eventually to the birth of Jesus. No one will thwart the plans of God. We begin with murder and end with revival.

Genesis 4 is answered by Hebrews 12. Abel's blood cries out from the ground. It cries for justice. It cries out that there is something wrong with the world. The blood of Christ, a better blood, cries out mercy. It cries out that he is the way the world is made right.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**1. What kind of idolatry has Cain committed himself to, and how it is connected to his arrogance and anger?**

**2. How is Cain's banishment a picture of hell?**

**3. How is Jesus not only the better Adam, but also the better Abel? How do we understand the story of Cain and Abel through Genesis 3:15 and also the gospel narratives of the New Testament?**



**COATS BAPTIST**  
C H U R C H