Cain and Abel
Genesis 4:1-16

These verses give us the account of Cain and Abel. It is a story that is so well known that many people who never read the Bible know that Cain killed Abel. We even say that those who are misbehaving are “Raining Cain.”

As we look at this passage of scripture, I want us to see:

I. The Conception 4:1-2

God had said to Adam and Eve, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth.” (1:28) The incentive to have children was enhanced by the promise of 3:15, that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. Through Eve, or the woman, would come the Messiah. Adam and Eve have been barred from Eden's garden and now are located somewhere East of Eden.

4:1 says that Eve conceived and bore a son, Cain.

-All parents remember what it was like to wait for the birth of their first child. What hopes and dreams are wrapped up in that little baby who is your first born. I'm sure Adam and Eve had big dreams for Cain.

-Eve's pregnancy was the first to take place on earth and must have been a source of joyous wonder for the couple. Like millions of her daughters to follow, Eve likely placed Adam's hand on her tummy so he could feel the stirring of life. Perhaps he even listened in awe to the heartbeat within. But instead of fulfilling their dreams, the first baby broke their hearts and left a trail of blood and tears in his wake.

When Cain was born, Eve hoped that he was the Christ. The name “Cain” means, “I have gotten or acquired a man from the Lord.” Eve would have been a cold-blooded atheist if she had believed anything else. Her exclamation demonstrates her saving faith in the promise of a coming redeemer. But she was wrong.

Cain's name reminds us that all life comes from God.

Eve bore a second son, Abel. “Abel” means “breath” and it is translated “vanity” at least 38 times in Ecclesiastes. His name signified a lack of permanence or meaning and alluded unwittingly to his life being cut short. His life will be brief.

As his sons grew older, Adam put them to work in the fields; and it became evident over the years that each boy had his own interest and skills. Cain became a farmer and Abel became a shepherd.

II. The Consecration 4:3-7
We don't know how old these boys are, but they are old enough to have their own work professions. Both were honorable and needed professions. Cain became a farmer and Abel became a shepherd.

This is not the first time that the brothers came to worship God. No doubt Adam and Eve had worshiped with their children. They had been to an altar and witnessed their own parents worshiping the Lord. God taught Adam and Eve the proper way to worship and why they were to offer a blood sacrifice. Even as God clothed Adam and Eve with the animal skins, He taught them about sacrifices and the shed blood, and they would have passed this truth on to their children. For all of his faults, Cain was no atheist. He came to worship.

Both brothers came to worship. God accepted one brother's worship and rejected the other. Why? It does matter how we worship and what we bring before the Lord. God is God and He is worthy of our worship. He also has a right to tell us what He will accept from us and what He will not accept. We must worship God His way and not the way that we want to worship Him.

Abel's offering was accepted. Why?

1. Abel came before God in faith – Hebrews 11:4 – Cain didn't. Abel believed God and offered the best he had; Cain lacked faith and apparently just went through the motions. Notice that Genesis 4:4 says that God looked with favor on Abel and his offering. The order is crucial: first the man, then the offering. Note 4:5 He did not look with respect upon Cain and his offering. Again, the order is crucial.

God always looks to the heart first and foremost. When He looked at Abel's heart, He found faith there, and it was faith God rewarded. Cain's absence of faith guaranteed that his offering would be rejected.

Sacrifice is acceptable to God only if it is offered in an acceptable spirit. Where there is no faith, even the finest offering cannot make up the difference.

2. Abel offered a blood sacrifice. “Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin” (Heb. 9:22). Moses makes it plain that Able offered the best, the fat portions from the firstborn of his flock. It was the healthiest, plumpest and of the choicest portions. Able brought the best to God. Are you?

Cain offered of the fruit of the ground. You can't get blood out of a turnip or any other fruit. Cain's worship was unaccepted.

“Nothing can from sin atone; Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Naught of good that I have done, Nothing but the blood of Jesus.”

Cain's anger and countenance was a dead giveaway to his sinful attitude (4:5). Cain could have
taken God's divine disapproval of his offering as the gracious communication that it was and humbly asked for God's forgiveness, promising never again to fall to such sin. But he did not.

God gently responded to Cain's anger – 4:6-7
-The questions are rhetorical. God knows the answer. God asks simply to force Cain to face his sin. Cain was so angry at Abel that he couldn't face his own personal failure. God's offer is genuine. If Cain would do right, and offer the right sacrifice in the right spirit, he too would be accepted. The door was open for both brothers, but it must be entered by faith.

The phrase, “sin is crouching at your door”, pictures sin as a lion waiting to pounce on Cain and destroy him. What started as sibling jealously led to anger. If Cain is not careful, sin will overcome him and will master him. He is on the brink of destruction and God warns him so he can go another 40 direction. There is a battle for his soul, and right now sin has the upper hand. But there is still time to change. What will Cain do? Will he realize his danger and turn from his anger or will it destroy him? The answer is quick in coming.

III. The Crime – 4:8

Cain rejected God's wisdom to do what was right so he could be accepted; he refused to repent, the crouching sin pounced and turned him into a killer.

Cain lures his brother to a field. How did Cain approach Abel? As a murderer? No, as a brother; “Let's go to the field.” It's the language of brothers. Abel trusted his brother and went with him. Do you see Cain's strategy? The murder was premeditated. His voice was the voice of a brother; his heart was the heart of a murderer.

There was a surprise attack upon Abel. Maybe it was done with a club or with Abel's sacrificial knife. There was certainly blood. After the first blow, maybe a cry of surprise, the question “Why?”, the fear, the shout for help, but there was none, the awful pain, the increasing darkness as the blows continue, and then, death. It started with the suggestion, “Let's go out together,” and it ends with murder.
-The first murder was murder in the first degree. It was not a beating that went too far. It was not an accident. It was not self-defense. It was not a sudden flare-up of temper. It was not retaliation. It was all planned carefully. It was deliberate, premeditated murder.

Why? Because Cain hated Abel? Yes, but also no. It was also out of hatred for God. He wanted to remove his competition and he wanted to get even with God. The only way to “hurt” God was to kill the man whose offering He accepted.
-The majority of murders are committed within the family. How easy it is to hurt those we love. No one can make us angry like members of our own family. The meanest things we say are said to those closest to us. We often show kindness to people we hardly know while we are treating our family as if they were the scum of the earth.
-Think of it. One minute you are making an offering to God; the next you are murdering your
own flesh and blood. There is a little Cain in all of us and a lot of Cain in most of us.

Remember that God Himself had spoken to Cain personally. Isa. 1:18 The Lord had spoken to him passionately, clearly, lovingly, and personally, and still he went out from that meeting and killed his brother.

IV. The Confrontation – 4:9-10

After this dastardly murder, God, in His mercy, didn't confront Cain with a sword of judgment, but with words. The Lord spoke to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” God wants to talk to Cain about what he has done. It's the last thing Cain wants to talk about.
-Notice that God was immediately on the spot, just as he had been with Adam and Eve after the fall. When God challenged Adam, Adam told the truth, if not the whole truth. But Cain told an outright lie. “Where is your brother?” “I don't know.”
-We all know where Abel was, and Cain knew where he was, and God knew where he was. It wasn't information God was seeking, it was convictions and confession. Abel was lying dead in a field.

There is a total denial of responsibility. Cain lies to God and then he denies that it should matter.

-Then he made a callous, flippant remark. “Am I my brother's keeper?” Cain's flippant, indifferent reference to his dead brother revealed a heart hardened in its depravity.

“Where is your brother?” “I don't know.” He plead ignorance. Don't say, “I don't know” to God. We all know far more than we are prepared to acknowledge.

“What have you done?” (V. 10) God is working again for conviction and confession.
-Let me say here that one son is dead and the other is a murderer, so the seed of the serpent is quickly striking at the seed of the woman, trying to cut off the seed that would crush his head.

God says, “Cain, you can't deceive me. You can't hide anything from me. The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.” This is a figure of speech to indicate that Abel's death was well known to God.
-Abel's blood was crying out, “Vindicate me.”

V. The Curse - 4:11-12

1. Cain was put under God's curse – 4:11

2. The ground was cursed for Cain's sake.

Cain was a farmer whose one vocation was to produce crops, but the ground was under a curse. Cain would continue to work the ground, but it will no longer yield its fruit to him. Instead, the ground he works will produce weeds and thorns and the heavens will withhold their rain.
-Cain faced an appalling future of barrenness, pain, despair, frustration, and finally, death – as do all men who defy God.
3. Cain would be a fugitive – 4:12, 14

Cain would be on the run all his life, fearful that someone would seek revenge for Abel's death and try to kill him. All his life he was looking over his shoulder. He would live in constant fear.

4. Cain would be a vagabond – 4:12

He would be a wander, moving from place to place, drifting from place to place, with no fixed place to live.

5. Cain was hidden from God's presence – 4:14

Cain would have no Lord to turn to. There was no coming to the Lord.

VI. The Callousness – 4:13

Notice the selfishness of Cain. It's all about Cain and his fears. “I...me...my...me.” The man who killed his brother cares only for himself. He doesn't express even the tiniest twinge of remorse, contrition, or repentance. If he feels bad about what happened, he hides it well. His only concern is that someone will try to kill him.

VII. The Compassion – 4:15

God promises protection amid punishment. No one will be able to touch Cain without facing seven-fold vengeance from the Lord. Whatever the mark was, it guaranteed Cain a long life. -This is both a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing in that no one will kill him. It is a curse in that he will now live a long, restless, unfulfilled life. His life ended like “The Man Without a Country.”

This was the judgment Cain received. Was it not just? It perfectly fit Cain's guilt for taking away the life of his kid brother. It was a perfect judgment, righteous in its every detail, lasting his entire life. The Judge of all the earth does right, and He will do right when He judges you and me.

The blood of Abel spoke to God. There is another's blood that speaks to God. It is also the blood of a murdered Man, but one utterly innocent, wrongly condemned by men, one without spot or blemish; It is the blood of “Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel,”

Doesn't the death of Jesus speak to you? If you were to see your child covered in blood, wouldn't that sight cry out to you? Never did any Father love his Son as God loved Jesus, and one day He saw Jesus' blood running from hands and feet and side. He was the Lamb of God, laying down His life and taking away the sin of the world.

-What was that blood saying to the Father? “Can you be indifferent to this blood?” Isaac Watts
looked at the wondrous cross and said, “Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.”

Abel's blood called for vengeance, but Jesus' blood cries, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” We are forgiven through the blood of Christ.

“Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood shall never lose its power Till all the ransomed church of God be saved to sin no more.”