**Genesis and the Degeneration of Man – Part 3 Cain and Abel 05/22/22**

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I’ve been promising that we would be done with sin and degeneration. Well, I guess I was wrong. Julie’s Uncle Jimmy is here so I figured I’d better talk about sin some more.

 Just kidding, I really wanted to talk about regeneration in regard to the doctrine of man, but it will have to wait, but not because of Jimmy. So far we have been diving into some of the deeper things of the book of Genesis, and we will continue.

 Chronologically, we have arrived at the point where Adam and Eve are driven from the garden after finding out all about good and evil. They have disobeyed God and have set off a disastrous chain reaction ending with separation from God, and forever altering all of God’s “Good” creation. It is a new world Adam and Eve find themselves living in as Chapter 4 opens, and it’s simply not as good.

 We’ll pick up not only the narrative, but all of the crucially important teaching within this passage, keeping in mind that Genesis is far more than a bunch of interesting stories that have no connection to the modern-day reader. No, it is the book of origins, remember? If you’ve ever wondered why things are the way they are, read Genesis carefully. Think about what you’re reading. Ask God’s Spirit to teach you, and things will come to light that you never could have imagined.

 You see, the Bible is truth. It is literally God speaking directly to you. Please turn in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 3. Before we launch into the dramatic story of the two brothers, Cain and Abel, let’s refresh our memories on a couple of details from earlier in Genesis that will be important to what we will be studying today.

SLIDE 1 - Protoevangelium

 First, let’s talk about a huge scholarly sounding word, the protoevangelium. This is Latin for the first evangelistic statement of the good news. Or literally, First Good News. Genesis 3:15 gives the early and incredible prophecy of Jesus’ victory over Satan.

Here God says to the serpent, **“And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”**

 Remember, this is a promise that Eve’s progeny will crush the head of the serpent’s progeny. This will effectively free all of creation from the power and eventually the presence of sin. In the meantime, all of those who are counted as the serpent’s seed will strike the heel of Jesus and His people, but to no eternal avail.

 Revelation 20:10 tells us that Satan, that serpent of old, will be cast into the lake of fire where he will be in torment forever. Later in verse 20:15 we see that all those who are not found in the book of life, all those who are not found in Christ will be cast into the lake of fire with the serpent and his seed the anti-Christ. Don’t look at me, I didn’t write it! The other thing I want for you to recall from Genesis chapter 3 is in verse 21.

SLIDE 2

**“Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.”**

 If you’re not thinking about what you’re reading, you may just suppose that this is just a weird little verse in which God is helping Adam and Eve out when they’re in a jam. They’re in a jam alright, and they’ve already tried to fix it, to cover up their full exposure to God by making coverings out of fig leaves. They are trying to do it their way, but God shows them how to do it His way. Blood must be shed, so he kills in order to cover their sin, otherwise, He cannot look upon them. It would be inconsistent with His perfect, holy nature. This will be important to remember later.

 Why must blood be shed? Because that’s the way God set it up. Here are some reference verses for you: Genesis 9:4-6, Leviticus 17:11, Hebrews 9:22. Bear in mind, this is no longer true. Jesus shed His blood for us, for once and for all time. For the sake of this passage in Genesis, though, this is a crucial detail.

SLIDE 3

 The other thing we need to remember is that Adam was driven from the garden, where he could hang out with the Lord God daily and walk with Him, literally. It was an incredible place, one in which Adam and Eve lived closely with God. At the end of chapter 3, God confers within himself and decides that since it would be terrible to have fallen man live forever, Adam must be driven out from His presence. So humanity was separated from intimacy with God by sin.

This is the backdrop for chapter 4. If you’ll flip over to chapter 4, let’s read it.

SLIDE 4 (biblical text)

**“Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the Lord.” 2Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 3And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. 4Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, 5but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. 6So the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it.” 8Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.**

**9Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where *is* Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know. *Am* I my brother’s keeper?” 10And He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground. 11So now you *are* cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. 12When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.”**

 Now, if any of you are like me, you’ve read this account many many times and haven’t really been able to make a lot of sense of it. What does it mean? Why didn’t God accept Cain’s sacrifice? We all know instinctively that it was a matter of the heart. For whatever reason, Cain’s heart wasn’t right before the Lord. Cain proved it too, judging by his reaction to God’s chastisement. He doubled down on his bitterness and killed his brother. Today we will see how it has everything to do with the lessons God has taught us earlier in Genesis. In walking through this, let’s resolve not to be like Cain.

SLIDE 5

 In verse one, Eve gives birth to her first child, a man. She names him Cain, or “Gotten.”

In other words, the Hebrew word for “gotten, acquired, or procured,” since despite the pain and suffering of childbirth, she has been given a gift. So far, so good. Verse two tells us that she had another male child, and named him Abel, or “vapor, or vanity.” It is not known exactly why she would name him this. Henry Morris suggests that by the time she had Abel, she had “become thoroughly impressed with the impact of God’s curse on the world,” and that Mankind was subject to vanity, with Romans 8:20 as a reference.

 Things get interesting in the second part of verse 2. It tells us that Abel was a keeper of the sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. Why is this significant? At that time remember that God had not yet allowed men to eat meat. That came after the flood, so there were two reasons to keep sheep around. One was to make clothes, refer back to Genesis 3:21, and the other was as sacrifices. We know this because Abel offered sheep as a sacrifice (v. 4). We’ll come back to this, but for now, just know that one is a farmer, and the other is a sheepherder.

 We can also know that Cain is not a good guy. Not just because of what we learn later in chapter 4, but we can get a clue from 1 John 3:11-12. This scripture tells us, **“For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, 12not as Cain *who* was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous**.

 We are told here that Cain is “of the wicked one.” Literally, Cain is of the devil.

Although his profession is every bit as legitimate and essential as Abel’s, there was a problem with Cain. Abel, on the other hand, is listed on in the Faith Hall of Fame in Hebrews 11:4.

He is called righteous in Matthew 23:35 and is listed as a prophet in Luke 11:50-51. Both brothers had worthy trades. Since men were forbidden to eat animals, Cain provided food.

Abel supplied sheep for clothing and most likely for sacrifices. God has always required blood for the covering of sins, which we refer to as atonement, and the lesson he taught in Genesis 3:21 was evidently more than a just better way to make underwear.

 The sacrifice mentioned in Genesis 4 was most likely a regular occurrence, not a first-time or one-time thing, like many of us have supposed it to be when we read over this passage.

All of this also indicates that although man was driven out from the garden, a relationship with the Lord was maintained on the basis of belief and sacrifice, which suggests that Adam and Eve and their children were repentant and obedient to the new mandate (sacrifice signifying repentance).

 Many scholars have suggested that the entrance to the garden where the Cherubim guarded with swords was a place to go meet the Lord, which also suggests an ongoing relationship with Him. This meeting place between the two cherubim suggests a return the design later on when the tabernacle was built, and the mercy seat was placed in the holy of holies. The ark may have been fashioned to resemble that place, with the golden cherubim looming over it on either side. At any rate, the Lord was obviously in relationship with people, and He obviously commanded that sacrifices be given, otherwise there would have been no issue with Cain and Abel.

SLIDE 6

 We arrive now at the sacrifice given by Cain and Abel, respectively. Verses 3-5 says, “**And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. 4Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, 5but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.”**

 Let’s provide a little background information here. To begin with, we are told that this happened in the process of time, or after some period of time. It is not known how old Cain and Abel were here. Abel had grown to the point of being considered a righteous prophet later on in scripture, as we have noted. Cain was older. It is reasonable to think here that both men had reached a very mature age. In the meantime, Adam and Eve were surely fulfilling the Lord’s command to be fruitful and multiply, as were their children, grandchildren, and so on.

 By this time, there may have been quite a few generations on the earth. This would suggest that by a hundred years, five or more generations may have already occurred. The earth was most likely being populated quickly.

 During this time, a system of sacrifices as a sign of repentance and cleansing had already been initiated, and we know that the only acceptable means of cleansing came through blood. God had demonstrated this in Genesis 3:21. This should shed some light on the fact that Cain’s offering of the fruit of the ground was unacceptable. He had no doubt made sacrifices beforehand, since there is no reason to believe that this was the first time after a long, or process of time that sacrifices were made.

 Most likely, the sacrificial system was instituted immediately after Adam’s expulsion from the garden as a condition of being able to meet and communicate with God. It would not have been possible for men to have any relationship with God, without first being cleansed through a sacrificial blood offering.

 Now we begin to see why Cain’s offering was unacceptable, but there is more. What was wrong with Cain? We need to think, since Cain was a farmer, where would he get a lamb or some lambs for the sacrifice. They would have to come from someone who tended sheep, most likely his brother. So for however long, we can imagine that Cain traded for sheep with his brother in order to make sacrifices.

 We know also that Cain was “of the devil.” At this point it is not so difficult to see why there would be hard feelings toward his righteous, favored brother who also happened to be a prophet of God. One’s status as a prophet means that God spoke through them, revealing His truth to the people through His righteous mouthpiece. This, plus the fact that Cain had to deal with Abel or go through him to get to God, very likely caused a great deal of resentment.

 Meanwhile, Abel is enjoying the favor and blessing of God, to the point of being respected by God, which is what all men seek. You see, as men, our way of perceiving that we are loved is to feel respected. In Cain and Abel, we have examples of the prototype of the serpent’s seed and the seed of Eve, respectively. This is the great division in humanity. Matthew 25:33 tells us that there will one day be a separation of the sheep and the goats.

 When God respected and accepted the sacrifice of Abel, which aligned with the directive given by God, and rejected that of Cain, a chain reaction happened. But what brought things to this point? Cain at some point decided he’d had enough of having to take a backseat to Abel.

He had been forced to elevate Abel and humble himself in order to please God. He no doubt worked hard in his fields, and understandably must have come to resent feeling like what he produced wasn’t good enough in the eyes of God. At some point, he decided to override God’s sovereign directive and take matters into his own hands. He still made a sacrifice, but it was a sacrifice made on his terms. This is crucial for us to understand.

 It is possible for us to do good things with the wrong motive. It is undoubtedly good to sacrifice and give back to God. But it is holy to do it His way and with the correct motives, which always involve humility and not pride. Remember, the root of sin is to put ourselves in God’s place. This is what happened with Adam and Eve, and Cain repeated the same sin, with the same motivation. He disobeyed God on the basis of his own desire to have control. It’s always the same. Think of the times you sin by going against the will of God. Why did you do it?

Because you wanted to. You wanted to do, think, or say what you wanted to despite the fact that you knew that it wasn’t what God wants. Sin really is that simple.

SLIDE 7

 Once Cain’s offering is rejected and he is disrespected by God, Cain verifies God’s correct judgment by the attitude he displays. Verse 5 tells us that Cain was VERY angry, and his countenance fell. A quick look at the Hebrew here just lets us know that Cain’s face was cast down. Imagine him looking down, gritting his teeth, eyes tearing up, scowling, face turning red, you get the picture. Cain was furious! Furious with Whom? Furious with God! He was not angry with himself for messing up.

 “Why?” Cain must have raged. “Why am I not good enough? Why is my younger brother the golden child? I work so hard! Harder than he’ll ever dream of working! I’ve bowed to him for so long! I swear, nothing I do is ever good enough! I gave you the best that I’ve got, God! And all you do is spit on it!”

 Does this rant sound familiar? It should. I think we have all been there at some point.

1 John 3:12 tells us that Cain’s works were wicked, and that can only come from a bad heart. Jeremiah 17:9 informs us that all our hearts are bad. We should be mindful of this. There is a lesson here in Genesis 4 for all of us. In verse 6, we witness the conversation (Remember, our God is personal. He interacts with us intimately), we witness the conversation that took place between God and Cain.

 As with the first incidence of sin, there was a confrontation between God and Cain. Notice that God didn’t come at Cain in an accusatory way. He simply asked a question. “Cain, why are you angry, and why do you have that terrible look on your face?”

Of course, God knew the answer, but He wanted Cain to understand his own condition. Sort of like when we are talking to someone we love and we know they are upset. We ask them, “What’s going on inside you right now? Why are you crying, or why do you look so angry?” In other words, “Hey, talk to me.”

 God went on to instruct Cain. In verse 7, God told Cain that He didn’t reject the offering because of displeasure with Cain, but because Cain did the wrong thing. If he would have done well, the offering would have been accepted. He went further in saying that if Cain chooses not to do well, things will get worse. Sin is the result of bad choices, and given the opportunity, it will rule over us. We should master sin, however, by doing well. You see, it may occur to us to do the wrong thing, in fact it will occur to us to go against what we know to be right, but we cannot allow that desire to overcome us. And this resistance to sin must be correctly motivated.

 We must understand how good God is, and respond to Him in love, because He loved us first. Cain did not do this. God spoke to him, gently by asking questions, correcting Cain and explaining to him the danger of sin. It was not God’s desire that Cain blindly obey, but that he understood that sin sought to rule over him and consume him. And that’s what happened.

 Verse eight gravely warns us of what can happen if we allow our bitterness to grow unchecked by the warning of scripture. God’s word to Cain is scripture. Cain chose to disregard God’s warning. God was trying to warn Cain of the cliff he was about to run off, but Cain ignored the warning and charged ahead. Have you ever felt like your anger was a fire? Did you let the Lord throw a bucket of scriptural water on it, or did you allow it to rage out of control? How many sins have you committed in anger and bitterness? For some of us, there are too many of these sins to even count.

 Cain let his anger burn, and in what I’m sure he felt to be righteous rage, he killed his brother. When we read verse eight, we see that there was a conversation that obviously got heated. They were brothers, after all, with one feeling resentful and jealous, and the other probably coming across as self-righteous and condescending.

 Abel was a prophet, which means he was a mouthpiece of God’s righteous instruction.

If you think about it, you can just picture the scene. A dialogue had begun, and it came to pass, or it happened, that they wound up in the field in an altercation. At some point, the anger boiled over, and Cain killed Abel. Some have suggested that the means of killing for Cain was most likely what he had seen done, either he hit Abel with something blunt, or he may have cut Abel’s throat. In either case, Cain spilled the wrong blood. He spilled innocent human blood in what has been considered yet another type or foreshadowing of what was to come.

 The prophecy of Genesis 3:12 was already in effect. The seed of the serpent struck the heel of the seed of Eve. The sin of having a bite of fruit had now escalated to fratricide, or the killing of a brother. In his first attempt to kill the line of humanity that would one day produce a redeemer, Satan corrupted the first son and killed the righteous one before either procreated.

SLIDE 8

Verses 9-12 tell of the inevitable confrontation between Cain and His God. As soon as Cain acted, God called him to account. This time Cain did not approach the place of sacrifice, rather, God came out to the field to meet Cain. Again, God asked a question with the intention of gaining a confession from Cain. Instead of responding in humiliation and a fear of God, Cain answers insolently and rebelliously. “I don’t know, God. I didn’t realize it was my job to keep track of him.”

 If we’re being honest, Cain did not know where Abel was. No one had ever died before.

Where did the dead go? The answer in this case is that Abel, as a righteous man of God, is the very first inhabitant of Sheol, the pre-Messianic place in the heart of the earth where righteous spirits went to await the Savior. Make no mistake though. Cain answered with hatred and enmity towards the Lord, doubling down on his sin and rebellion. God’s answer is startling.

 Though Cain had been able to silence his brother’s righteous voice, the blood of Abel cried out from the ground! The very ground would proclaim the guilt of Cain, since Abel’s body would return to the dust. The victory for Cain was temporary and hollow, just like that of Satan.

Following the disingenuous sacrifice of Cain, God spoke to him mercifully, instructing him how to act in the future, so that he might do well. Now following the world’s first murder, God spoke judgmentally.

 Cain had placed himself under the weight of God’s judgment. There must be a serious consequence. Cain was forever driven out from the presence of the Lord. What a terrible sentence. Sadly, virtually no one in the world today sees this as a serious thing, including those of us sitting here in church today. How can I say this?

 If we truly believed in the eternal death sentence and how brutally final it is, and how intensely torturous it is, we would have no higher priority than to tell everyone we know to repent and be saved, including our enemies. Eternal separation from God is not something we should wish on anyone.

 So how do we conclude this lesson from scripture? For starters we can check our attitude regarding God. Are we resentful? Our attitude toward God reflects our attitude towards people. If we have a problem with the people around us, we have a problem. We can see here that Cain may have seemed righteous. He sacrificed the best of what he had. He may have been outwardly religious, but inside he was rotten and insisted on doing what God commanded his own way.

Also, he harbored hatred for his brother.

1 John 4:7-8 tells us **“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.**

 You see, what Cain forgot or ignored was that God was good to him! He became resentful and spiteful. He came to see his sacrifice as a duty or a chore rather than an expression of repentance and thankfulness. Moreover, he let his heart be taken over by jealousy and envy of his brother, who loved God and enjoyed the favor and fellowship that accompanied the relationship. Cain didn’t realize how free he really was. He was free to do what God asked him to do, just as he was free not to.

 Finally, Cain was too proud and haughty. When he realized he had created a bad situation for himself, instead of getting humble and accepting discipline, he grew more proud and defied God, which hardened him and led to him killing his brother in callous anger. In the end, Cain separated himself from God forever. All because of a proud, hard heart.

SLIDE 9

 So how do we apply this? First, we can choose to love, respect and fear the Lord God.

Mark 12:30 tells us that the greatest commandment is **to “…love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.”**

 Notice here that I said that we must choose this. Love has little to do with feeling, and everything to do with action. Daily we must rise and recognize that God is God, and then we must give ourselves completely to Him. The tough part here is encapsulated in the word completely. I’d submit to you that most of us are willing to give ourselves partially to God.

But we must abandon ourselves to God and His purpose. Cain refused.

 Secondly, We can choose to express this love by doing things the way God commands us to do them. Your children may tell you they love you, but then they may go off and do the exact opposite of what you ask them to, or they may choose to disregard what you say and do what they want to. How loved and respected does that make you feel? Hopefully, you have equipped your children to be successful as much as you possibly can. You have made it so they can be happy and successful. Now, what if they disrespect you by disregarding all you have done for them and intentionally turn away from what you’ve asked of them? They may be free to do that, but how does it feel? Proverbs 14:12 says, “There is a way *that seems* right to a man, But its end *is* the way of death.”

DEATH!

 That is not what we want for our children. We want them to be free to make good decisions. We are free to make good decisions. As believers, we are free from the power of sin.
 Finally, we must realize in life that we find that we have dug ourselves a big, deep hole, we must stop digging. Put down your shovels and take the hand up that the Lord is offering.

That hole you were digging is a grave! After reminding us that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble, James 4:7 tells us **“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”** God wants so much more for us than we want for ourselves. Stop. Submit. Resist.

 What if Cain would have said to himself when those feelings of bitterness toward Abel came, “Hey, Cain. Cool it. God is good to you. He has given you everything you need to be happy and content.” Or what if he would have prayed, “Lord God, thank you for all you have given me, and bless my brother. Help me to be content and live in peace with him.”

 It really is that simple. Don’t let your mind be a playground for the devil. Give your mind, along with everything else, over to God. Let Him guide your thoughts.

Finally, Romans 12:18 says, **“If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.”**