
Lesson 11 — MY BROTHER'S KEEPER



Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?"

[Genesis 4:9]

The tragic consequences of sin had been engraved in the hearts of Adam and Eve, and worse still, the essence of their very nature had been permanently corrupted. Sin had left them cast out of the Garden, cut off from eternal life, and estranged from God. The ground was cursed. Pain and struggle were the new normal, and death was inevitable. Not to mention, a supernatural archenemy — the Serpent — was still on the prowl as a legitimate threat.

Perhaps the joy of children and the blessing of starting a family would alleviate the sobering affects of the fall. Adam knew his wife, Eve, and she conceived. God provided two healthy sons — the firstborn Cain and his brother Abel. Genesis 4 picks up in the middle of things, where Cain and Abel bring freewill offerings to the LORD as an act of worship.

But the blessing that brought Adam and Eve much joy in life soon would become the burden of unbearable pain. The wages of sin would strike again, and like before, it would hit them where it hurt the most.

The Pattern of Atonement

Cain took to farming, and his brother Abel took to shepherding. The Scripture says that in the course of time they both brought an offering to present to the LORD, but God did not regard their offerings the same. Only Abel's offering was acceptable to God, while Cain's was rejected. Let's read further to see if we can discover what is at the heart of the matter.

- ❖ Read Genesis 4:1-7. What did Cain and Abel offer to the LORD? Why do you think God rejected Cain's offering but accepted Abel's offering?
- ❖ Read Genesis 3:21. How did Abel know to bring an animal sacrifice to the LORD and why was it necessary? Why do you think Cain failed to bring his own animal sacrifice?

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- ❖ Read Hebrews 11:4. Why did God declare Abel righteous as opposed to Cain? Read Hebrews 9:22. What is necessary for our forgiveness?
 - ❖ Read Genesis 4:7. How does the LORD initially show Cain mercy? What warning does God give Cain?

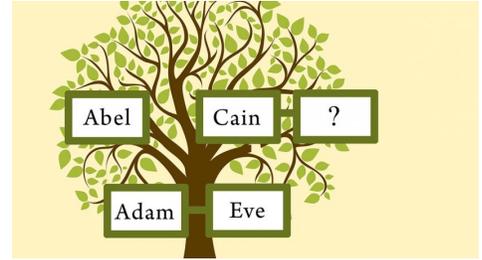
The Voice of Blood Crying Out

Instead of turning to the LORD in humility and faith, Cain chose pride and gave in to his anger. Sin once again would have its way in the hearts of mankind, and it would come at a significant price — the first murder of human life. Adam and Eve didn't lose just one son that day. They lost two.

- ❖ Read Genesis 4:8-16. How do we know that Cain's murder was premeditated? What similarities exist between the way the LORD approached Cain and the way He approached Adam and Eve after their sin in the Garden? What is most tragic about Cain's response?
- ❖ What was Cain's punishment for his sin? How did God still show him mercy?
- ❖ Read 1 John 3:11-15. What can we learn in this passage about Cain's motive to murder his brother? Why should we take hatred of heart so seriously?
- ❖ Read Matthew 23:29-36. How does Jesus connect His own death to the murder of Abel?
- ❖ Read Hebrews 2:9-18. What does this passage tell us about Jesus as our "elder Brother?" In what ways has Jesus proven to be the ultimate example of a "brother's keeper?"

Cain's Wife

From where did Cain get his wife? Skeptics often raise this question to cast doubt or challenge the reliability of the Bible. The language in Genesis 4 certainly seems to imply that there were other humans alive at the time of Abel's murder. From whom was Cain needing protection? Who would occupy the city Cain built in the land of Nod?



All of these questions carry with them some presuppositions that can easily be answered with a more careful look at the Biblical text. First, we need to address some incorrect assumptions in order to get to the truth.

ASSUMPTION #1 – CAIN WAS AN ONLY CHILD LEFT ON EARTH

Many assume that Cain must have been the only other human being alive on the planet besides his parents, Adam and Eve. There are usually two erroneous conclusions drawn from this assumption.

1. Since Cain was the only child left in the family, then he would have no one to marry. Therefore the Bible is false.
2. If Cain found a wife in Nod and married her, then from where did she come? Was there an entirely different race of people alive on the earth who did not descend from Adam and Eve? Therefore the Bible is incomplete.

Fortunately, the Bible provides a simple answer in Genesis 5.

*“When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. The days of Adam after he fathered Seth were 800 years; and **he had other sons and daughters.**” [Genesis 5:3-4]*

The genealogies in the Scriptures are not meant to provide an exhaustive account of every child born into a family, nor do they always support chronology. Just because Seth is the only son listed under the line of Adam, we know that Adam and Eve had other sons and daughters who are not named. Adam was 130 when Seth was born, but nothing in the text prohibits the possibility that other sons and daughters were born before Seth.

Even if Cain and Abel were the first two offspring of Adam and Eve, a lot can happen in 130 years. Dr. Henry Morris once calculated that by the time of Adam's death, there easily could have been 3 million people on the earth. So by the time Cain was banished, many other adult brothers and sisters and nieces and nephews and cousins could have been alive on the earth, providing a substantial population from which to choose a spouse.

Furthermore, the Scripture tells us that Eve is the “*mother of all the living*” [Genesis 3:20], so obviously Cain’s wife had to be one of his close relatives.

ASSUMPTION #2 – CAIN FOUND HIS WIFE IN NOD

For those who try to harmonize evolution with God’s six days of creation in Genesis, there is a fascination with Cain’s wife. They use Cain’s wife to insinuate that perhaps there were other people already alive on the earth who had evolved long before God formed Adam and Eve. They contend that this pre-adamic race of humans explains how Cain could have found a wife living in previously settled civilization.

To hear them tell it, after Cain was banished to the land of Nod in the east he found a flourishing community of other pre-adamic humans settling there, which is where he “found his wife.”

Yet if you read carefully, the Bible says Cain first settled in Nod, and then it simply says he “*knew his wife and she conceived.*” It never says that Cain found his wife in Nod, but only that after settling in Nod, Cain and his wife came together to produce a child. Cain could have married his wife before leaving for Nod. There is nothing in the text that says that his wife was already there. Furthermore, Cain is the one who built the city there in Nod, so there is no indication that a thriving civilization was already in place. Cain’s city undoubtedly was later occupied by his offspring [see Genesis 4:17-24].

ASSUMPTION #3 – INCEST VIOLATED GOD’S LAW

Although it is a little unsettling for us today, incestuous marriage was necessary at the beginning for obvious reasons. There is no way around the fact that close relatives would have had to marry at first. But doesn’t God’s law prohibit incest? Yes it does! But we must remember that the law wasn’t given until 430 years after Abraham, so there was no clear law against incest until the days of Moses. Even Abraham married his half sister, Sarah.

Of course incest is not acceptable today on both moral and biological grounds. The offspring of incestuous relationships often carry degenerative birth defects because of the degradation of the human gene pool, yet the genetic purity of the early human race would have certainly prevented the genetic deformities we see today. All in all, every apparent contradiction in Scripture can be clarified with a little more study and some common sense.

- ❖ Read Genesis 4:17-24. Write down as many interesting details provided in Cain’s family line?
- ❖ Read Genesis 4:25-26. What is the significance of Seth’s birth, especially in light of the prophecy in Genesis 3:15?