

In the Beginning

Cain and Abel

Genesis 4:1-26

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Cain and Abel

Scripture

We are currently in a series of sermons on Genesis 1-11 that I am calling, “In the Beginning.” I plan to preach only six sermons on these 11 chapters. It is just an overview of redemptive history.

So far, we have looked at the Creation of all things (Genesis 1:1-2:3), and the Fall of man into sin (2:4-3:24). Today, I want to examine God’s faithfulness in preserving a line of descendants that will eventually lead to the birth, life, death, resurrection, and victory of Jesus Christ.

Let’s read about Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:1-26:

¹Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.” ²And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. ³In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. ⁶The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? ⁷If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.”

⁸Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel 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 the Lord said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground. ¹¹And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. ¹²When you work the ground, it shall no longer

yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.”¹³ Cain said to the Lord, “My punishment is greater than I can bear.¹⁴ Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”¹⁵ Then the Lord said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.¹⁶ Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

¹⁷ Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. When he built a city, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch.¹⁸ To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad fathered Mehujael, and Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech.¹⁹ And Lamech took two wives. The name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah.²⁰ Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock.²¹ His brother’s name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe.²² Zillah also bore Tubal-cain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

²³ Lamech said to his wives:

“Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
 you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say:
 I have killed a man for wounding me,
 a young man for striking me.

²⁴ If Cain’s revenge is sevenfold,
 then Lamech’s is seventy-sevenfold.”

²⁵ And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, “God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.”²⁶ To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord. (Genesis 4:1-26)

Introduction

I just finished reading *Killing the Rising Sun* by Bill O' Reilly and Martin Dugard.¹ It is a book about how the United States defeated Japan in World War II. I was repeatedly astonished by the incredible battles that were fought throughout World War II. Individuals and nations were fighting for their very survival.

In a very real sense, these battles pale in comparison to the battle that began in the Garden of Eden. Genesis 3 shows us how Adam and Eve rebelled against God and fell for Satan's temptation. In Genesis 3:15, God said to Satan, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." Here is the beginning of the battle between Satan and the offspring of the woman that has raged for millennia. Satan wants to be supreme and have all creatures worship him. However, God created all things (including Satan), and God alone is to be worshiped and served. He designed a plan to save a people who will worship and serve him. In his sovereign providence, God has preserved a line of descendants that will lead from the woman to the birth of Christ, who will accomplish victory over Satan.

Lesson

The analysis of God's faithfulness in Genesis 4:1-26 teaches us that God was preserving the offspring of the woman until Christ accomplished his victory.

Let's use the following outline:

1. The Births of Cain and Abel (4:1-2)
2. The Sacrifices of Cain and Abel (4:3-7)
3. The Start and Punishment of Violence (4:8-12)
4. The Mercy in the Punishment (4:13-16)

¹ Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard, *Killing the Rising Sun: How America Vanquished World War II Japan* (Henry Holt and Co., 2016), Kindle Edition.

5. The Descendants of Cain (4:17-24)
6. The Birth of Seth (4:25-26)

I. The Births of Cain and Abel (4:1-2)

First, let's look at the births of Cain and Abel.

Genesis 4:1 states, **“Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, ‘I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.’”** The Hebrew word for **knew** (*yāda*) and is “used for sexual intercourse on the part of both men and women.”² That is why Eve **conceived and bore Cain**.

Cain's name means “gotten.” Eve must have thought that **Cain** was *the* offspring (or seed) that God spoke about in Genesis 3:15. Interestingly, Eve did not say that she had a “baby” or a “boy,” but she said, **“I have gotten a man (*ish*).”** **Cain**, Eve believed, was the second Adam. Surely, he was *the* offspring who would defeat Satan.

Cain was the first child ever born. He was very special. Eve affirmed that her child was born **with the help of the Lord**. He started life with the Lord. And, as the firstborn, he was also entitled to all the rights of inheritance. **Cain** was the first child of the woman.

Verse 2a says, **“And again, Eve bore his brother Abel.”** It is possible that **Abel** was a twin, but Cain had the rights of the firstborn. Nevertheless, **Abel** was the younger of the two brothers. **Abel's** name comes from the same root word for “breath.” **Abel** lived up to his name, for his lifespan was but a breath.

In verse 2b, we learn that **“Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground.”** **Abel** was a shepherd, and **Cain** was an agriculturalist, although we learn in verse 17 that he also became a builder.

² R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 366.

II. The Sacrifices of Cain and Abel (4:2b-7)

Second, notice the sacrifices of Cain and Abel.

Moses said in verses 3-5a, **“In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard.”**

Perhaps you have wondered, “Why did the Lord have regard for Abel and his offering but not for Cain and his offering?” I remember hearing an answer decades ago when I was a young Christian that it was because Abel brought a blood offering and Cain did not (because he brought an offering of the fruit of the ground). However, I don’t believe that is the reason, because at this point there was no requirement for a blood offering. The reason is right in the text, and a careful reading of the text tells us the answer. **Cain simply brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground.** On the other hand, **Abel also brought** an offering, but he brought an offering **of the *firstborn* of his flock and of their *fat portions*.** Abel gave God the first of what he had, and he gave God the best of what he had (which was the **fat portions**). In other words, Abel’s love, devotion, and worship of God showed in his giving the very best to God of what he had.

There is of course a lesson for us in that we are always to give God the very best. We are to give him the best of our time, talents, and treasure. Our love, devotion, and worship of God shows itself in our giving the very best to God of what we have. Do we?

I also don’t want you to miss a very important comment in the text. God looks at the heart, the attitude, and the motivation of every person before he looks at the gift. Verse 4b says, **“And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering.”** Hebrews 11:4 says, “By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice

than Cain.” **Abel** offered a sacrifice to God “by faith.”

Cain just went through the motions of worship. He just **brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground**. His heart was not in it. Therefore, it is not a surprise to read in verse 5a that **for Cain and his offering God had no regard**.

“**So,**” Moses wrote in verse 5b, **“Cain was very angry, and his face fell.”** It seems that Cain was angry that God did not accept his offering. Cain was also angry with Abel because God did accept his offering. Cain’s anger even showed in his face, because **his face fell**.

But, like a parent who loves his son, we read in verses 6-7a that **the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?”** God urged Cain to repent and do the right thing. God was teaching Cain that if he did what was right, he would be accepted by God.

But this is followed by a warning in verse 7b, **“And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.”** God warned Cain that if he did not do what was right, then he opened himself to attack by this dangerous beast that was crouching at his door, waiting to do him harm. Satan was ready to strike the second generation. He had already got Adam and Eve to fall into sin. Now, he was tempting Cain to follow his anger into sin.

And that is exactly what Cain did.

III. The Beginning of Violence (4:8-12)

Third, observe the beginning of violence.

Verse 8a says, **“Cain spoke to Abel his brother.”** Some manuscripts add what is recorded in the *New International Version*, “Let’s go out to the field.” Then, the rest of verse 8 says, **“And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.”** Jews reading this at the time that Moses

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wrote it would have realized that Cain's action against his brother was premeditated. Killing a person in a field, far away from people, did not allow the victim's shouting to be heard, and there were also no witnesses to the murder.

But while there were no human witnesses, there was a divine witness. In verse 9 **the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?"** This was a blatant lie. Jesus once said that Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44). Cain has consciously moved into the family of Satan. When Cain was born, Eve thought that he was *the* offspring who would conquer Satan. But, Cain was angry at God, and he was angry at his brother. He intentionally murdered his brother, and he intentionally lied to God. It is clear that Cain was not the offspring of the woman. He was instead the offspring of Satan trying to destroy the offspring of the woman.

In verse 10 **the Lord said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed...."** In Genesis 3 God cursed Satan and God cursed the ground. God did not curse Adam and Eve because they represented the ones from whom the offspring of the woman would be born. Now God cursed Cain, indicating that Cain was not the offspring of the woman but was indeed the offspring of Satan. The battle between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of Satan would split humanity into two groups: some will be on the side of God and some will be on the side of Satan.

God concluded his punishment of Cain by saying in verse 12b, **"You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth."**

IV. The Mercy in the Punishment (4:13-16)

Fourth, look at the mercy in the punishment.

In verses 13-14 **Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, you have driven me today**

away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” Cain now realized that all people by nature have murderous hearts. And if he could murder his own brother, then what was to stop others from killing him?

In verse 15 **the Lord said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.** We don’t know what the **mark on Cain** was. Some think it was a tattoo. One commentator speculates, “In my mind I see a giant bull mastiff with a spiked collar!”³ What is important, however, is what the mark did.

Cain had switched sides from God to Satan. He was not the offspring of the woman, but was the offspring of Satan. He had become a traitor in God’s kingdom. God rightly cursed Cain. God rightly condemned him to be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth. Now, we would expect God to send him to hell.

But, God acted in mercy. It is astonishing! God put a mark on Cain to protect his life. And here we learn that God’s common grace extends even to those who are traitors to his kingdom.

Having received the mark of God’s protection, we read in verse 16, **“Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.”**

V. The Descendants of Cain (4:17-24)

Fifth, notice the descendants of Cain.

God’s common grace was upon Cain. In verse 17 we read, **“Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. When he built a city, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch.”** A question often arises, “Where did

³ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 107.

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Cain get his wife?” Well, the answer is simple. Genesis 5:4b says that Adam “had other sons and daughters.” Cain married his sister. The laws of consanguinity that Moses later recorded were not yet in effect, and so Cain was permitted to marry his sister.

Then in verse 18 we read about the descendants of Cain, **“To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad fathered Mehujael, and Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech.”** Lamech is special because he represented the seventh generation from Adam.

However, a further violation of God’s law took place, as we read in verse 19, **“And Lamech took two wives. The name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah.”** God’s creation law stated in Genesis 2:24 that “a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Two wives violate the one flesh commandment.

It also turns out that **Lamech** was far more brutal than Cain. In verse 23 **Lamech said to his wives: “Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me.”** Someone apparently wounded **Lamech**, and instead of responding with justice so that the punishment would fit the crime, **Lamech** killed the man. He boasted in verse 24, **“If Cain’s revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech’s is seventy-sevenfold.”** **Lamech** vowed unending vengeance. No-one would touch him. He would take revenge on any and everyone who sought his harm. He did not need God’s protection. He would fend for himself. Thus, man boasted in his autonomy.

VI. The Birth of Seth (4:25-26)

And sixth, observe the birth of Seth.

At this point, we might despair. However, God was not done with the preservation of the offspring of the woman. In verse 25

we read, **“And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, ‘God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.’”** Eve now knew that **Cain** was not the promised offspring; **Abel** was. But, she said, in his marvelous grace, **“God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.”** That’s the point of this chapter. In the battle between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of Satan, God was faithful in preserving the offspring of the woman.

And then notice in verse 26, **“To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord.”** Don’t miss the last sentence. Cain’s line was rebelling against God. They were autonomous, content to live life apart from God. However, in the line of the offspring of the woman, **“people began to call upon the name of the Lord.”** They recognized their dependence on God, and made him central to their lives. Their love, devotion, and worship of God showed itself in their calling upon the name of the Lord.

God was faithful in preserving a line until the birth of Christ. Satan tried in many and various ways to crush the line leading up to Christ. But, he was not able to do so. God was faithful in preserving a line of descendants that eventually led to the birth, life, death, resurrection, and victory of Jesus Christ over Satan.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the concept of God’s faithfulness in Genesis 4:1-26, we should be assured that God will preserve his people until the return of Christ.

What God did up until the time of Christ’s first coming, he will continue to do until Christ’s second coming. Although we face the trials and temptations of Satan, let us remain confident that God will preserve his people until the return of Christ. Amen.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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