

GENESIS—Seed of the Bible
 Session Three: The Beginning of CRIME

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OUR LAST STUDY WAS ABOUT THE BEGINNING OF SIN. This time we are to look at the beginning of crime. We defined sin as wrongdoing towards God, and said that crime is wrongdoing towards man. We also pointed out that sin can have consequences for our fellows, and crime likewise has its god-ward ramifications.

Genesis chapter four is the passage we are concerned with this time. What started out as innocent and praiseworthy turned sour: the two children of Adam and Eva came with an offering to God, each of them bringing from their life-work.

Cain brought some of his harvest and gave it as an offering to the LORD. Then Abel brought the first lamb born to one of his sheep, killed it, and gave the best parts of it as an offering.

— Genesis 4. 3,4

It is interesting that Cain seems to have been the leader in this act of worship, and we would have thought God would have been delighted. Yet the fact is recorded that *the LORD looked with favour on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favour.*

Why should this be? To our minds it seems logical that they would give out of what they possessed? It cannot be that God was displeased with the substance of their offerings, so that flesh was acceptable and grain not so, for in the offerings prescribed by Moses both kinds were included.

The measure for acceptance seems to have more to do with the offerer than the offering. The writer of Hebrews gives us the answer: It was because of the presence of faith in Abel that God had respect unto him and to his offering: *“by FAITH Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. Without faith it is impossible to please God”* Hebrews 11. 4, 6

AS A RESULT OF THIS PERCEIVED INJUSTICE, CAIN’S EXPRESSION DARKENED. Whereupon the Lord said to Cain, “If you’d done well, you’d have been accepted.” He does not respect people or offerings, he is concerned with what is **right**. It’s a matter of the heart. Abel’s blood-sacrifice must have been an indication of what he knew about himself, whilst Cain’s religion is like that of the Pharisees, a matter of show. Cain’s anger was undoubtedly rooted in pride. He couldn’t bear that his brother was accepted before God and he was not.

Then God gives a warning to Cain: *“Because you have done evil, sin is crouching at your door. It wants to rule you, but you must overcome it.”* A grave warning—yet an unheeded one. Cain’s story, as it continues is one of rebellion and evil!

After this “face-off” Cain suggests to his brother they take a walk. *“Now Cain talked with Abel his brother”* The sense is that Cain planned to catch Abel by surprise, lulling him with pleasant conversation. This shows that Cain committed premeditated murder, and therefore clearly ignored God’s way of escape. The harboured jealousy tempted him not merely to take an opportunity of using violence, but to make one. Poor, innocent Abel; probably thinking his brother wants to make peace. But it’s deceit; it ends in the first of all crimes, the worst of all crimes, made infinitely worse in that it is a crime against his own brother! Cain murdered Abel in cold blood.

He can’t take it out on God, but he can remove the supposed cause of his troubles.

NOW HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF. As it had been with the father, so now it is with the son. The Lord appears, questioning. “Where is Abel thy brother?” Despite the petulant reply, the Lord presses the issue: “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground.”

Then the sentence: “You are placed under a curse and can no longer farm the soil. It has soaked up your brother’s blood as if it had opened its mouth to receive it when you killed him. If you try to grow crops, the soil will not produce anything; you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth.”

The curse upon Cain was that Adam’s curse would be amplified in regard to him. If bringing forth food from the earth would be hard for Adam, it would be impossible for Cain (who was a farmer). If Adam were driven from Eden, Cain would find no resting-place on all the earth—a fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.

CAIN’S ATTITUDE IS NOT SOFTENED AT ALL BY THIS SENTENCE. His reply is usually seen as a cry of despair, whilst in truth it further testimony to his wickedness. What he said is to be understood this way: “What sort of punishment is that? I don’t stand a chance—I’m open to all attacks, my very life is at threat.” It seems the reply he gets is sardonic, “If anyone kills you, I’ll kill him! Seven times over!”

Then Cain acts, moves out in an attitude of defiance. When sinners go out from the presence of God, they go out to continue sinning. Judas went out into the night—to sell the Saviour for thirty pieces of silver, Cain goes out to prove he will not accept God’s verdict.

“And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.”

Actually there never was a place called Nod. The translation should be “the land of **wandering**”. He storms of away from the holy places, off to the land where it was ordained that he should wander, a sorry fugitive. And when he got there, what did he do?

He built a city. He made a place to dwell in comfort, a place where he could be protected! His rebellion continues.

The name of the city means *dedicated*. To what? To his own plans? To a place where his rebellion may grow? Certainly after this wickedness multiplied horrifically, with the result that God had to wipe out civilization which had grown so bad that it is recorded that “Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”—Genesis 6. 5

THIS SORRY TALE IS NOT UNIQUE. Cain is not alone. What we have in this story is not only the tale of a man abandoned to sin, it is a commentary upon the lives of multitudes. It is a story that fills our newspapers on a daily basis.

Such wickedness is beyond the wit of man to remedy. It needs God to intervene, it needs a Saviour to put things right.

Crime began so early in the human record, and it is with us still. Yet the day will surely come when peace will fill the earth, and men will love one another.

