

Genesis Chapter 4 - Commentary By Mike Wells

Chapter 4 Overview:

The 4th Chapter of Genesis records the beginnings of human civilization. The first murders and death's take place along with the first religion. The end of the chapter makes note of another seed or lineage which can be traced to Christ through the rest of the Bible.

Genesis 4 : 1 – *And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.*

- Here is the first record of sexual relations and the first birth
- Cain (the name means “**possession or acquisition**”)
- Eve’s comment I have gotten a man from the Lord, could also be I have received a male from the Lord

Genesis 4 : 2 – *And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.*

- Her 2nd son named was named Abel (the name means “**breath**”)
- Abel was a shepherd of sheep and many assume the more spiritual of the two brothers
- Cain in contrast was a worker of the soil
- There was obviously a fair amount of time between versus 1 and 2
- The boys apparently grew to be men and assumed their vocations

Genesis 4 : 3 – *And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.*

- The phrase process of time literally means “**end of days**”
- Some scholars assume it was the end of the week, others the Sabbath, and even others some special Sabbath.
- Either way, both men made an offering unto the Lord.
- Cain brought what he had grown from the ground

Genesis 4 : 4 – *And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:*

- Cain’s offering was “*of the fruit of the ground*”
- Abel “*brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof*”
- The word fat (**khayleb**) can also have the sense of the “**choicest**” or “**fattest of the flock**”
- Abel brought the best he had as an offering to God

- God was pleased with Abel's offering

Genesis 4 : 5 – *But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.*

- God doesn't clearly say why He was not pleased with Cain's offering
- Most believe that God had made it clear to the boys as they grew that He desired a sacrifice which involved the shedding of blood as atonement for sin.
- The rest of the Old Testament certainly presents this view
- Cain was not a herdsman, brought his best works from the fields to God
- God was not impressed by His good works; they could not atone for his sin.
- Cain's reaction was that he was very "**wroth**" or angry and "**His countenance fell**"
- Not only was he angry, he then became dejected and depressed

Genesis 4 : 6 – *And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?*

- God asked Cain – Why are you upset?
- God gave Cain another chance.
- He came to him and tried to help him correct his error.
- Cain will reject God's gracious offer of a second chance as we will soon see

Genesis 4 : 7 – *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him*

- God was telling Cain, "If you do what is right, you will still be accepted"
- God told Cain that "**sin lieth at the door**" literally means "**a sin offering is laying outside the door**"
- It is implied that God had provided a lamb which was laying outside the conversation was taking place.
- God provided an innocent lamb as a substitute for Cain's sin.
- Cain could exercise his option to sacrifice the animal and accept God's gracious offer
- Cain rejected God's offer which is a picture of how the world rejected the perfect lamb Jesus Christ

Genesis 4 : 8 – *And 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 slew him.*

- Evidently, Cain had a heated discussion with his brother
- Cain most likely was jealous and bitter and his sinful heart most likely had been hardened

- Now he was venting his anger against his brother Abel in retaliation and killed him
- The phrase “*and it came to pass, when they were in the field*” implies that Cain in cold-blooded premeditation planned his brother’s murder.
- He lured him out in the field and he rose up and slew him
- This is the first murder in history and the first person to die

Genesis 4 : 9 – *And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?*

- Just like God had confronted Adam and Eve after their sin, he now confronted Cain
- God knew exactly what Cain had done, but he asked him where is Abel your brother anyway
- Cain then directly lied to God and said “*I know not*”
- Then with arrogance he said “*Am I my brother’s keeper?*”
- Cain could not resist the urge to be irreverent and disrespectful to God

Genesis 4 : 10 – *And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.*

- You can almost hear the wrath of a righteous God as He replied to Cain – “*What hast thou done?*”
- The final phrase is metaphoric of God’s knowledge of Abel’s shed blood

Genesis 4 : 11 – *And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;*

- God’s punishment of Cain’s crime was a double curse
- Curse 1 – The ground would not “*yield unto thee her strength*” meaning Cain would have trouble raising crops the rest of his life
- This implies both trouble and possibly poverty since this was his vocation

Genesis 4 : 12 – *When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.*

- Curse 2 – “*A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth*”
- Cain would face trouble and have no rest in life
- His life will be filled with instability and difficulty

Proverbs 13:15 – “*the way of the transgressors is hard*”

- Cain just like His parents had to learn the truth the hard way
- Just like Adam and Eve, they had broken or transgressed God’s laws and now would suffer for the rest of their lives.
- Sin always brings trouble, sorrow, and corruption

Genesis 4 : 13-14 – *13 And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear. 14 Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.*

- Upon hearing his “sentence” Cain began to complain in self-pity
- He whined to that everyone that finds me will slay me – He was fearing retribution
- Notice that it is obviously implied that there by now are others besides Adam, Eve, and Cain (everyone)
- Adam and Eve had obviously had other children that by this time had grown to maturity

Genesis 4 : 15 – *And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.*

- God then issued a warning that if anyone killed Cain in retribution, the vengeance for them would be sevenfold
- The mark set upon Cain has sparked much debate
- People have believe it was everything from a mark on Cain’s forehead to a mean dog given to protect him
- Mark (**owth**) in is most common rendering means a “sign”
- Either way, God obviously gave a serve warning in some manner the he would severely deal with any other murderer.

Genesis 4 : 16 – *And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.*

- Cain departed from the presence of the Lord, most likely means he left the vicinity of his parents homestead near Eden.
- Where Eden or Nod or any of the lands mentioned really was is not known since the flood destroyed the earth.

Genesis 4 : 17 – *And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch.*

- The popular question of where Cain got his wife is answered as noted previously that Adam and Eve already had other children
- This is even more clear in Genesis 5:4 where it is noted that during his long lifetime, Adam “*begat sons and daughters.*”

- The genetic strength of the race was strong enough still to withstand sibling marriage
- The beginning of a godless society is noted in Cain building a city or town
- The seeds of the world-system of ungodly people were being planted
- Cain had a son whom he named Enoch, but please note not to confuse Cain's son with the godly man name Enoch in chapter 5.

Genesis 4 : 18-19 – *18 And unto Enoch was born Irad: and Irad begat Mehujael: and Mehujael begat Methusael: and Methusael begat Lamech. 19 And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah.*

- The ungodly descendants of Cain and his wife are noted
- We have no further record of most of them
- Also note, the first breach of God's moral standard for marriage when Lamech became the first polygamist by taking more than one wife
- God hadn't given the law yet, but Adam and Eve served as an example of God's perfect will for marriage – monogamy

Genesis 4 : 20 – *And Adah bare Jubal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle.*

- There is not further record of these folks either, but they were early folks living in the ungodly society

Genesis 4 : 21 – *And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.*

- Mentioned are men that who invented various arts and crafts
- They also appeared to have invented the first musical instruments

Genesis 4 : 22 – *And Zillah, she also bare Tubalcain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubalcain was Naamah.*

- Men skilled in metal crafts quickly developed
- Implied is the availability of metals and skills to make stuff from it
- Basic skills as tent making, cattle raising, musicians, instrument making are noted.
- What is implied is that their skills were well developed and not primitive.

- Many folks believe that the technology of the civilization before the flood was highly advanced
- We normally think of a caveman scenario of early mankind; however the bible tells us clearly that there were some advanced technology and arts in this period.

Genesis 4 : 23 – *And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt.*

- Lamech who is a 5th generation descendant of Cain is noted for killing two men
- The circumstances and events are not clear
- His reference to his getting wounded may have meant he was hurt in battle or it may refer to how he viewed the consequences that were coming to his action
- It is implied that he killed an older man and a younger man
- Jewish tradition says that while he was hunting he accidentally killed Cain along with a younger companion – There is no scripture to support this however.

Genesis 4 : 24 – *If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.*

- He either uttered this out of fear of what was going to happen to him or out of arrogance without remorse
- It is no wonder God that God would later see *“the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination fo the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”* –
Genesis 6:5
- Cain and his descendants surely were the beginning of the world systems which continues to this day or corruption and in

Genesis 4 : 25 – *And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.*

- The idea is that Adam continued to have martial intimacy with Eve having other children through the years.
- However, God wanted to be sure to point out another one their children “Seth”
- Seth literally means “Compensation”
- God had given Even another seed instead of Abel who would be the godly lineage of Adam in direct contrast to Cain’s lineage.

Genesis 4 : 26 – *And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD..*

- Seth named his first son Enos which means “man or mortal”
- “*Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord*” has two historical senses.
- Men then began to pray in Jehovah’s name as the Authorized Version seems to imply