Series: Bible Characters
Cain and Abel – (Genesis 4:1-15)

Genesis is a book of beginnings, and here we have the beginnings of a family. Two male children are born. Some feel they were twins since there is only one conception mentioned. Again we can see the law of the second over the first illustrated in their story. Let’s take a closer look at these two young men.

I. CAIN

A. Facts about Cain.

1. Cain’s name.
   a. Spear
   b. Gotten or Acquired
   c. Signifies possession

2. What do you feel Eve meant in Gen. 4:1 when she said, “I have gotten a man from the Lord”?
   a. Generally, Cain’s name is “acquisition” and Eve was thanking God for giving her a child and expressing her faith that Cain would grow to manhood.
   b. Even more so, Eve may have been thinking that Cain was the promised Deliverer of Genesis 3:15, but he was far from it.

3. Cain was first in some things.
   a. First human born.
   b. First to bring the sacrifice.
   c. First to have his offering rejected.
   d. First to be mad at God.
   e. First to show the sinful seed being passed to everyone that is born.
   f. First to murder.

B. Failure of Cain.

1. What was Cain’s occupation? (“a tiller of the ground” Gen. 4:2)
2. What was Cain’s offering? (“the fruit of the ground” Gen. 4:3)
   a. Why do you think Cain brought that as an offering?
   b. Was Cain’s bloodless offering inappropriate?

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1) Read these verses: Lev. 2:1, 4, 14-15.
2) Do you think God rejected Cain’s offering because it was not a blood sacrifice?
   c. Some things to consider here…
      1) The OT law had not yet been given, so the meal and meat offerings do not necessarily apply here.
      2) The only offering or sacrifice Adam and Eve would have known was what God taught them in Gen. 3:21. Cain and Abel evidently were taught about offering (4:3).
3. So why did God reject Cain’s offering?
   a. It was a lesser offering, “Abel offered… a more excellent sacrifice…” (Heb. 11:4).
   b. Because it was bloodless. Remember, at this time only the fruit and herb bearing trees were assigned to man for food, and God had set aside the animal, offering the fat, and shedding the blood for something special (Heb. 12:24). (Hebrews 9:22)
   “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”
   c. The key to this is actually found in Heb. 11:4. The reason for Cain’s rejection was that it was offered with a wrong heart attitude. There was no faith involved.
   “Only when they are offered in faith do the services and sacrifices of men please God.”¹⁴ (Hebrews 11:6)
   d. The rejection of God’s provision of redemption through the blood sacrifice is “the way of Cain” in which Jude 11 speaks.
      1) Cain’s offering lacked faith in God’s provision spoken of in Gen. 3:15.
      2) Cain rejected God’s provision and the only other offering he could make was that of his own resources which is never acceptable to God (Titus 3:5a).
      3) Specifically, “the way of Cain” is associated with false teachers. False teachers “…speak…what they know naturally…” (Jude 10). Cain was religious only, he came to God in a natural sense (of his own works).

II. ABEL

A. Facts about Abel.

1. What does Abel’s name mean?
   a. “Breath” or “Vapor” – possibly referring to his brevity of life,⁵ or Eve’s understanding of the continuance of the curse in humanity.⁶
   b. “Vanity” – Thinking she had received the promised seed in Cain, another son was

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¹⁴ Spiros Zodhiates, note for Genesis 4:3-7, p. 8.
⁶ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, footnote for Gen. 4:2, p. 9.
simply vanity to her.\(^7\)

c. “Keeper” – Referring to his occupation as a keeper of sheep.\(^8\)

2. Abel was first in some things.
   a. He was the first victim of jealousy.
   b. He was the first victim of murder.
   c. He was the first of the human race to die.

**B. Faith of Abel.**

1. Abel’s offering was a blood sacrifice.
   a. Cain represents the “natural and unregenerate” man whose offering was by the works of his own hands and lacked any sense of sin or need for atonement.\(^9\)
   b. Abel’s offering was “of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof” (Gen. 4:4), shedding atoning blood and showing a sense of his sin.\(^10\)

2. This is the reason Abel is called “righteous” in the NT. Question 4
   a. Abel offered to God the best of his flock, by faith, and a sacrifice of blood.
   b. Abel’s heart was upright. He is one of those whom God’s countenance beholds (Psalms 11:7) “For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.” He is one of those whose prayer is the delight of God (Pro. 15:8) “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.”\(^11\)
   c. Righteousness is imputed by God to sinful men only on the basis of obedient faith in His Word. Abel’s “more excellent sacrifice” (Heb. 11:4) could only be pronounced by God thus showing that his sacrifice involved a matter of faith, hence he was imputed righteousness by God.\(^12\)

Even though Eve’s expectation of Cain fell short, she still believed in God’s promise of a Deliverer. When God gave her another son to replace Abel, she named him Seth, meaning “substitute” question 1c. Seth became a substitute for Abel and is found in the lineage of our Lord in Luke 3:38. Cain and Abel represent the difference between “religion” and “relationship.” Which do you represent?

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\(^7\) Matthew Henry, p. 36.
\(^8\) Wayne A. Brindle, Editor, *The King James Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Pub.) footnote for Gen. 4:2, p. 15.
\(^9\) Merrill F. Unger, p. 2.
\(^10\) Ibid., p. 2-3.
\(^11\) Matthew Henry, p. 37.