Week 4: Cain and Abel

Lesson Information

Title: Cain and Abel

Objectives:

- Literal
  - Understanding the story of Cain and Abel and why the Lord respected Abel's offering and not Cain's
  - Purpose of Genealogies
- Tropological:
  - Anger and Jealousy
  - Sin begets sin
- Allegorical:
  - Concept of the Firstborn

Resources:

- Fr Daoud Lamei on Genesis 4-5
  - Arabic with English notes below
  - https://notes.morcous.com/books/genesis/page/07-genesis-4-5
  - https://notes.morcous.com/books/genesis/page/08-genesis-5-6
- Fr Tadros Yacoub Malaty - Genesis Commentary
  - https://www.dropbox.com/s/zpat4ujj5q6p7o6/Genesis%20%28Small%29%20-%20Father%20Tadros%20Yacoub%20Malaty.pdf?dl=0 (Short one)
  - https://www.dropbox.com/s/f6o1ujr3kcj7wxm/Genesis%20-%20Father%20Tadros%20Yacoub%20Malaty.pdf?dl=0 (More Details)
- St Ambrose on Cain and Abel
  - https://www.dropbox.com/s/rhe1wt71qfzl31w/042%20St%20Ambrose%20-%20Hexameron%2C%20Paradise%2C%20Cain%20and%20Abel.pdf?dl=0

Reading:

- Genesis 4-5

Key Verse:

- "If you do well, will you not be accepted?" (Genesis 4:7)

Lesson Structure

Review Genesis 1-3

- Where are Adam and Eve now? Outside of Paradise

Read Genesis 4:1-5

- Firstborn
  - Cain is the firstborn, but as we will see throughout Genesis, the firstborn has a higher status and almost always loses it... Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, Reuben and Judah, Manasseh and Ephraim; and later on the Old Testament people like King David, etc.
  - This is a sign of what's to come - Israel is the "firstborn" but they will lose that status when they crucify and reject the Lord Jesus Christ, and so the Gentiles (i.e. the Christians) will have it

- Names
  - Names are important - see how Eve remembered the Lord when naming her son.
  - Cain means "acquired" because "I have acquired a man from the Lord"
  - This is a very good thing

- Occupations
  - Even though Cain is the firstborn, Abel's occupation is mentioned first. Because he was first in occupation
  - Shepherding usually indicates righteousness (Abel, Abraham, Moses, David, Christ as the Good Shepherd) because shepherding indicates taking responsibility. Counting their sheep, protecting their sheep, saving their sheep from lions and bears, etc.

- Cain and Abel's Offerings
  - "in the process of time" in the Greek is really "at the end of days" - The Fathers comment on this and say that Cain was delaying. Like when we delay our prayer in a day, and finally at the end of the day just offer a small prayer of "our Father" while we lay in bed

  - Why did God accept Abel's sacrifice and not Cain's? The Fathers give two reasons
    1. Cain's offering was from the ground, and the ground was cursed in the last chapter. Abel's offering pointed to the act that God did with Adam and Eve when He clothed them with animal skins. So some Fathers point to the TYPE of the offering.
       - Where did Cain and Abel learn about sacrifice? From their parents, who learned it from the Lord
       - At the end of last chapter (3:21) - "Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them."
       - The Fathers say that Adam and Eve taught their kids that they should sacrifice an animal to God, as God had sacrificed an animal for them

2. Cain's offering was out of a sense of duty or obligation, Abel's offering was freely given with faith. The Scripture clearly describes Abel's offering - "firstborn of his flock, and of their fat" - he chose the best of the best to give to the Lord. He did not hold back.
    - Abel's offering was from a thought of "God has given me all of this, so I will give him back the best" or "I will give the best of the best to the Lord, and I have faith He will take care of my sustenance."
    - Cain's offering was from a place of "I need to appease God" or "let me take the best and give God what is left." This was a very pagan way of thinking.
    - Unfortunately, we think like Cain today
        - I give God what is left of my time - the last few minutes of my day after I've done everything else
        - I give God what is left of my energy - after I've used it all up working and playing and talking, I give what's left to God
        - I give God what is left of my stuff - I empty the closet and find the things I don't like or I don't wear, or are out of style, or are ripped or torn, and I think "I will donate these to the needy" and I think I've done something good

    - What if we thought like Abel?
        - The beginning of my day (time and energy) are given to the Lord
        - I get new things and nice things to offer to the needy in the name of the Lord

    - We even think like Cain in a different sense
        - I need to pray to appease God, so I'll just quickly read through these Agpeya prayers
        - I need to fast to appease God, so I will fast, but I'll eat siyami burgers with siyami cheese and siyami ice cream after
        - I need to go to liturgy to appease God, so I will go but my eye will be on my watch, my phone will be in my hand, and my mind will be something else

    - What will the Lord say to us?

- And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering.
    - The Lord did not punish Cain or send fire from heaven or anything, he simply disregarded Cain's offering

- Cain was angry and his countenance fell
    - Cain did not love God. If he did, he would have fixed the situation immediately, brought a better or a different offering. But because he didn't have love, he fell into something worse - Anger. Jealousy. Wrath. Murder.

    - Jealousy

    - Good jealousy and bad jealousy
        - "Wow he prays so much, I want to pray like him"
        - "Wow he gives so much, I want to give like him"
        - "Wow she serves a lot, I want to serve like her"
        - versus
        - "Wow he has a lot of money... why does HE get so much money? Why did God give HIM so much money?"
    - We see evil jealousy throughout the Scripture
        - Joseph's brothers - why be jealous? He is the youngest, his mother died, he doesn't get to know his mother's love... nope. Jealousy.

- Cain was VERY angry
    - When you find yourself angry, ask yourself the question that God asked Jonah: "Is it right for you to be angry?" - the answer is usually no

Read Genesis 4:6-15

- Cain did not need to be jealous
    - He was the first human ever born
    - His name means "acquired from God"
    - Many Fathers say that Eve thought Cain was the Savior that God had talked about in Genesis 3 - the one who would trample the serpent. She thought Cain would be the Savior who would take them back to Eden!

- Why does God ask questions?
    - The first question God asked man - "Where are you?" to Adam
    - The second question - "Why are you angry?" to Cain
    - The Lord is always looking for our repentance - Why has your countenance fallen? You were not made by Me to look down, but to look up to heaven

- If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.
    - God is telling him that he still has a chance! Do well and you will be accepted! You are not rejected! You are not dead, You still have a chance!
    - God is telling him "I see your heart. I hear your thoughts. You want to get rid of your brother. Sin lies at the door, and its desire is for you. BUT YOU SHOULD RULE OVER IT" - you are not a slave to your thoughts or to sin! You have the authority and the freedom to say no. I created you as a ruler not a slave.
    - This verse is the entire definition of spiritual warfare. Sin lies at the door. Its desire is for you. But you can rule over it.
    - Sometimes we have thoughts like Cain's... "if only I had a different mom or dad" - "if only I had a different Sunday School servant" - "if only I didn't have this brother/sister." When you think those thoughts, your heart is like that of Cain

- Cain talked with Abel his brother

- When you're mad, don't go talking to anyone. Talk to God. If Cain had responded to God at all, he would have calmed down, and his conversation with Abel would have gone differently. Instead, Cain kills Abel.

- Sin begets sin
  - In Genesis 3, we saw the first sin - disobedience to the commandment to not eat a fruit. In the next chapter, we see murder.
  - We think small sins "won't reach anything" or "are not a big deal" - but sin leads to sin. Always.
  - These little foxes creep in and we think they're okay. But they can still bite.

- Where is Abel your brother?
  - Again, the Lord seeks Cain's repentance; his confession of his wrongdoing.
  - Cain lies.
    - Jealousy begot anger, begot wrath, begot murder, begot lying.
    - Lying comes from many reasons but the two biggest ones:
      - Fear - fear of embarrassment, fear of something you did, etc.
      - Earthly Reward - to receive praise or honor that doesn't belong to you

- Cain's Punishment
  - Cursed from the earth
    - Adam's punishment was that the ground would be cursed for his sake. He would have to toil and labor in order to bring food from it. In the garden, it would water itself and bring about its fruit on its own. But now he has to toil and water and labor.
    - For the man who hates his brother - despite the hard labor and work with the ground, he may eat, but he will never be satisfied.
      - "You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm'" (Haggai 1:6)

  - A fugitive and a vagabond on the earth
    - God does not kill Cain. Because He is still giving him a chance to repent.
    - Vagabond is someone who is "lost" - wandering. Doesn't know their purpose in life. Doesn't know that they are created in God's image, to glorify God, to prepare for eternal life with God. Someone who is focused on earthly life.
      - "Let us eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die" (Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, Proverbs, Luke, 1 Corinthians)
      - Someone who is lost is lacking love for God and love for man. God's will is for us to be like Him; God is love.

  - Greater than he can bear
    - Many times, a punishment that is too great to bear is the start of repentance
    - Guilt
      - "Anyone who finds me will kill me" - there's no one around to kill him, and no one is gonna find him, but he's terrified

        - There are people who commit murder and don't get caught, and after 20 years they go and confess and turn themselves in - even though the lawsuits are closed, people stopped looking for them, etc. The feeling of guilt is a prison of the mind, worse than any prison in the world.
        - Joseph's brothers later in Genesis have the same guilt. When anything bad or even inconvenient happens to them, they immediately think "this is because of what we did to our brother"
        - When you're guilty, you have blockers in your eyes and you see things that aren't there... I am a failure, I am hated, everyone hates me, etc.
    - What about God?
        - The Lord does not desire the death of a sinner, but rather that he returns and lives
        - Imagine if you go to a doctor and he says "get away from me you're sick" - no! Doctors go to the sick to treat them
        - The same with the Lord
- The Lord gave him protection - again, the Lord is seeking his repentance. Giving him time to repent.

Read Genesis 4:16-24

- Cain left the land of his family, and the presence of the Lord and went somewhere else
    - The family of Adam and Eve symbolizes the first Church.
    - Cain thought he would be judged, so he left them and their God. If he had gone to his parents they would have told him "Repent! Offer a sacrifice to God!" But instead, he left them
    - Sometimes we make a mistake and we run to the church and run to our father of confession and this is the right attitude
    - Sometimes, we make a mistake and we escape the church. Stop going. Stop attending the liturgy. Don't take communion. This is the worst attitude.
    - "The Church is a hospital for sinners, not a courthouse" - St John Chrysostom

- Cain knew his wife
    - Famous question - where did Cain get a wife? She is another daughter of Adam and Eve. In those very early days, they had to marry their brother or sister until there were many nations, in order to populate the earth.

- Cain built a city
    - We'll see that the Lord doesn't really like cities - they represent an attachment to the world
    - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc. live in tents away from the cities

- Cain's descendants
    - The descendants of Cain would have no idea about God - who would they learn from?
    - They are living completely separate from God and from Adam and Eve who know God

- So we will see that they devolve into lives of sin
- Example: Lamech
  - Multiple wives
  - Murders anyone who hurts him
  - Killing children
  - Thinks that God will avenge him
- This becomes the way of the land... the opposite of what God intended for Adam and Eve and humanity

Read Genesis 4:25-5:5

- Seth is the great grandfather of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of all of us
- "Then men began to call on the name of the Lord"
  - This indicates that Cain's family did not call on the name of the Lord
  - But Seth and his family were children of God
  - "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:13)
- Seth is born in the likeness and image of Adam, who was made in the image and likeness of God
  - Despite the Fall of Man, the Image of God was not lost

Read Genesis 5:6-32

- What are these high numbers for ages?
  - Many scholars agree that people in the old days live longer than us - earth was more pure, air was clean, food was clean, not like today. Their diets were better (i.e. plant-based).
  - In the next chapter, God allows them to eat meat and also limits the life of man to 120 years - and later on, it will be less than 100.

- Enoch
  - The genealogies usually say “xyz lived xyz years and begot xyz and then died” and continues to the next one. But sometimes they’ll get to a name and stop and say something. So this is a message to us – be careful that you don’t live your life as a name and number. No one remembers Enosh or Mahalel’s names… but we get to Enoch and we all know Enoch.
  - So what gives a man significance in history, and makes him remembered by all? His relationship with God. The genealogy pauses here to tell us about Enoch.
  - Enoch walked with God – first person this word is said about and it’s used twice.
  - We don’t know anything about Enoch – we know “Enoch walked with God.” To the extent that God took him or God “translated him” (Septuagint)

  - Let’s see where Enoch is mentioned in the New Testament
    - “By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, ‘and was not found, because God had taken him’; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of

those who diligently seek Him." (Hebrews 11:5-6)
    - "Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." (Jude 1:14-15)
    - Where did they get this info? Inspired by the Holy Spirit, from the Jewish traditions
    - See what simply walking with God can do for you? That God took him and said "you don't need to die right now"?
- Does this mean it is possible for a man not to die?
    - In Hebrews 9 it says "it is appointed for men to die once" – so every man must die.
    - The Church understands that every person needs to die. And we have Enoch and Elijah that don't die in the Bible but are taken up and translated to God. So they didn't die… but their death was not canceled, it was postponed.
    - If we open Revelation 11, we will read about two witnesses sent by God to preach and they are killed and then resurrected. These are understood by the Church to be Enoch and Elijah

- Walked with God
    - Friend of God – two people walking together are friends
    - "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you."
    - Abraham walked with God and God came down and literally walked with him and said "should I hide what I intend to do from Abraham?" And He told Abraham about Sodom and Gomorrah and Abraham even negotiated with God. And God told Abraham your children will be in Egypt in hardship 400 years but I will deliver them! This is friendship.
    - God wants to be our friend! He is the one that comes to us and says "I want to be your friend"
    - "The Lord was with Joseph" – it always says that in Genesis. And it means that Joseph was aware of it! God is with all of us – but how many of us are aware and see God in everything and remember God at all times?

- What's the point of Genealogies?
    - Historical Records
    - To trace the Messiah's lineage back to King David, Tribe of Judah, Abraham, Noah, Seth, Adam
    - This Genealogy is special because it is a prophecy:
        -

Adam	Man
Seth	Appointed
Enosh	Mortal

Cainan	Sorrow
Mahalel	The Blessed God
Jared	Shall come down
Enoch	teaching
Methuselah	His death shall bring
Lamech	Despairing
Noah	Comfort/Rest

- This Genealogy is also important because we see that the flood of Noah did not start until after Methuselah and Lamech had died. Because the line of Noah was righteous. And the Lord was not going to kill any of them with the flood.

Review Questions

1.

Homework

Revision #4
Created 2022-09-04 07:53:54 UTC by Morcous Wahba
Updated 2022-10-17 23:21:30 UTC by Morcous Wahba