

The Heart Matters

Genesis 4:1-8, 16

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A. Fallen to Rise Again (v. 1):

1. Relations; know – Adam was set to remain intimate with his wife.
2. Conceived - Eve became pregnant with a child. The tense of the verb here means that this is something she will not stop doing.
3. Bore – God controlled Eve's womb and she will continually keep delivering children. In other words, she is the mother of all mankind.
4. Said – Upon the delivery of Cain, Eve knew that the Lord had opened her womb so she verbally said that she recognized that God was in control of what was taking place because Adam was with his wife when he first met her (Genesis 2:23-25; Matthew 19:5-6). Eve knew that the Lord had decided to make her the mother of all mankind and she blessed the Lord for His decision.
5. Said – Despite the fact that Eve sinned against the Lord, she was still a worshipper.
6. I have gotten; I surely will buy - God decided to provide her the gift of a child. His decision was completed when she gave birth, even though the first child is Cain.
7. Lord – Throughout the creative process God's name is mentioned. When Eve speaks, she says “Lord”, signifying not just His authority and power but also His covenant relationship with her and her husband. This demonstrates that after the fall, Adam, and Eve still communicated with God.
 - a) Eve saying that “she has gotten a man-child with the help of the Lord” demonstrates that they still had a relationship with the Lord. She did not say God.
 - b) *With the help of the Lord*: Eve acknowledge that God is the ultimate source of life (Acts 17:25).
8. She gave birth – What Eve understood was taking place; she clearly understood that this was reoccurring with her delivery of Abel. The names she gave her kids seems to demonstrate the Lord's influence on her life because Abel's name represents that he would not have a long life.
9. Brother - What is important to note is that it did not say Eve had another son. It is stated, especially with what is about take place, that Cain had a brother, representing an affectionate tie they would have for each other.
10. Brother - Brother also means they had the same father, so they were born with the same sin nature.
11. Was a keeper of flocks – Abel continuously had the temperament to be a great leader and a good shepherd which he became.

- a) But the narrative lines him up with the curse; he worked the soil (Gen. 4:2; 3:17). Abel, however, seems to be lined up with man's original purpose, to have dominion over life (1:28); he kept flocks. These coincidental descriptions are enhanced with their actions in worship. Abel went out of his way to please God (which meant he had faith in God, Hebr. 11:6), whereas Cain was simply discharging a duty. Abel's actions were righteous, whereas Cain's were evil (1 John 3:12). These two types of people are still present.
12. Tiller of; Serve – By saying “tiller of the ground”, it represents that Cain's job required heavy labor like that of a slave who is in bondage. God cursed the ground since Adam was a cultivator of it, so Cain, following in his father's footsteps, had to work hard (Sweat; 2:17).

B. The Heart Matters (vs. 3-5):

1. So it came about – They had a set time where they worshipped the Lord, and this time was going to be in place forever. They also knew what was expected of them (Hebrews 11:4).
- a) To form an accurate conception of the idea which lies at the foundation of all sacrificial worship, we must bear in mind that the first sacrifices were offered after the fall, and therefore presupposed the spiritual separation of man from God and were designed to satisfy the need of the heart for fellowship with God. (From Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.)
2. The course of time - Over a period of time Cain's attitude towards worshipping the Lord changed.
3. Brought; they came – Cain made a willful decision to purposefully, from this point forward, worship the Lord in this manner. It is like some people who work rigorously and have to keep working very hard; as a result, they develop an attitude about what they bring to the Lord as a gift and become frustrated that they must endlessly come before him to worship Him.
- a) The sacrifices of Cain and Abel are not depicted as addressing sin or seeking atonement. The word used designates them very generally as “gifts”—a word that is most closely associated with the grain offering later in Lev 2. They appear to be intended to express gratitude to God for his bounty. Therefore, it is appropriate that Cain should bring an offering from the produce that he grew, for blood would not be mandatory in such an offering. It should

be noted that Genesis does not preserve any record of God requesting such offerings, though he approved of it as a means of expressing thanks. Gratitude is not expressed, however, when the gift is grudgingly given, as is likely the case with Cain. (From IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament, Copyright © 2000 by John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas. Published by InterVarsity Press. All rights reserved.)

4. Offering to the Lord - Cain brought a gift to the Lord. It is not that he did not know who he was coming to worship. Cain clearly understood (by the word used for Lord) that he was bringing an offering to someone who sincerely desired to have a relationship with him but who also expected that respect be provided when he came before the Lord. Cain clearly understood how the relationship was supposed to work.

- a) This explanation centers upon the difference in spirit manifested by the two men. Because Abel was a man of faith, he came in the right spirit and presented worship that pleased God. We have reason to believe that Abel had some realization of his need for substitutionary atonement. To all appearances both offerings expressed gratitude, thanksgiving, and devotion to God. But the man who lacked genuine faith in his heart could not please God even though the material gift was spotless. God did not look upon Cain because He had already looked at him and saw what was in his heart. Abel came to God in the right attitude of heart for worship and in the only way sinful men can approach a holy God. Cain did not.
- b) As a matter of fact, Abel offered the fattest firstlings of his flock, the best that he could bring, while Cain only brought a portion of the fruit of the ground, but not the first fruits. (From Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.)

5. Abel brought - Abel was completely surrendered to purposefully come before God in the manner in which he did. There was no turning away from what he was going to do.

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heart for worship and in the only way sinful men can approach a holy God. Cain did not.^[1]

6. Firstlings; birthright - Abel selected from his flock the animal that was the strength of the herd. The quality of all the herd was determined by the pure breath of the animal he selected. The Lord is the creator so Abel can provide Him his best.
 - a) Abel came as a sinner, and according to God's appointment, by his sacrifice expressing humility, sincerity, and believing obedience. Thus, seeking the benefit of the new covenant of mercy, through the promised Seed, his sacrifice had a token that God accepted. Abel offered in faith, and Cain did not, Heb 11:4. In all ages there have been two sorts of worshippers, such as Cain and Abel; namely, proud, hardened despisers of the gospel method of salvation, who attempt to please God in ways of their own devising, and humble believers, who draw near to Him in the way He has revealed.^[2]
7. And their fat portions - Abel demonstrated by his actions that he believed the Lord had everything to do with how he prospered when he brought the Lord his fat portions. He provided the Lord his very best. He blessed the Lord for blessing him.
8. Firstlings and fat portions - He had to kill the animal then scrape off the fat from the inside of the animal. There was a lot of preparation (lots of work) that took place before worship (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). His heart stirred him because his relationship with the Lord was sincere.
9. The Lord had regard for Abel - The Lord, as a result, continuously approved what Abel brought and indefinitely had a desire to experience this kind of worship forever.
10. Cain the Lord had no regard, no respect - The Lord had totally no interest, no desire to approve or accept the offering Cain provided to Him. This verb literally means that the Lord was so disinterested; He only had a casual glance at it.
11. Anger – Cain's attitude grew worse. He began to fret before God with a furious anger. This highlights how disrespectful Cain was.
 - a) Cain was so angry that he would not be talked out of his sin – not even by God. Eve, however, had to be talked *into* her sin by Satan; but Cain “belonged to the evil one” (1 John 3:12). It is as if he could not wait to destroy his brother – a natural man's solution to his own failure.^[3]
 - b) Cain was very angry. “Very” indicates the intensity of Cain's passion; being “very angry” is often a prelude to homicidal acts (cf. 34:7; 1 Sam 18:8; Neh. 4:1; cf. Num 16:15; 2 Sam 3:8). “His face fell”: cf. v 6 and for a similar expression using the hiphil, Job 29:24; Jer. 3:12.^[4]

12. His countenance fell – His anger did not do anything to move the Lord to accept his offering, so Cain's face displayed his continuous displeasure towards God.
13. His countenance fell – Some people decide what they want to give to the Lord and when the Lord does not bless them as He does others, they become more resentful to the Lord and become apathetic in their worship towards Him.

C. Attitude Check (vs. 6-8, 16):

1. Then the Lord said - The word for “Lord” in this verse represents it is the Lord who is seeking to have a relationship with Cain. So, the Lord is continuously speaking to Cain, relentlessly seeking to get his attention in an effort to change Cain's heart.
2. Why are you angry – The Lord does not see why Cain needs to be so heated because the Lord is willing to accept a different offering from Cain and extend His love to Cain so that they have a productive relationship.
 - a) Cain’s unbridled anger showed itself instantly. Furious wrath blazed out, revealing the spirit that was lodged within the heart. Cain became an enemy of God and hostile to his brother. Thus, wounded pride produced envy and a spirit of revenge. This is what brought forth the burning hatred and violence that made murder possible.^[5]
3. Why are you angry – The Lord has preachers every day in so many places on so many networks trying to get our attention. There is no need for us to become highly emotional against someone who is being more blessed than we are, or in a state of frustration about how our relationship with the Lord is working. He is ever present willing to extend grace and mercy so we are in perfect standing with Him.
4. His countenance fell – Cain had no reason to display, by his facial expressions a continuous displeasure towards God. So, people decide what they want to give to the Lord and when the Lord does not bless them as He does others, they become apathetic in their worship towards Him.
5. You do well; Acceptable, pleasant, or well – Hifil, yiqtol (imperfect), 2nd person, masculine, singular active - Cain can endlessly prosper, continuously accumulate more wealth and be in good favor towards the Lord if he simply changes his attitude towards the Lord.
6. You do well; Acceptable, pleasant, or well – The Lord is constantly seeking to gain Cain's attention to let him know that he can be well pleasing to the Lord and have a great relationship with the Lord.
 - a) It is evident from vv. 14 and 16 that God did not withdraw His personal presence and visible intercourse from men, as soon as He had expelled them from the garden of Eden. "God talks to Cain as to a willful child and draws out of him what is sleeping in his heart and lurking like a wild beast before his door. And what

He did to Cain He does to everyone who will but observe his own heart and listen to the voice of God" (Herder). But Cain paid no heed to the divine warning. (From Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.)

7. You do well; Acceptable, pleasant, or well – By the Lord pressing Cain, it only highlights how hard-hearted Cain's heart truly was.
8. Countenance be lifted up - When his relationship with the Lord is good there would be no need for him to be depressed. He can become encouraged and therefore be uplifted in the presence of the Lord.
9. If you do not do well sin is crouching - If what Cain continuously does is not pleasing to the Lord because he refuses to live up to the standards of the Lord, Satan is like a lion approaching its prey ready to pounce on him (1 Peter 5:8-9).
 - a) Sin desires to have Cain (these words show God's interpretation of "desire," the same Heb. word, in Gen. 3:16), but Cain could have the mastery over it. Here is the perpetual struggle between good and evil. Anyone filled with envy and strife is prey for the evil one.^[6]
 - b) The Hebrew word for "crouching" is the same as an ancient Babylonian word referring to an evil demon crouching at the door of a building to threaten the people inside.
 - c) Sin may thus be pictured here as just such a demon, waiting to pounce on Cain – it desires to have him. He may already have been plotting his brother's murder.
10. Its desire is for you - Satan has a very strong attraction towards Cain when he willfully decided to not live up to the standards of the Lord. Satan becomes very excited that Cain provides him this opportunity.
 - a) "Sin" is then portrayed as a doorway demon waiting for its victim to cross the threshold. From the Old Babylonian period in Mesopotamia, such demons were considered evil and were thought to ambush their victims.^[7]
 - b) By this divine analysis we learn that sin has a pervasive power that seizes occasion to enslave its victims (cp. Rom 3:9; 1 Cor 15:56; 1 John 5:19). But Cain is urged to repent lest he be consumed; he cannot claim helplessness nor ignorance, for he has divine counsel. The apostle Paul testified to the inner struggle against the power of sin and conceded that the power of Christ alone could liberate him (Rom 7:15–25). Cain's refusal to deal rightly with his sin permitted his anger to fester into murder.^[8]
11. You must master it - Cain needs to make a decisive decision to cause Satan to come

under his authority so that Satan has no opportunity to control him.

12. Cain told Abel his brother - Cain kept communicating continuously with Abel concerning all that had taken place. This only makes the killing of his brother worst because it demonstrates that they had a good relationship for Cain to share what took place between he and the Lord. Please note, they were together in the field.

a) The word “brother” is repeated seven times (8–11).^[9]

13. It came about - It came about means that time went by after this worship service and the conversation with the Lord. Cain never decided to change his attitude, so Satan had the time he needed to pounce on him so that he had complete control of Cain.
14. Cain rose up and killed him – As a result, Satan had time to gain more and more control of Cain’s mindset (Romans 6:23). Satan gained such control (this word refers to a building being constructed) that Cain would get up and strike his brother killing him.
15. Cain rose up and killed him – The way the murder of his brother is defined here is that Cain kept striking his brother until he was dead, dead (James 1:15). He had become so controlled by Satan, as time passed, his anger grew, as his relationship with the Lord weakened. Satan now has so much control of Cain he can change his emotions for a brother he was once close to, leading him to strike his brother until he was totally dead.
16. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord (vs. 16) - Sincere worship keeps our relationship with the Lord in its rightful place; it keeps us focused. It causes us to reflect on how the Lord faithfully serves us each moment of the day. As a result, we become inspired to worship the Lord with all our hearts.

^[1] Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Ge 4:5). Chicago: Moody Press.

^[2] Henry, M., & Scott, T. (1997). *Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary* (Ge 4:1). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems.

^[3] Ross, A. P. (1985). Genesis. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 34). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^[4] Wenham, G. J. (1987). *Genesis 1–15* (Vol. 1, p. 104). Word, Incorporated.

^[5] Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Ge 4:5). Chicago: Moody Press.

^[6] Ross, A. P. (1985). Genesis. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 34). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^[7] Walton, J. H. (2009). *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* (Vol. 1, p. 38). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

^[8] Mathews, K. A. (1996). *Genesis 1-11:26* (Vol. 1A, p. 271). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

^[9] Brown, D., Fausset, A. R., & Jamieson, R. (n.d.). *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Genesis–Deuteronomy: Vol. I* (p. 66). William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.