

# JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

## Lesson 4: ABEL – A Respected Offering

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### A Brother Killing A Brother

Aim: To show how the death of Abel at the hands of his brother - Cain, pictures the death of Jesus at the hands of His Brother, the nation of Israel.

Key Scriptures: Luke 24:25-27; Genesis 4:1-11; Hebrew 11:4 & 12:24; Matthew 23:35

Our study is entitled **Jesus in the Old Testament**, and is based upon Jesus's encounter with 2 of His Disciples on the road to Emmaus. They had failed to understand that **the Christ must suffer** before He could enter into His glory, and redeem Israel.

*Luke 24:25 Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!*

*26 "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?"*

*27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*

We began our study where Moses began, in Genesis. We have already seen how Jesus, the Word made flesh, was there in the beginning when God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit created the heavens and the earth. In our last two lessons we studied how Adam is 'a type of Him who was to come' – Jesus Christ. Just as Adam's side was opened and a rib removed for

the building of his wife, so Christ's side was pierced and the blood and water flowed out, providing what was needed for the building of a Bride for Christ.

In the previous lesson, 'The Transgression of Adam', we saw how **Eve was deceived by the serpent** and ate from the forbidden tree. **Adam was not deceived**, but in his unfallen state of mind, he knew that redemption would only be possible if he entered into sin with his wife – they both would have to be redeemed together if rulership was to take place. And in this way Adam is a Type of Christ because Jesus – 'who knew no sin' – 'became sin for us, that we might become the righteous of God in Him'.

Following the Fall of Adam and his wife, Adam acted by faith in changing his wife's name from 'Woman' to 'Eve', which means 'life-giver', because she was to be 'the mother of all living'. God then killed an animal, or animals, to clothe Adam and Eve in tunics of skin. This would cover their nakedness, which had resulted from them eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In God's actions we have the first incidence of **death and shed blood** being required **for the forgiveness of sins**. But despite that forgiveness, and despite the fact that they did have spiritual life, they still had to be excluded from the garden of Eden because they were no longer in the image and likeness of God, and no longer fit for a position of rulership at that time.

In today's lesson we shall see how Christ's suffering is seen once again, this time in the account of Cain and Abel. Eve, the mother of all living, from whom the whole human race would come, bore Cain, and then Abel, with the 2 sons born in the image and likeness of Adam (Gen.5:4). Let's read:

#### Observations & Notes:

*Genesis 4:1 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD."*

*2 Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.*

*3 And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.*

*4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering,*

*5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.*

*6 So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?"*

*7 "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 [lit. shall] rule over it."*

*8 Now 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 killed him.*

Before we answer the questions does anyone have any observations (not covered by the following questions and comments) they want to share?

**Q:** What were the sons' occupations, and what might that indicate?

**A:**

In Abel 'a keeper of sheep' and Cain 'a tiller of the ground' we see a distinction with Abel having a focus on spiritual things and Cain on things of the earth, much the same way as Jacob is described as a 'mild man living in tents' & Esau as 'a man of the field'.

**Q:** What did Cain and Abel do in verses 3 & 4?

**A:**

**Q:** How did God feel about their respective offerings?

**A:**

We must not assume that God's respect, or not, of their individual offerings was based upon whether it was the fruit of the ground, or the firstborn of the flock. [Although perhaps it is worth noting that Scripture specifies that Abel's offering was the 'firstborn of his flock', while it does not say anything comparable about Cain's offering being the firstfruits of the ground.] Cain as a tiller of the ground could **only** be expected to bring an offering of the fruit of the ground, as that is all that he would have had available to bring. So there must have been something in connection with what or how Cain gave his offering that was not acceptable to God. As a result Cain became very angry and his countenance fell, meaning literally that his face dropped down.

**Q:** What admonishment, or encouragement, in **v.7** does God give Cain as a result of his anger?

**A:**

**Q:** Where is sin and what does it want?

**A:**

What we are seeing in verse 7 is a description of sin as a person or beast who wishes to consume or devour Cain. This special literary style is called '**personification**', and in this particular case, it gives us a picture of sin being

a predator waiting to hunt down its victim. You might recall this Scripture from the NT:

*1Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

**Q:** According to Gen. 4:8, did Cain conquer or rule over his sin as God had advised him?

**A:**

**Q:** Where were they when this happened?

**A:**

**Q:** Do you remember from your study of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares in Matthew chapter 13 what 'the field' is a picture of?

**A:**

When they were in the field together - the world together - one brother rose up and killed another brother. Cain did not rule over his sin (his anger) and instead, 'Sin' the predator, ruled over him and consumed him.

**Genesis 4:7** is an interesting verse because it lays out for us the history of Cain, from his disobedience to his future restoration. The counsel God gives him provides an opportunity for repentance and to act by faith, and to be accepted. *"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 [lit. shall] rule over it."* The promise to Cain is that he shall rule over his sin. A day of repentance and forgiveness will come. In the same way as Israel, of whom Cain is a type, in the future will experience repentance, forgiveness and acceptance (see 2 Chron.7:14).

Let's read what happened next:

**Observations & Notes:**

*Genesis 4:9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"*

*10 And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground.*

*11 "So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.*

As set forth in Lev.26 & Deu.28 blessings follow obedience and curses follow disobedience
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Did you notice that once again we are seeing the use of personification?

- Abel's blood crying out
- The earth opening its mouth

**Q:** What was the outcome for Cain and his actions?

**A:**

Verses 12 to 16 (not shown) go into details of what transpired after this point with respect to Cain's punishment, protection, and future restoration. And in doing so they provide commentary on verse 7. They prophetically point to a future time with respect to God's dealings with the nation of Israel at the hands of the Gentiles. They also reveal how God's supernatural protection is on both Cain, and Israel, when they are fugitives and vagabonds upon the earth. Vengeance will be on anyone killing them sevenfold. Cain because of his disobedience would suffer dire consequences, but even before Cain slew Abel in v.8, the Lord revealed that Cain would ultimately experience restoration following repentance, ('you **shall** rule over it' [sin]), and likewise Israel in v.7.

Let's now look at some NT verses that comment on the events in Genesis chapter 4 with respect to Abel and his offering followed by his death at the hands of his brother:

**Notes:**

***Hebrews 11:4** By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.*

*Hebrews 12:24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.*

Abel acting 'by faith', which contextually would be to the saving of the soul (Heb.10:39), brought that which God required as an offering. Cain acting apart from faith did not bring that which God required. God must have told them what was required otherwise it would have been impossible for them to act by faith. Faith is believing that which God has said. It would seem, according to the examples in Deuteronomy 12:6 & 14:22, that each was expected to bring of the increase of their respective livelihoods. Abel brought of the firstfruits of his flock, but Cain may have failed to bring of the firstfruits of his crops. (*See Gen.4:3 again*) And apart from faith it is impossible to please God (Heb.11:6).

There are **2 aspects** to the account of Abel's offering in Genesis 4 and they are dealt with in the 2 verses from Hebrews chapter 11 and chapter 12.

**1).** In **Hebrews 11:4** this aspect deals with Abel's obedience to God's command concerning an offering of what was, 'the firstborn of his flock'. Although the offering would have involved death and shed blood, that is not the primary focus in that verse, but rather Abel acting by faith in accordance with God's command as to what he should bring as an offering.

**2).** In **Hebrews 12:24** this aspect of Abel's offering **is** associated with **death and shed blood** rather than the offering of the firstfruits of his flock. It does not refer to the lamb(s) he offered but has to do with Abel as the offering. The aspect of the type of Cain killing Abel.

**Q:** Re-read Hebrews 11:4. How does the more excellent sacrifice that Abel offered still speak today? (*Hint: 1 Samuel 15:22*)

**A:**

The Lord offered Cain opportunity to do that which was required of him (4:7) but he refused, and when he was in the field with his brother he slew him.

Likewise when Jesus was 'in the field' (the world) talking with His Brother, the nation of Israel, the Brother rose up and killed Him just as Cain killed Abel. And while Hebrews 11:4 tells us that Abel's sacrifice was "more excellent" than Cain's, we know from Hebrew 12:24 that Jesus' death on the cross speaks better things than Abel's death. His was "the MORE excellent sacrifice". He was the Passover Lamb without spot or blemish, and because of that, God would accept His death as payment for the sins of His people, and it would mediate a new covenant for His brethren, the Jews.

Even before they crucified Christ, the nation of Israel had had a long history of murder and disobedience. Jesus made reference to that, along with Abel's death, and His own death, during His final week in Jerusalem:

**Notes:**

***Matthew 23:29*** "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous,

*30 "and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.'*

*31 "Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets....*

*34 "Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city,*

***35 "that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar....***

*37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"*

At Jesus's first coming He "came to His own" people (*John 1:11*) Israel, as THE Prophet that Moses had told them about (*Deut. 18:15*); and because they had a history of killing the prophets God sent, so they would be held accountable for **all** the righteous blood shed upon the earth beginning with Abel and up to Zechariah, whom they murdered between the temple and the altar.

And so to state what hopefully is now very obvious:

- Cain is a Type of the nation of Israel who killed their Brother, and
- Righteous Abel, whose blood was shed, is a Type of Christ

The Antitype is always greater than the Type in that it is the fulfillment of the Type. We saw this in the Book of Hebrews, where a comparison is made between the blood shed by Abel at the hands of his brother, and the blood shed by Christ on the cross at the hands of his Brother. The efficacy of Christ's shed blood speaks better things than that of Abel's:

*Hebrews 12:24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.*

Abel's death pointed to Christ's death. In fulfillment of the Type, Christ's death achieved something that Abel's death did not, and never could achieve. However Genesis chapter 4 is a prot**otype** which, being first, sets forth an unchangeable pattern relating to Christ and Israel that is then seen in a number of other OT examples, such as Joseph and his brothers, and Moses and his brethren.

Next lesson we will look at the 3<sup>rd</sup> son of Adam and Eve, Seth, and what he reveals about Jesus from the OT.

Let's pray.