

GROUNDS OF FAITH CAFÉ: “Genesis” (Subtitled: Is there a snake in your Garden too?) Further subtitled: Lessons from the Garden! Lesson 6. (4:1-16)

Introduction: “Genesis” (“In the Beginning”) is a narrative description of the story of God. Chapters 1-11 provide the stories of creation, human origins, the “fall” of humanity, and the ensuing progress of evil – all against the backdrop of God’s enduring patience and love. Today we enter chapter 4 which details the crime and punishment of Cain.

Explanatory overview: By way of mini-review, Chapter 3 described the “fall” of mankind as they dis-respected God’s Lordship, seeking to *gratify self* rather than *glorify God*. Chapter 3 introduced a series of narratives with a common theological structure: sin - punishment - renewal. Scripture depicts Adam & Eve (chap 3); Cain & Able (chap 4); Noah & flood (chap 6-9); tower of Babel (chap 11). Each instance has similarities: sin = rebellion; God punishes; renewal = often in form of a child. The progression reveals:

Characters	Sin	Punishment	Renewal
Adam & Eve	Desire to be “like God” Eating of prohibited tree	Painful childbirth; toil; hierarchical “rule”; expulsion from Garden (from God’s Presence)	Clothed in animal skins Birth of Cain
Cain & Able	Anger --- Murder	Wanderer (expelled from “soil”)	“Mark” on Cain Birth of Seth
Noah & Flood	Social violence on community scale	flood	Sacrifice; Covenant sign; Noah’s descendants
Tower of Babel	Self-gratification (name); fame	Scattering; communication confusion	Abraham

Read: Genesis 4:1-16 completely through. The descent of mankind as they spurn the Lordship of God in favor of self-rule and self-determination is swift. As the chapter opens, we note that Eve has not completely disregarded the relationship she should have with God:

- **Re-read 4:1.** Having just been expelled by God from the Garden of Eden at the end of chapter 3, this chapter begins on an upbeat note. What happens according to this verse?
- **Re-read 4:2-5.** Another child is born to Eve. Interestingly, communication between Eve, her children and God still exists despite their expulsion from the garden. What offerings to the LORD are brought by the children? What does Scripture say was God’s response to the offerings? Now re-read verses 4:3-4. Do these verses provide some clue as to the reason for God’s response? Why did God react as He did? What was Cain’s response?
- **Re-read 4:6-7.** What does Cain’s anger lead to? NOTE: “Sin,” presented in Scripture as a “choice,” is first attributed to Cain. In 4:7, what word picture is used to describe “sin”? Now read James 1:13-15. What parallels do you see, if any, between Cain’s actions, Eve’s actions in 3:6, and the description in James?
- **Re-read 4:8-9.** Apparently seeking a scapegoat for his own perceived rejection by God, Cain kills his brother. Note God’s question and Cain’s response in 4:9: Do you think the question applicable today? In what way are we (or should we be) our brother’s keeper?
- **Re-read 4:10-16.** Remember that God “cursed” the ground in 3:17. This tiller of the soil sheds blood upon the cursed earth. What “curse” does Cain receive, i.e., what does God do to Cain – both in terms of punishment and as an act of grace?