

CONTEXT – FAMILY

- a. V1 “Adam made love to his wife”. KJV ‘knew’ (Hebrew: *yā·daʿ*). Denotes “oneness and total knowledge of the other person. Sexual intercourse is the most intimate of acts, sealing a social, physical, and spiritual relationship. That is why God has reserved it for marriage alone.” (Allan Ross and Gordan Wenham, *NLTASB*, at 12)
- b. V1 ““With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man”” (KJV “I have gotten a manchild”!)
 - i. ‘Cain’ – Hb for ‘bought forth’ or ‘acquired’.
 - ii. Sense of optimism within the curse (echo of *proto evangelium*) 3:15-16.
 - iii. *Yah-weh* or ‘LORD’ 9 /15 verses – “the personal, covenantal name of God in the Hebrew Bible...It signifies God’s eternal, self-existent nature and His faithfulness to His promises.” (*Strong’s Online Lexicon*, <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/3068.htm>)
 - iv. Gen 1-2:3 uses ‘God’ (*ě-lō-hîm*); and 2:4-Ch3 (cf 3:1-5b!) ‘LORD God’ (*Yah-weh ʿě-lō-hîm*)
- c. V2 “Later she gave birth to his brother Abel” – Hb for ‘ephemeral’ or ‘meaningless’ (Ecc 1:2, 12:8)

THE COST OF SACRIFICE

- d. Vv3-4 “Cain brought some of the fruits...Abel...brought...fat portions from some of the firstborn”. “The contrast is not between an offering of plant life and an offering of animal life, but between a careless, thoughtless offering and a choice, generous offering” (Youngblood, “Genesis”, NIVSB, 11)
 - i. Levitical system: consecration grain offering (Deut 26:2); cf a peace offering of animals, *and* a meal in God’s presence (Deut 15:19-23).
 - ii. “Cain, who belonged to the evil one”, see 1 Jhn 3:11-18 – an evil heart is shown by evil deeds, and a righteous heart is revealed by righteous deeds. (cf Heb 11:4)
- e. V4-5 “LORD looked with favor (‘respect’ NKJV) on Abel...but on Cain...he did not look with favor”
 - i. Because “sacrifice is only acceptable to God if it is perfect and costly...he will not be satisfied with second best” (‘Genesis’ by Wenham, *New Bible Commentary*, 64); Rom 12:1.
- f. V5b “So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast”
 - i. How do we react when someone points out our faults?
 - ii. Sin that grows. Jas 1:12-15. “evil desire...conceived...gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death”
- g. V6 “then the LORD said... ‘why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?’” Socratic question!
- h. V7 “If you do what is right will you not be accepted”. God gives agency and volition.
- i. V7 “But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door”. Hb word for crouching (*rō·bêš*) – Babylonian reference to a demon at the door of a building. Cf 1 Pet 5:8.
- j. V7 “it desires to have you, but you must rule over it”
 - i. Cf3:16 with the “desire” of humans to rule over each other. Here sin is personified.
 - ii. *Simul justus et peccator*. Simultaneity: justified *and being* sanctified! A living ambigram!
 - iii. Jesus in Matt 6:21-22 and 1 John 3:15 – yikes, we’re *all* toast!! (And yet, Rom 8:1-2).

RADICAL EVIL

- k. V8 Cain: “Let’s go out to the field.” Cold premeditation.
- l. V8b “Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him”. The first murder. A sacred threshold breached.
- m. V9 LORD: ““Where is your brother Abel?”” (Again, Socratic)
- n. V9 ““I don’t know...Am I my brother’s keeper?”” YES! 1 John 3:14-15; Matt 25:31-46.
- o. V10 “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground” – Gospel: propitiation and expiation.
 - i. NT phrase of “the blood of righteous Abel” when invoking innocent victims whose deaths cry for justice (eg Matt 23:35, Luke 11:51)

- ii. Old covenant v New covenant. “You have come...to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel” (Heb 12:23b-24)

CURSE

- p. Vv11-12 “driven from the ground...no longer yield its crops...You will be a restless wanderer”
 - i. Vv 12, 14, 16 Cain becomes a ‘restless wanderer in the land of wandering’ (Nod 4:16)
 - ii. *The Forest People* by Colin Turnbull, a British cultural anthropologist, details the incredible Mbuti people of Zaïre – where the worst punishment for aberrant behavior was social ostracization.
 - iii. “Underlying these punishments is a principle that recurs throughout Scripture: human sin has a bearing on the fertility of the earth. Whereas God intended humanity to enjoy the earth’s bounty, sin distances people not only from God himself but also from nature” (Desmond Alexander, ESVSB, 58)
- q. V13 Cain: “My punishment is more than I can bear”
 - i. Distressed at the punishment, not the sin. Cf ‘Punishment’ could be translated as ‘my sin’ (perversion, corruption). And he’s sad at being “being hidden from [God’s] presence” V14 .
 - ii. Cf Jesus who took our sin, not just our punishment. 2Cor5:21
 - iii. “Cain responded not with remorse but with self-pity. His sin was virtually uninterrupted: impiety (v.3), anger (v.5), jealousy, deception and murder (v.8), falsehood (v.9) and self-seeking (v.13). The final result was alienation from God himself (vv.14,16).” See Youngblood, *Ibid*, at 12.
- r. V14 “driving me from the land...hidden from your presence...a restless wanderer...whoever finds me will kill me”
 - i. YES: driven from the land, and a restless wanderer.
 - ii. NO: God will never leave us or forsake us! (Hebrews 13:5, Deuteronomy 31:6). Cf V16 where “Cain went out from the LORD’s presence” – of his own volition. Ergo, only *we* can separate us from the love of God. (Rom 8:38-39).
 - iii. NO. He will not be killed. BTW, by who? Trad view: human race still genetically pure and Cain/Seth etc married sisters or neices. CF other views which read Genesis more ‘parabolically’ or symbolically – as a meta-story of ultimate meaning – would say there were others created (in some way) by God. Beware false dichotomies and *non sequiturs* (for the dorky out there a helpful primer article: ‘*Is Evolutionary Science in Conflict with Adam and Eve?*’ by Daniel Gordon Ang, Jon Garvey, David Kwon and S. Joshua Swamidass found at <https://peacefulscience.org/prints/evolution-adam-eve/>. Also see *The Great Partnership: God, Science and the Search for Meaning* by Jonathan Sacks (Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, retired) where he argues that science takes things apart to *see how they work*, but religion puts things together to *see what they mean*. If you’re offended at this point, I sincerely and humbly ask your forgiveness.

GLIMMERS OF HOPE

- s. V15 “the LORD put a mark on Cain.” Birthmark? Brand? Dog!? In the midst of a curse, blessings!
 - i. Hb *’ō-wṭ* – sign or a token, from a physical mark to a supernatural occurrence that serves as evidence of God’s intervention or presence. (E.G. ‘lights’ Gen 1:14; ‘Bow’ Gen 9:12-17; ‘circumcision’ Gen 17:11; Miraculous ‘signs’ Ex 4,7,8,10,12,13). The Cross.
 - ii. Seth’s line (leading to Jesus’ adoptive father Joseph, Luke 3:38). God’s plans are unthwarted.
 - iii. Abel glorified (Heb 11:4) as an exemplar of faith and someone now beyond pain.
 - iv. God redeems the most irredeemable circumstances (Rom 8:28, non-individualistic interpretation!)

Questions for the brave of heart

- How do hangups about intimacy effect my relationship with God, and/or with others?
- When someone observes my faults, I [] argue [] get depressed [] deflect [] get angry [] listen
- My commitment to living sacrificially for God last year was shown in _____.
- What will I do this week to stop the ‘devil baby’ growing in me? (James 1:13-15).
- How wide is my scope of (co)responsibility? What’s most holding me back from growing?