

Scripture Reading: Genesis 4:15,

“3 And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to Jehovah. 4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And Jehovah 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 Jehovah 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 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 & killed him. 9 Then Jehovah 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. 12 When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth." 13 And Cain said to Jehovah, "My punishment is greater than I can bear! 14 Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me." 15 And Jehovah said to him, "Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And Jehovah set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him. 16 Then Cain went out from the presence of Jehovah and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.”

"Jehovah Judges Cain"

Last week we considered the sin of Cain in murdering his brother Abel. We saw Cain completely deny his sin and even talk back to Jehovah God!

- **Thus we come this morning to the judgment of Cain’s sin!**

We will consider what this judgment was, Cain’s response and even a bit about the Mark of Cain and next week we will consider the families of Cain.

Before we begin to look at our text for this morning perhaps it would be good to begin with our promised consideration of what all this has to do with Jesus: How do we see Jesus in this portion of the Book of Beginnings?

- **Some of this is depressing!**

Now obviously we know that Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead at the end of history, so seeing God judge the sin of Cain can help us understand the role of Jesus as judge.

But there is also another important lesson to learn from the accounts of these days before the flood: What we saw last week in the life of Cain, what we will consider next week with the families of Cain and finally what we will see with the whole world just prior to the flood is an honest picture of the sinfulness of sin!

- **God is showing us that He was very serious when He told Adam that he would die the death if he ate the forbidden fruit.**

Cain was living just outside the Garden and yet could turn away from God and killed his own brother!

Those who followed Cain could not learn from the punishment of Cain but went on to commit greater and greater sins and finally God has to destroy all things living, save Noah and those on the Ark with the great flood.

- **All of this is given here in the Book of Beginnings, not to depress us, but to show us the true need for Jesus to come as the Savior of the World!**

In other words, what we are studying here is the sinfulness of sin and understanding it helps us understand the need for the work of Jesus.

So with that in mind let us consider how God dealt with the sin of Cain:

10 And [Jehovah] 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. 12 When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth."

As we saw last week, Cain's sin has not been kept secret; despite his best efforts to hide the body of his brother:

- **God says that Abel's blood cries out from the ground and since Cain refused to confess his crime he must face the punishment for his crime and live under the dominion of sin.**

After the flood God will sanction the death penalty for murder and there is much discussion as to why this was not Cain's proper punishment here. Most believe, and I think rightly so, that God was making an example of Cain that others in that time should have learned from: After Adam's sin part of God's judgment was that his work would now come with sweat and toil but it would still yield fruit as we saw in the lives of Cain & Abel as farmers & shepherds. Now Cain is taken even further away from God's blessings where even with sweat and toil he would have no yield.

I think this curse from the earth relates to the second part of God's curse: Cain would not be able to settle down and be a shepherd or farmer any longer: Cain's desire to be self-sufficient had been his downfall and now he would be dependent on others. What follows in verse 13 shows that Cain clearly understood the severity of his punishment...

13 "And Cain said to Jehovah, "My punishment is greater than I can bear! 14 Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me."

I think that Cain's fear is twofold, fearing that righteous people like his brother would want to avenge Abel's blood and that selfish wicked people like himself would not want to support someone who could not produce a harvest.

In either case, God does not want Cain killed so in verse 15 we read:

"And Jehovah said to him, "Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And Jehovah set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him."

- **So what was the mark of Cain?**

Yes, you will find lots of speculations from some sort of mark on his forehead to an actual physical handicap of some sort. Whatever it was, it was there to communicate God's displeasure with anyone who kills Cain and to remind them what their punishment would be.

Even if it were a very visible sign, God would still have had to communicate what it meant to those who saw it, so I think we could argue that it did not have to be a visible sign: Think of how God identifies His people in the Old & New Testaments! Neither circumcision nor baptism is something that is visible on the recipients after the ceremony.

- **Circumcision is covered by a man's clothing and those who are baptized do not stay wet.**

And yet we often see God warning people about not doing harm to His people, like Psalm 105: "14 He permitted no one to do them wrong; Yes, He rebuked kings for their sakes, 15 Saying, "Do not touch My anointed ones, And do My prophets no harm.""

- **So whatever the mark of Cain was, it was clear what God wanted.**

16 “Then Cain went out from the presence of Jehovah and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.””

So once again we see a change of location and I want to come back to that fact in just a moment, but first I need to say a few words about Cain’s confession, or lack thereof. Last week we saw a complete denial on the part of Cain and even some back-talk aimed at Jehovah God. This week there seems to be more awareness of his sin as Cain cries out,

- “My punishment is greater than I can bear!”

This might sound like a man ready to confess and return to his God, but such is not the case: Cain is now sorry that he has been caught and must face punishment for his sin, but he is not sorry that he has sinned:

- He is not honestly confessing his sin and there is a big difference.

Sin is so deceitful in our lives: When we do small things that seem to go unnoticed we can slowly wander away until we can no longer do things in faith as was the case with Cain bringing unfaithful sacrifices. Then when this leads to scandalous sin, which is there for all the world to see, we become more focused on the punishment and how embarrassed we will be rather than honestly coming in repentance to God, no matter what the consequences might be.

We have all wandered down this path to some extent or another. Those raised in faithful covenant homes may well have the blessing of never had moved beyond the short account stage, bringing their sins faithfully before God’s throne before a root of bitterness or the spirit of rebellion could have the opportunity to take hold...

- Truly these are testimonies that are well pleasing to God!

Others of us who wandered away or came to Jesus later in life must live with greater consequences for our sin...

- But we still needed to come back to God in honest confession before we could be restored to a right relationship, which is another testimony of God’s Grace!

In both cases the call for today is to walk faithfully and to not wander from God’s presence, heeding the warning we see in the life of Cain & one that is given to us at the beginning of the Book of Proverbs.

- The Book of Proverbs was written to make us wise because the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord!

But Proverbs also gives us sober warnings and the one in Chapter one should bring images of Cain back to our mind whenever we read them...

Proverbs 1: “20 Wisdom calls aloud outside; She raises her voice in the open squares. 21 She cries out in the chief concourses, At the openings of the gates in the city She speaks her words: 22 “How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? For scorners delight in their scorning, And fools hate knowledge. 23 Turn at my rebuke; Surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.”

- *Remember how God told Cain that if he did right he would be accepted!*
- *But Cain refused which is what is now addressed here in Proverbs...*

24 “Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hand and no one regarded,
25 Because you disdained all my counsel, And would have none of my rebuke,
26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes, 27 When your terror comes like a storm, And your destruction comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you.
28 “Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. 29 Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord,
30 They would have none of my counsel And despised my every rebuke. 31 Therefore they shall eat the

fruit of their own way, And be filled to the full with their own fancies. 32 For the turning away of the simple will slay them, And the complacency of fools will destroy them;

- 33 But whoever listens to me will dwell safely, And will be secure, without fear of evil."

So let me draw back in conclusion and consider again what the locations mentioned in the life of Cain here in the Book of Beginnings might mean for us today...

- What can be easily overlooked are the geographical references in this story of Cain.

Man was created in the Sanctuary of God, the Garden that was planted in the land of Eden. Cain's parents were cast out of the Garden into the land of Eden because of their sin.

- Cain could have been faithful as was his brother Abel bringing the right sacrifices with faith, believing that God would make a way for man to return to God's sanctuary.

Instead Cain brings his own works without faith and refuses to heed God's warning and instead rises up and kills his faithful brother.

- Now there is a further casting out as Cain leaves even the land of Eden and goes into the wilderness of the world to live as a vagabond.

As we have seen, Cain reaches a point where he can be sorry that he sinned, but not able to be sorry for his sins, to confess them honestly in faith. So Cain moves away from God in his heart AND in his location...

- Out from the Garden and now out from the land into the world.

As we move forward in the Old Testament God demonstrates man's need by setting up a Tabernacle and then the Temples as pictures of what Jesus would come to do.

Again, locations are an important part of the picture: The Holy of Holies is the sanctuary of God like the Garden and only the High Priest was allowed to enter, and then only once a year with blood.

Outside the Holy of Holies was the Holy place where the sacrifices were made like those of Abel.

- Beyond that you had the court of the Gentiles and the world like where Cain was sent to wander.

One desiring to be in right relationship with God had to come honestly confessing their sin with sacrifices of faith and believe that the High Priest represented how God would eventually crush the head of Satan and save His people from their sins.

- In Jesus we see this in His earthly ministry and His final work.

Jesus begins His ministry in the country side in the region of Galilee, He comes to the courts of the Temple to do much of His teaching...

- And finally He enters the Holy of Holies when the temple curtain is torn as He dies on the cross as THE sacrifice for sin.
- Jesus is raised in power and ascends to the true Holy of Holies!

The Book of Hebrews goes to great lengths to show how all of this was in reality carried out in the true Holy of Holies in heaven where Jesus comes as the lamb slain from before the foundations of the world bringing His righteous Bride to His Father.

Now we know that our salvation is restoring a right relationship with God and it is often referred to in the New Testament as being 'in Christ.'

In fact you will find the phrase 'in Christ' 85 times in the New Testament used in a variety of ways and we can understand many of them better if we remember the imagery of the locations here in the Book of Beginnings. Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God and to be in Him is to be seated in the heavenly as we proclaim each week after our confession of sin.

Those confessions are made as we are gathered together lifting up our prayers and songs and receiving instruction from God's Word and feasting at His Table as Abel did just outside the garden and the priest and people did in the Temple. Then we are sent out into the world, not to be a part of the world or as outcasts...

- But as ambassadors of Jesus to call people back to God through the Gospel.

Those who believe can return to God, coming with honest confession of their sins and then being lifted up to the Holy of Holies in Jesus! Listen to how the Apostle Paul describes all this in the opening verses of his epistle to the Ephesian Church:

"1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him. 11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, 12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. 13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory."

- Those are the abundant blessings that we have in Christ!

And thus the lesson that we should learn from Cain is that we must not wander away from Christ thinking we can get by within ourselves or in the world! As we discussed last week we do not know what small decision first led Cain to doubt God or put his trust in himself but he reached a point where he could no longer offer the sacrifices in faith or be able to respond to God's call for repentance. Thus he wandered even further from God as we shall see in more detail next week.

We are those who have believed the Gospel and put our faith in Christ!

As Paul declared in I Corinthians 15:1 "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain."

- We are to hold fast and remain in Jesus!

And we don't do so in our own strength...

Hebrews 4:14 "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy & find grace to help in time of need."