

BIBLE STORY: CAIN MURDERS HIS BROTHER ABEL

Genesis 4:1-12

Central Thoughts

- All human life is sacred from the time of conception.
- God desires to protect the gift of human life by the Fifth Commandment.
- The self-centered nature of sin desires to control us and to destroy our love for others.
- Cain murdered Abel because he believed in himself and hated the grace of God.
- Abel's offering was accepted because he trusted in the Lord's mercy rather than himself.
- Jesus saves and protects the gift of life by laying down His life for us upon the cross.

Discussion Questions

What is the Fifth Commandment?

You shall not murder.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need.

What does God wish to protect with the Fifth Commandment?

The gift of life

What does it mean that "Adam knew Eve his wife"?

It means that they came together as one flesh so that a child was conceived in her womb.

What does the name "Cain" mean?

It means "gotten" or "acquired"

What is Eve really confessing with the words "I have gotten a man from the LORD"?

That the son born to her was the promised Seed who would crush the serpent's head. It is as if she were saying, "I have gotten a man who is the Lord."

What does Eve's statement indicate about her faith?

She believed in the promise of the Seed of the Woman who would save us from sin and death.

What does the name "Abel" mean?

Breath

What does Abel's name teach us?

Man is fleeting, like a breath. His life was short.

What was Cain's occupation and who does he represent?

Cain was a tiller of the dust of the ground from which all mankind came. He represents all sinful men.

What was Abel's occupation and who does he represent?

Abel was a shepherd. He represents the Good Shepherd who would lay down His life in death for the sheep.

What did each son of Adam and Eve bring to the Lord?

Cain brought an offering from the fruit of the ground and Abel brought an offering from the firstlings of his flock.

Since each man brought the best of their crops or flock to the Lord, why was Abel's accepted but Cain's rejected?

Cain brought his offering to the Lord with a works-righteous faith. He believed the Lord should bless him because of his offering. Abel brought his offering to the Lord with faith in the grace of God rather than his works. Note: Hebrews 11:4 teaches us that faith in the grace of God in Christ is the reason why Abel's offering was accepted. His offering was a confession of his faith in Christ: "By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous..."

According to Hebrews 11:6, what is it to please God or “do well” and what does this teach us about what gives us power over sin?

Faith in Christ pleases God, and without faith we do not have the power to resist sin which lies at the door of our heart and will, and tries to rule over us (Genesis 4:7).

Why did Cain become angry and murder his brother?

He believed in himself. He was full of self-righteous pride, so the sin that lay at the door of his heart ruled over him and he murdered his brother. He hated his brother because he hated the grace of God that his brother believed in. Self-righteous unbelief is the cause of all Christian persecution.

What had his self-righteous faith turn Cain into?

He became self-centered and he had no love for his brother. “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

When the Lord calls Cain to acknowledge his sin, what is his only response?

“My punishment is greater than I can bear!” He also fears being killed as a fugitive who is made to wander the earth.

How does God show mercy to Cain as a sign to all sinners?

He sets a mark on Cain so that no one will kill him.

What does Cain’s murder of the shepherd Abel prefigure?

How men from the dust would rise up in self-righteous unbelief to crucify Jesus.

What does Jesus’ willing sacrifice upon the cross and His mercy toward Cain teach us about the gift of life under the Fifth Commandment?

Human life is sacred and is to be protected. Jesus saved us from death by willingly sacrificing Himself on our behalf. As the self-righteous faith of Cain caused him to have no love for others, Jesus’ faith in His Father’s lovingkindness moved Him to love us in His sacrifice upon the cross.

Meditation on the Bible Story

In the Fifth Commandment, God wishes to protect His gift of life from the time a human being is conceived in the womb of his mother. Not only is murder forbidden by the Fifth Commandment, but so also is every way in which we might be tempted to hurt or harm our neighbor. Faith in ourselves and our own accomplishments or desires always turns us into selfish and loveless people who do not care for others. Hatred is a form of murder. It flows from a desire to destroy those who have what we want or think we deserve. Cain and Abel both brought the best of their offerings to the Lord, but the faith of their hearts was very different. Cain believed in himself and expected the Lord to reward him for his works. When the Lord did not reward him, he became angry at God and the one whom God had favored: his brother Abel. Abel believed in the grace of God that he did not deserve. His offering was a confession of faith in the Lord’s gift of salvation, rather than a confession of faith in himself. “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6). The Lord described sin to Cain. It is like a monster that lurks by the door of our heart, mind, and will. It is selfish and loveless. It desires to control us. Sin overpowered Cain so that he hated and murdered his brother. We see that he only loved himself when he said, “I do not know [where Abel is]. Am I my brother’s keeper?” God’s Law in the Fifth Commandment teaches us to love our brother more than we love ourselves. What the Fifth Commandment demands, Jesus did for us in His suffering and death upon the cross. Even though we deserved to be hated and destroyed by God, Jesus sacrificed His own life so that we might live. His patient long-suffering love for us is seen in the mark that He placed upon Cain, desiring his repentance. Love and concern for our neighbor in need flows from faith in Christ who loves us and who has freely forgiven us all our sin.

Prayer on the Bible Story

O Lord, we confess that sin lies at our door and desires to rule our hearts and minds. Spare us from believing in ourselves as Cain did, and give us the faith of Abel who trusted in Your love and mercy in Christ. By the gift of Your grace and forgiveness teach us to protect the gift of human life and to help and befriend our neighbor in his every need, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



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