



Village Logos Project

Cedar Plan

Lesson 3

Genesis 4: God, Cain, and Abel

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Introduction

The first three chapters of Genesis have introduced themes that will reverberate throughout the rest of Scripture. In chapter 4, the aftermath of the Fall both develops these themes and sets up new ones.

Assignments

Days 1–4

Reread Genesis 1–3 to refresh your memory of the background leading into Genesis 4. Then carefully and prayerfully read Genesis 4 several times, at least once per day. Ruminates on it during your study time and as you go about your daily activities.

Copy the whole chapter by hand into your notebook and make notes of your observations, including key words and phrases, things you haven't noticed before, connections to other Biblical passages, or anything else that stands out. Read a few different translations and note any meaningful differences. Keep an eye out for natural divisions/transitions in the text and for literary structures and patterns, then use them to create an outline of the chapter.

In the first lesson, we looked at the word translated *God* in Genesis 1. The Bible refers to God in many ways. Three of the most significant are as follows:

- *Elohim*. A generic word for a god or gods. In the Old Testament it usually refers to the true God who created the universe. It can also designate false gods or beings falsely worshipped as gods. Sometimes it may also refer to other heavenly beings (e.g. Psalm 8:5).
- *Adonai*. A respectful title meaning “Lord” or “Master”.
- *YHWH or Yahweh*. The personal name of the God of the Hebrew Bible. Most English translations render this name as “LORD” to

What You Will Need for This Study

- Your primary study Bible
- Concordance
- *Patriarchs and Prophets*
- One or more other translations for comparison
- A notebook

distinguish it from “Lord” for *Adonai*. Sometimes it is rendered as Jehovah. The substitution of the title (*Adonai*) instead of the name (*Yahweh*) goes back to Jewish taboos on pronouncing the divine name.

Our chapter ends with a noteworthy statement about the name of YHWH, which we’ll come to later. For now, read through Genesis 1–4 again and note how God is referred to in different passages:

- God (*Elohim*)
- The LORD God (*YHWH Elohim*)
- The LORD (*YHWH*)

In many scholarly circles, it is fashionable to see the different ways of referring to God as evidence for distinct literary traditions that later editors stitched together. Can you think of any other explanations?

Days 5–8

Continue reading the chapter every day. Explore the following questions and any others that arise out of your reading. Use the skills you’ve learned in previous lessons to dig in deeper on key words.

- In what ways do you see fulfillment of the creation ideal in this chapter? In what ways do you see results of the Fall and curse? (Murder is the most obvious one—anything else?)
- What do you make of the idiomatic use of the word *know* (Hebrew: יָדָע *yād_a*, Strong’s # H3045) in verses 1, 17, 25, and similar passages elsewhere in the Bible?
 - Does it suggest anything about how the Hebrew worldview

saw sexual relations? What, if any, implications does this have for the concept of “casual sex”?

- Does it suggest anything about what the concept of knowledge meant to ancient Hebrews? How does this compare to what knowledge normally means in modern Western culture? How does this comparison help you understand other Bible passages that might otherwise be confusing or disconcerting? (For example, God not wanting humans to receive “knowledge of good and evil”—what does this actually mean?)
- What does Eve mean by her statement at Cain’s birth?
- Consider the two brothers’ occupations in light of Genesis 1:26–29, 2:15, and 3:17–23. How is each brother carrying out the creation commission, experiencing the curse, or both?
- Notice the two things the text says the LORD had regard for and the two things He did not have regard for (v 4–5). What is significant about the mention of both the brothers and their offerings, and not just the brothers or just the offerings?
- The text does not explicitly say why one brother and his offering were accepted and the other not, nor does it explain how the LORD showed His regard or disregard. Do you see any hints in the text? Think about explanations you have heard. Can you find evidence here or elsewhere in the Bible either for or against those explanations?
- What does Cain’s reaction reveal about the motivation behind his offering?
- Consider God’s first response to Cain (4:6–7). What does it reveal about God’s character, particularly how He relates to erring humans?
 - Where else have we seen language similar to the end of verse 7? Compare the two passages. How are their meanings related?
 - The interpretation of the Hebrew phrase in these two passages is controversial, as can be seen by comparing a variety of translations. Can you find any good reasons to support one

interpretation over others?

- God presents two possible paths in verse 7; Cain follows one in verse 8. What does this imply about the reality of free will? What would you say to someone who argued that God predetermines all outcomes, and the appearance of choice is an illusion?
- Verse 9 begins the second investigative judgment scene in Genesis. Why does God begin with a question?
- The narrative does not record any of Abel's words. How does this literary choice heighten the impact of verse 10?
- Look up other uses of the word *cry* (Hebrew קָרָא *tsâ'aq*, Strong's # H6817; noun form קִרְיָא *tsa'âqâh*, Strong's # H6818). Pay special attention to uses directed toward God.
- What can we learn about both God's justice and His mercy from the dialogue with Cain?
- A later study will examine the related concepts of mark and seal throughout the Bible. If you want to get a head start, do a word study on the work *mark* in verse 15.
- In the last half of the chapter, what echoes do you see of previous patterns? How did Cain's sin affect future generations in addition to the effects of the fall of Adam and Eve?
- This section closes with Seth and his line (the chapter divisions are not original, but in this case chapter 5 is clearly the beginning of a new section). What does this literary arrangement emphasize?
- What is the significance of the end of verse 26: "At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD"? Does it mean they had never addressed YHWH by name before?

Days 9–14

Continue daily reading of Genesis 4. Choose meaningful verses to commit to memory.

Read *Patriarchs and Prophets* chapter 5 and at least the first two pages of chapter 6. What themes does Ellen White emphasize in the story of Cain

and Abel? How does she connect it to the Great Controversy motif that is the theme of the *Conflict* series?

Compare your notes to E. G. White's observations. Anytime you both comment on the same text, event, or idea, categorize the relationship between your observations and hers as follows:

1. **Unison:** You and White said pretty much the same thing. You may or may not have used similar words, but the ideas are the same. This is especially likely to happen if you have read her writings extensively before.
2. **Harmony:** Your take was different from White's, but they don't contradict. Your ideas and hers can both be true at the same time and may even complement each other.
3. **Dissonance:** It's difficult or impossible to see how your ideas can be reconciled with *Patriarchs and Prophets*. This may signal a need for further study. Read the Biblical text again carefully to see if you've missed anything. Read White carefully to make sure you've correctly understood her inspired intent. If your observations still don't fit into one of the first two categories, note this as an area for further study.

Prayerfully consider what God is teaching you personally through this study. How will it affect your life? What commitments will you make in response to what you've learned? What will you share with someone else in the near future?

Write 2–3 pages about what you've learned from your study of Genesis

4. Share your writing with some Christian friends and ask for their feedback.

