

# Learn to Read Genesis Effectively

Distance Learning Programme

Session 5



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## **SESSION 5**

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## Genesis 4 and 5 – Cain and Abel



Read Genesis 4 and 5  
before you start this session

### 4 v 1 to 7 – First sons of Adam and Eve



Read Genesis 4 v 1 to 7  
again if necessary

*4 v 1 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the LORD.”*

What can we learn from Eve’s comment?

The *New International Version* says “*With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man.*”

She may have believed that he was the descendant referred to in chapter 3 v 15 – the one who would “bruise the head” of the serpent who had deceived her.

*4 v 2 Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.*

God had given Adam and Eve fruit and vegetables to eat (Genesis 1 v 29). This suggests that Abel cared for the sheep for some purpose other than to eat them – possibly for their skins for clothing (Genesis 3 v 21) or their wool.

*4 v 3 to 5 And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering.*



Why was Abel's offering accepted and Cain's rejected?

It is all too easy to assume that the problem was the kind of sacrifice offered (animal or vegetable) – but grain offerings were later acceptable under the Law of Moses (Leviticus 2). Notice also that it is first Abel, *then* his offering that are respected by God, and it is first Cain and *then* his offering that are not respected by God.

**Echoes -**  
Genesis  
4 v 4

There are echoes here in Micah 6 v 6 to 8; Psalm 40 v 6 to 8; Psalm 51



- Abel knew the principles of an acceptable sacrifice. Perhaps we can assume that Cain should have known them as well
- Abel's offering was made "by faith" or as a result of trust and belief in God as Hebrews 11 v 4 tells us
- Cain's offering was made with a different attitude, as is shown by his subsequent actions

*4 v 6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." (New International Version)*

**Echoes -**  
Genesis  
4 v 6 & 7

Romans 6 v 11 to 23; 7 v 21 to 25

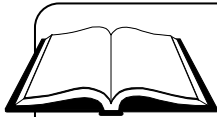


Did Cain have the right to be angry with God?



- Cain had no respect for God and thought God ought to accept an offering made on his own terms. This was the second rebellion against God's authority
- Cain would have been accepted if he had agreed that God is always in the right
- If he continued to be angry without cause, and if he could not conquer his pride and repent, sin would master him (and he would become its "slave" – see Romans chapters 6 and 7)
- We must learn the same lessons

## 4 v 8 to 15 – The first murder



Read Genesis 4 v 8 to 15

*4 v 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 and killed him.*

**X-Ref -**  
Genesis  
4 v 8

1 John 3 v 12

The margin of *The New King James Version* tells us that many ancient manuscripts have extra information in this verse:

*Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; “**Let us go out to the field.**” and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.*

This suggests that Cain persuaded Abel to go out into the field with him in order to kill him secretly. The murder was therefore premeditated.

4 v 9 *Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”*

**X-Ref -**  
Genesis  
4 v 9

1 John 3 v 11-18

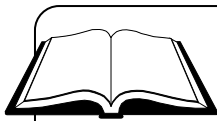
In these verses, the Apostle John uses Cain’s bad example to teach believers that they must love their fellow-believers.

Back to the Genesis account again:



What was the LORD trying to persuade Cain to do?  
What was Cain’s reaction?

Cain was given the opportunity to confess what he had done, but he denied all knowledge of the matter:



Read Genesis 4 v 10 to 15

4 v 13 ... *“My punishment is greater than I can bear!”*

The *Revised Version* has the alternative *“Mine iniquity [or crime] is greater than that it may be forgiven”*.

If this is correct, then Cain did repent at that time, but couldn’t believe in God’s mercy. He was still more concerned about his own wellbeing than the honour of God.



- Repentance must primarily be based on our respect for God
- It should not be self-centred



## 4 v 16 to 24 – The family of Cain



Read Genesis 4 v 16 to 24

**X-Refs -**  
Genesis  
4 v 16

2 Kings 13 v 23; 24 v 20; Jeremiah 23 v 39; 52 v 3

Cain set out on his wanderings, turning his back on God and all he had known.

*4 v 16 Cain ... dwelt in the land of Nod ...*



Look at the entry for “Nod”  
in the *Young’s Concordance* entries  
on page 8

*4 v 17 ... And he built a city ...*

These first chapters of Genesis record that men and women lived to great ages and the population would have grown rapidly. Cain attempted to find security by building the first recorded city – probably for his (by then extensive) family. There is an echo here in Hebrews 11, in which the faithful men and women of Old Testament times are distinguished by their preference to remain strangers and pilgrims, with “no continuing city” (Hebrews 13 v 14), because they looked forward to a better city “to come”.

Verses 16 to 24 of Genesis 4 show the beginnings of a society uninfluenced by God’s principles:

- Lamech had two wives (v 19)
- He was violent and committed murder (v 23)
- He was proud and arrogant (v 23 and 24)
- He boasted about killing his attacker (see Matthew 5 v 38 to 42 for Jesus’ comments on how to treat those who treat us badly)

## 4 v 25 and 26 – The birth of Seth



Read Genesis 4 v 25 and 26



Look at the entry for “Enos”  
in the *Young’s Concordance* entries  
on page 8

Seth showed that he realised the frailty of human nature when he named his son “Enos” or “Enosh” in *The New King James Version*.

*4 v 26 Then men began to call on the name of the LORD.*

**X-Refs -**  
Genesis  
4 v 26

Genesis 12 v 8; 26 v 25; 1 Kings 18 v 24; Psalm 116 v 17;  
Joel 2 v 32; Zephaniah 3 v 9

These verses allow us to work out what “calling on the name of the LORD” meant. It seems to imply “offering acceptable worship to God”.

## 5 v 1 to 5 – The life and death of Adam



Read Genesis 5 v 1 to 5

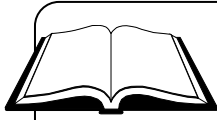


What do we learn from this brief summary of Adam’s life?



- Adam was made in the likeness of God
- He had a son, Seth, in his likeness
- Adam died after 930 years – a long time after the death sentence was passed. He may have begun to think that God had forgotten, but God always keeps His promises, whether for reward or punishment

## 5 v 6 to 32 – The family of Seth



Read Genesis 5 v 6 to 32

The remainder of the chapter traces the family of Seth down to Noah, covering a period of approximately 1,800 years. The same list is found in 1 Chronicles 1 v 1 to 4, as the marginal references tell us.



What impression do we receive of Seth and his descendants?  
Did they follow the example of Cain or Abel?



- Enoch respected God (Genesis 5 v 22 to 24)
- Lamech (not the same man as ch 4 v 23) showed that God was in his thoughts when he named Noah (verse 32)
- Noah also respected God, as we shall see in Genesis chapter 6

## Summary

In Chapter 4 we begin to read about two kinds of people – those like Cain who had no time for God and those like Abel who respected God's principles.

Cain:

- Ignored God's principles of sacrifice
- Murdered Abel who did respect God's principles
- Had descendants who perpetuated the godless way of life

Abel:

- Respected God's principles of sacrifice
- Tried to obey God

Chapter 5 shows that Abel's respect for God's commands was carried on by Seth's descendants down to Noah.

## Optional assignment 5

### The two ways of life

We have seen that Cain and Abel had very different outlooks on life. Cain was intent on “doing his own thing”, as we would say today; Abel respected God’s standards.

Have a look at everything that is said of Cain and see how it is all reflected in our modern world which has also largely decided to turn its back on God. To give you the whole picture, here is a list of other verses where Cain is mentioned, in addition to Genesis 4:

Hebrews 11 v 4; 1 John 3 v 12; Jude 11

Then have a look at all that is said about Abel and see what kind of attitude we should have if we wish to be included in God’s purpose. Again, here are the verses where Abel is mentioned:

Matthew 23 v 35; Luke 11 v 51; Hebrews 11 v 4; 12 v 24

## Young’s Concordance entries

### **NOD**, *wandering*.

A land East of Eden, supposed by some to be China or Tartary

Gen. 4. 16. dwelt in the land of N. on the east of Eden

### **ENOS**, *mortal*.

Son of Seth and grandson of Adam (B.C. 3769-2864)

Gen 4. 26 And to Seth ... and he called his name E.  
 5. 6 an hundred and five years , and begat E.  
 5. 7 And Seth lived after he begat E. eight  
 5. 9 E. lived ninety years, and begat Cainan  
 5. 10 E. lived after he begat Cainan eight hun.  
 5. 11 the days of E. were nine hundred and