

=EVENTS FROM GENESIS=

Lesson 2

Cain and Abel

AIM: to teach each pupil that his own personal choice determines his relationship with God.

POINT OF CONTACT: Think of two objects that begin their existence with exactly the same properties, but have an entirely different end. We could draw up this illustration: Two drops of water are falling from a cloud toward earth. Each drop of water has the same origin. Each has the same chemical properties. Each drop is falling through the same atmosphere. One drop of water, however, lands in a swift-moving mountain stream; the other, into a deep pond that has no outlet nor inlet. The first drop of water remains clear and pure, serving its purpose of supplying good water; the second drop of water becomes infested with algae and dirt because of the stagnant condition of the waters.

INTRODUCTION: Our lesson for this week is the second in a series of lessons from Genesis. We will compare the lives of two brothers. We will see that each person who has ever lived on the earth has had the same opportunity for salvation and everlasting life as every other person; his end depends upon what he does with this opportunity. We will discuss Cain and Abel as we read of them in Genesis 4.

I. THEY WERE BOTH BORN WITH EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES.

1. They were born of the same parents.
 - 1) Adam and Eve were the father and the mother of Cain and Abel.
 - 2) Cain was the firstborn. Abel was Cain's younger brother.
 - 3) They had the same parental training.
2. They had the same home and neighborhood environment. Before the birth of Cain, Adam and Eve had been banished from the Garden of Eden and had made their home in an area that was by now much less beautiful than their garden paradise.
3. They had the same spiritual teachings. Adam had obviously taught his sons concerning his first home, the temptation brought by Satan, God's curse upon the earth, God's sentence of death upon people, and God's condemnation of Satan. Adam and Eve knew of God's promise to send a Saviour Who would be victorious over Satan. They knew that innocent blood must be shed in order that sin be covered. Notice Genesis 3:14-24. Cain and Abel had to learn these teachings from their parents. Hebrews 9:22 has always been true. (Note: From the beginning of the history of man, man has known of the true, living God. His ideas about God have not evolved with the progress of man; man has been permitted by God to suffer degeneration in his knowledge of Him, because of his rejection of Him. Read Romans 1:16-32.) Cain might have had even more of an opportunity to understand man's relationship with God than Abel, for it seems that Eve thought that God was already sending His Promised One when she gave birth to Cain because she said, "I have gotten a man from the LORD." (Genesis 4:1b)

II. THEY WERE BORN TO FULFILL IDENTICAL PURPOSES.

1. They, like all people, were born to fellowship with God. God came and talked with Adam, as we read in Genesis 3:8, and throughout history God has made known the way that people might come to talk and to dwell with Him.
2. They were made to have dominion over all things in the earth and to bring others to Him. This truth is taught in Genesis 1:26, 28; Psalm 8:6; Proverbs 11:30; John 15:1, 2.
3. They were to "multiply, and replenish the earth." See Genesis 1:28.

III. THEY WERE BORN WITH THE SAME POSSESSIONS.

1. They brought nothing into the world. No person brings any material possessions with him when he is born. He has no material advantage over any other person. I Timothy 6:7a, "For we brought nothing into this world." (Being firstborn, Cain would, however, gain the advantage over Abel because of possessing the birthright. The eldest son in a family, upon his father's death, would step into his father's position as the head of the family, and he would also inherit twice as much of his father's estate as any other member of the family.)
2. They were constructed the same.

- 1) They were obviously of the same able body because they were both able to carry on farming pursuits. Abel was a shepherd; Cain raised crops of food, as we learn in Genesis 4:2.
- 2) They each had a soul. The destiny of their souls would be determined by what each of them would do with God's offer of eternal life.
- 3) They each had a will. They could choose to come to God or not to come to Him.
 - a. Cain chose not to accept God's way to come to Him. Cain raised vegetables and grains and fruits, perhaps. Whatever he raised, he chose to bring his produce as his offering to the Lord. This was not an acceptable offering. In the first place, it did not fit God's plan. In the second place, it was directly opposed to God's plan, for the ground had been cursed by God—it was fruit that was coming from a cursed earth. See Genesis 3:17-19.
 - b. Abel chose to conform to God's plan. Abel brought a firstborn sheep whose blood was shed.

IV. THEY WERE BOTH RECIPIENTS OF GOD'S LOVING MERCY. (God wanted both of them to come unto Him.)

1. God let Abel know that the sacrifice he had brought was acceptable. God saw Abel's sacrifice. Genesis 4:4b, "And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering." It's almost as though God said, "Abel, that's it. That is the way that you are supposed to come to Me. You have trusted in My Word, Which says that innocent blood must be offered for the payment of sin as a substitute for your own blood." Read Hebrews 11:4.
2. God let Cain know that he had not come in God's prescribed way, as we see in Genesis 4:5-7.
 - 1) Cain was angry that his sacrifice was not acceptable to God. He showed his anger and his displeasure at the fact that his way of worshipping God did not please Him.
 - 2) God reasoned with Cain to get him to review what he had just done and to see the folly of his offering. God tried to get Cain to admit that he was a sinner. He also pleaded with him to accept the Gospel. Read Genesis 4:7. The Gospel is just outside the door of a man's unsaved heart. See Revelation 3:20. God was also telling Cain that his sin would not change his right to be able to exercise his birthright over Abel. He could still be respected and have the right of spiritual leadership over the family; he should just accept God's plan for redemption. God was pleading with Cain to repent.
 - 3) Cain resisted God's pleading. Someone once said, "It is a certain sign of an unhumiliated heart to quarrel with those rebukes which we have, by our own sin, brought upon ourselves."
3. God tried once more to get Cain to admit his sinful condition.
 - 1) This was after Cain had murdered his brother, Abel. Cain had been talking with his brother in the field. Whatever the conversation was, there had been a resentment building up in Cain over the fact that God had showed favor to Abel's offering and that He had not to Cain's offering. Cain was rejecting God and was therefore blind to the fact that God loved him, just as He loved Abel, but that the difference was that Abel had not rejected God, but Cain had. (Down through history many servants of the Lord have been killed by those who hated Christ. Matthew 23:35 gives a short recap of some who had been martyred. There have been many since then, including missionaries to the Auca Indians in Ecuador in 1956, and also those in the Congo in 1964.)
 - 2) God tried to get Cain to confess his sin. God asked Cain where Abel was. This was opportunity to confess his terrible crime and his sin and to ask for forgiveness. Of course, God knew what had happened to Abel, just as He knows about the sins that we commit, but He wanted Cain to confess, just as He wants us to confess before and after we are saved. Read Luke 18:13, 14; I John 1:9.
 - 3) Cain refused to confess his sin. He rejected for the last time God's offer to be saved. Cain was insolent with the Lord. He intimated that it was God's job to care for Abel; it was not his. Cain's sin had found him out, whether he was willing to confess and admit it or not. Everybody's sin finds him out, as we see in Numbers 32:23; Luke 8:17. Even though Cain evidently had buried his brother's body, the deed was known to Somebody—God.

V. ONLY ONE OF THE BROTHERS WAS PERMITTED TO BE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD.

1. Because Abel was saved, his death was a passing into the presence of God. See II Corinthians 5:8.

2. Cain was sent out from the presence of the Lord. Notice Genesis 4:14, 16. When he died, he went to Hell, where all unsaved go. Because he had started on the way to destruction, he would take others with him. Read Luke 11:52.

CONCLUSION: Everyone in the world has the same opportunity of being saved (John 1:9) and is therefore in a position to experience God's favor upon his life if he will but accept the light which he receives. Everyone hearing this week's lesson should resolve not to follow Cain into the way of pride and destruction, but to walk in the ways of Abel, who did God's bidding.

MEMORY VERSE: Luke 8:17, "For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad."