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(Genesis 4)

**Intro.** Have you ever known someone who commits a wrong & then tries to cover it up with a lie? I’ve known more than one compulsive liar in my life & when you pick apart their story, they cover up their lie with another lie—sin, when you fail to repent, will multiply. As we continue our series in Genesis 1-11 on “Building the Foundation of Your Faith,” today we look at Genesis 4 on “The Multiplication of Sin.”

Theme: Sin & hope

Background: Shortly after experiencing a perfect Paradise, Adam & Eve sinned & were kicked out of the Garden of Eden.

### Brief Overview of Issues in the Narrative:

- “Cain” means one built or produced while “Abel” means emptiness or vanity (probably due to shortness of life)
- The origins of certain practices are mentioned in this chapter—Jabal (4:20) is the origin of tent-dwelling & raising livestock as nomads; Jubal (4:21) is the origin of musicians (players of lyre & pipe—he liked to toot his own horn); Tubal-Cain (4:22) is the origin of bronze & iron work (historians tell us they are different ages with the Bronze Age (3200-1200 BC) & the Iron Age (1200-330 BC), but God’s Word says they began about the same time—one may have been more popular at an earlier time); Naamah was the sister of Tubal-Cain, showing though the text focuses on men, women were just as prevalent
- Before we look at the main lessons to learn from this passage, let me deal with the #1 question people have about Genesis 4—who was Cain’s wife? The easy answer is her name was Mrs. Cain. Seriously, those who hold to Darwinian evolution argue there would have been multiple ape-like creatures evolve into humans over time, but the Bible teaches we are traced back to Adam & Eve. The Jewish historian Josephus said Adam & Eve had 33 sons & 23 daughters & because Cain & Abel were certainly adults when they farmed & raised sheep, they were probably 15 or 20 or more years old at the time of this story. They would have had lots of sisters & Cain & his brothers either married their sisters or nieces (either daughters or grand-daughters of Adam & Eve).
- Now this may sound unsettling, but the command against marrying close relatives didn’t come for 2500 years until the time of Moses (Leviticus 18-20), for even Abraham married his half-sister Sarah (Genesis 20:12) & Isaac was married to his 2<sup>nd</sup>-cousin (24:15). Some assume Seth was the 3<sup>rd</sup> child born to Adam & Eve, but the text doesn’t say that—there were probably lots of children after Abel, but Seth is born after Abel is killed to replace him. The issues of negatively mutated DNA crossing up in close relatives today would not have been a factor early on, because the genetics would not have had negative mutations
- **Lessons we learn from Genesis 4**

#### 1. Obey the Lord by giving Him your best (4:3-7)

- Cain, as a farmer, brought an offering of the fruit of the ground, but Abel, as a shepherd, brought the firstborn, which indicates the best, usually largest & indicates trust in Yahweh to provide more under his care (the firstborn could have been used to begin a new family of sheep)
- The Lord accepted Abel’s offering, because it was his best while He had no regard for Cain’s, because it wasn’t his best
- The Lord called Cain to do what was right & it would be well with him
- Too many Christians today aren’t giving the Lord their best

Illus: I’m not saying “do your best” & you’ll be right with God & blessed (like the health-wealth gospel), because we could never do it, but as recipients of the grace of God in Christ our Lord, we must obey the Lord & offer Him our very best, because He is worthy of such—offering our best may lead us to persecution in this life (like Abel), but obeying the Lord is of utmost importance

#### 2. Unrepentant sin leads to more sin (4:5-9, 17-24)

- Cain plotted to kill Abel & got him out to the field, probably where he grew crops & had a club hidden or rock

- Cain offered less than the best to God, then he got angry that God wasn't pleased with his offering but He was pleased with Abel's offering, then he plotted to get rid of Abel, then he killed Abel, then he lied to God about knowing where Abel was
- God warned Cain the wrong course meant giving sin an opportunity to destroy him—He described sin as crouching at the door, ready to pounce & devour its prey
- God's desire for Cain was for him to have victory over sin by trusting in Him
- Later, after Cain made a new home in Nod—a place of wandering
- Lamech was the 7<sup>th</sup> generation from Adam through Cain's line & he sinned by taking multiple wives (Jesus made it clear that God's plan was one man + one woman for life, Matthew 19:4-6)
- To make matters worse, he overreacted to someone hurting him by killing him & then he bragged about it in song, claiming anyone who tried to harm him would face extreme vengeance—sin had grown exponentially with each passing generation & grown uglier

Illus: Truths about sin: Sin will take you farther than you wanted to go, will keep you longer than you wanted to stay, will promise you more than it can deliver & cost you more than you wanted to pay

- If you think you can keep sin small & hidden, you've been deceived—it will only grow

### **3. The greater the sin, the greater God's punishment (4:10-14, 16)**

- God asked Cain about Abel's whereabouts, much like he asked Adam where he was—not because God didn't know (He referenced Abel's blood in the next verse), but to grant him a chance to think about what he had done & repent
- Cain questioned whether he was Abel's keeper & the implication from the text and later revelation is that we are to love our brothers & help watch out for them (cf. 1 John 3:11-12)
- “fugitive & wanderer on the earth”—an outlaw & vagabond—nowhere he can go that he is really at home

Illus: Wanderer—Cain learned to sing the song Dion would popularize, “I'm the wanderer, yeah, the wanderer, I roam around, around, around...”

- Cain accused God of receiving an unjust penalty—the ground will be hard to work, he won't be in the presence of God & won't be protected without a home (close family members would want revenge on Cain)

### **4. God offers common mercy toward sinners in this life (4:14-15)**

- God responds to Cain's charge of an unjust punishment by saying, “That's not true; there is a greater punishment awaiting anyone who kills Cain”
- “The Lord intervenes by establishing a boundary protecting Cain so that no one exercises a personal vendetta against him” (Mathews, 272)
- Later, after the Flood, God instituted capital punishment for murder (cf. 9:5-6)

### **5. In the midst of society's degradation, the Lord brings hope (4:25-26)**

- “Seth” means appointed one, both as one appointed to replace Abel not just in the family but in being appointed by God to restore Yahweh worship, like Abel's faithfulness
- “Enosh” means mortal one
- They began to call upon the name of Yahweh in worship because they realized their own mortality, Yahweh as the only one who could ultimately help sinful man & together they called upon Yahweh in corporate worship, realizing God created us to be in community

**Conc.** I've watched marriages built on lies where the husband or wife was already trying to cover something up & I've watched families pass on sinful habits to the following generations, but I've also seen God's grace get a hold of someone's life & the marriage, which had no hope, suddenly turn around & the family which was full of sin suddenly had a member faithfully serving the Lord. You see, where sin abounds, God's grace abounds all the more. And God's grace-gift of hope & peace & life & forgiveness is found in His Son Jesus. Won't you repent & trust Him today?