

Bible Study Assignment ----- February 25, 2021

Reading

Genesis Chapters 4-5

Discussion Questions

1. Some interpreters of the story of Cain and Abel believe that this story doesn't document history but was written to reveal different truths. For example, this is the first incident in the Bible of a younger son being favored more highly than the older (other examples include Jacob, Genesis 25:19-34; and David, 1 Samuel 16:1-13) which is a theme that repeats several times in the First Testament (Old Testament). Can you think of a modern-day example of favoritism among siblings? How did the favoritism affect the relationships within the family?
2. It is unclear why God rejected Cain's offering in favor of Abel's. Some interpreters note that the text doesn't qualify Cain's offering but states that Abel's offering was the fat portions of the firstlings of his flock – the best he had. Do you think God is pleased more by someone making an offering that represents the best he/she has to give? Why or why not?
3. Has your work ever been rejected in favor of someone else's? How did that affect your relationship with the person doing the rejecting? With the other person?
4. In Genesis 4:7, God tells Cain, "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it." What do you think the "sin" is? How is it related to Cain's "job performance"?
5. God punished Cain by taking away his livelihood and exiling him. Which of these would be the worst one for you? Why?
6. Cain includes another effect of his punishment: being hidden from God's face. What do you think the author means by this?

7. Some interpreters have noticed a parallel between the story of Adam, Eve, and the forbidden fruit episode and the story of Cain murdering Abel. What is one way they are similar?

8. The author of Genesis 4 included a poem of Lamech, one of Cain's descendants, who boasts to his wives that his vengeance is seventy-sevenfold what God promised to Cain if someone killed him. What is another difference between Lamech's vengeance and the vengeance God would have taken on Cain's behalf?

9. Genesis 5 is a genealogy from Adam to Noah with each generation following a pattern: the father's name, his age when he bore an ancestor of Noah, the number of years after that child was born during which other children were born to him, and the total number of years he lived. There is one break in this pattern beginning with verse 21. Name one difference you notice.

10. Noah is credited with being the first vinedresser. How might this relate to his father's prophecy about him: "Out of the ground that the Lord has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands." (HINT: the word translated as "toil" here can also be translated "pain").