

GENESIS

Lesson 12

Ruling Over Sin, The Story of Cain and Abel Part 1

In this lesson we will look at the first murder recorded in the Bible, and man's responsibility to rule over sin. This is another of the early chapters in Genesis that raises many questions. Let's see if God will open our eyes to some of the answers, so that we may better understand the beginning of man, and, more importantly, the beginning of God's plan for redeeming his creation.

At the end of Genesis Chapter 3, God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. This places them in the land of Eden, but outside of the garden. It is apparent that at this point they were the only two people working in the garden, as there were no children or other couples present (Genesis 3:20). This concept alone is difficult for people to understand, since we cannot grasp how the world's population originally came from only two people—and yet this is what God tells us in the book of Genesis.

We should also note that when they were exiled from the garden, the earth was still "perfect," since God's curse had just begun. This means that they had no enemies—even the animals were not a threat—and the climate was perfect as well. However, they are told that the ground would be difficult to work (Genesis 3:17-19).

Therefore, there was no pollution, no genetic abnormalities, and no environmental or human threats of any kind. It also meant that God had already taught them about caring for the animals and the trees and plants, so they were not without skills. Furthermore, God had provided them their first clothing made of animal skins. Additionally, they could communicate, i.e., talk, with each other as well, and as well with God, as demonstrated in Chapter 3. These are all important to consider, and they show us that mankind did not evolve from some "ooze." Adam and Eve were not cave dwellers who only grunted at each other and hunted meat with clubs. In point-of-fact they were vegetarians, farmers who worked the land and raised animals (Genesis 9:1-3). Animals were only killed when sacrificed in worship. If we believe the Bible, then we should not believe the caveman's iconographic representations of early man. Adam and Eve had skills, tools, clothing, communications; they knew animal husbandry and how to work the land...and they had each other, living in a near perfect environment.

As Genesis Chapter 4 opens, we begin to see what we believe is a history of mankind—unfolding with the birth of Adam and Eve's first son, Cain, followed later by a second son, Able. (Genesis 4:2-3). Before we move from these initial verses, we need to take a step back and consider that God is about to reveal a chronology, an order over time, to us. However, it is not the chronology of mankind; nor is it a history of the early days of the earth.

The Oxford Dictionary defines the term *chronology* as "the arrangement of events or dates in the order of their occurrence." Additionally, the Oxford Dictionary defines the term *history* as "the study of past events, particularly in human affairs," and "the whole series of past events connected with someone or something."

As we will soon discover, the early chapters of Genesis offer a chronology that describes to the reader the path from Adam and Eve to Seth, and finally to Noah. No dates are provided; calendars and birthdays were not present, nor are they relevant in what God is showing us in the first nine chapters of Genesis. We are not provided the birth records of every child Adam and Eve had, nor that of the offspring of their offspring. What we are provided, what is more relevant, is how sin came to be present on the earth, along with the revealing of God's plan for redeeming his fallen creation. We must therefore read, and interpret, what we are reading in that context.

Read Genesis 4:1-2 and Genesis 5:3-5 and respond to the following questions.

1. How old was Adam and Eve when Cain was born?
2. Count the number of daughters Adam and Eve had in these verses, how many were there?
3. Who was the first child born to Adam and Eve?
4. How long did Cain live?
5. How old was Cain's wife?
6. How old was Abel when Cain murdered him?

As you see from responding to the above questions, this information is not provided in the biblical record. That's because it is not relevant to the message that God is providing for us. Only relevant information relating to the "thin red line of redemption" is provided in the Genesis record. We cannot draw other chronologies or conclusions by analyzing the data. There are no secret messages to be decoded. Rather, God is talking directly to each of us: "This is how I created the heavens and the earth; this is how the sin of man caused that creation to be cursed; and this is how I am redeeming it." That is the message of Genesis, the book of beginnings. Christ will crush Satan, and already has defeated Satan by His death and resurrection.

Because of the Bible, we can trace the descendants of Adam and Eve all the way through the lineage that results in the baby Jesus being born to Mary and Joseph. All of the questions that we ask ourselves, like those in Questions 1-6 above, are simply irrelevant to God's plan. As we move forward in our study of the growth of civilization leading up to Noah and the Flood, our prayer should be that we focus on what God is trying to tell us, revealing his message of redemption.

In our next lesson, Cain's inability to control his sin results in the murder of his brother Abel.

Thanks for faithfully studying with us.

In Christ,

Wes