

# East Of Eden?

Genesis 4:1-16

Sunday April 25<sup>th</sup> 2010 Morning Service

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Adam and Eve have been cast out of the Garden of Eden. Work is now frustrating and hard; relationships are damaged and people will now slowly die. **Frustration, tension and death** are the dominant threads of life, threads that we see running down to this day. The stage is now set for the human drama we call history.

The first thing we note is something of great promise and hope (1-2a). The promise of salvation was going to be through a child of Eve (3:15) and we immediately see that Adam and Eve have children. The promised deliver will come. However, we also read earlier that Satan would always be against the children of Eve (3:15), knowing that his destroyer was prophesied and would one day appear. And so, from the beginning he wants to slay anyone who might be that Messiah. Abel looked like he was a possible candidate. Abel must be eliminated and Cain must be corrupted.

**We have here a tale of three characters, from which we can learn many lessons of how fallen people live in a fallen world. These are lessons that will help us live our lives.**

## 1) Abel – zeal and faith

**His Offering:** He offered his best; he offered with faith. **He still speaks:** Hebrews 11:4

**What does he say? Life is not futile:** His name – Abel, means ‘breath’, ‘temporary’ or ‘meaningless’. The same basic term, ‘meaningless’, occurs in Ecclesiastes 1:2 and 12:8. His life was tragically cut short – but as he still speaks it was not futile. **Offer to God your best:** Abel offered his best. This proves the state of our heart. **Offer in faith:** Faith must accompany any act of service. This was not a mere ritual or routine; he made his offering looking to God, trusting in God, thankful to God and dependent upon God

## 2) Cain – a rebel’s heart

**His offering: Two points: It was a poor offering** – second best. **It was a faithless offering** – outward ritual but no inner relational reality. It was activity without dependence and relationship.

**His spirit - the 8-fold personality traits of a rebel**

**An angry spirit** The first thing we learn about a sinner after the fall concerns their relationship with God: they do not put God first. The second thing we learn is that they are angry. Why is he angry? He is angry because God did not accept his compromised offering. He felt God should accept him as he was, without change, without repentance. In his heart he was telling God how things should be. Unrighteous anger and being cast down often go together – they are like two ugly sisters. Anger can be like a spiritual anaesthetic – we increasingly cease to feel our own sin.

**A resistant spirit** Would he now do what is right? He is resistant to God's rebuke. How resistant are we to changing our ways? Here in Cain we see the template of the rebellious heart. As we resist God we open ourselves to sin.

**A vulnerable spirit** – anger blinds us to our own sin and opens the door to greater sin. When we are angry we can easily hate; we can become murderers. This is what Jesus said. However apparently religious we are in other ways, hatred still has the power to send us to hell. Jesus said simply saying 'you fool', a mild term of contempt, can send us to hell. (Matthew 5:21-22) Why? Simply this: if we hold others in contempt we have not become aware of our own sin and our own need of grace. We are not full of gratitude for God's undeserving forgiveness for us. We are proud; we deny the gospel; we have not experienced salvation (cf. Mt 18:1-35; Mt 6:14-15).

**A deceptive spirit** The violent spirit only needs opportunity to express its venom. Cain deceived his brother to walk out into the field. Sin leads us to deceive others.

**A violent spirit** Cain killed Abel.

**An irresponsible spirit.** 'Am I my brother's keeper?' Cain's heart is seen for what it is here, utterly selfish. He was concerned only for himself.

**A self-pitying spirit** Even now, Cain is unrepentant. He pities himself. When God judges him he is concerned about not having land to grow food, being a wanderer, being attacked and being driven from God's presence. When God judges us we will, if we do not repent, tend to be self-pitying.

**A frightened spirit** He was not only self-pitying, but it is clear that he was also frightened of God's judgement. **To put ourselves under Gods judgement is terrifying. We become lost and alone, subject to forces far beyond our control.**

### 3) God – a righteous and gracious judge

**Four characteristics of God's judgement:**

**Fruitless work** Adam found the ground was cursed, but the curse of Cain was *greater in degree*; now even with toil the ground would produce nothing.

**Anxiety** Angst and anguish typify the soul without God.

**Restless** We are built to relate deeply with the Lord and when we don't we can't operate in the way we were designed.

**Estranged from God** v 14 and 16: 'Cain went out from the Lord's presence.' The more we sin the further we walk from God's presence. It gets harder and harder to repent.

**Four characteristics of God's grace:**

The Lord gave Cain **another chance** to bring an acceptable offering (7a)

The Lord gave Cain **a warning** that sin was about to pounce on him.

The Lord **questions** Cain rather than destroying him (9)

The Lord **preserves** Cain's life so that he had time to repent (see 2 Peter 3:9).