

Explore the Bible: December 31

The First Murder • Genesis 4:1-15

By Laura Lee Leathers



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Rivalry (Gen. 4:1-7) – Congratulations, Eve, it's a boy! New life, a gift from God. She named him Cain, the first child, and gave credit to God "with the Lord's help."

She also gave birth to Abel, her second child. We don't know if they were twins or if Abel arrived later. Seth is mentioned in Genesis 4:25. Jesus came from his lineage. Adam and Eve had other sons and daughters (Gen. 5:4).

Abel was a shepherd. The sheep provided a source of clothing and for sacrifice. Had God explained the sacrificial system to Adam and Eve? It seems logical since animals weren't a source of food until after the flood (Gen. 9:3). Abel presented an

offering, the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions (v. 4) (see Ex. 13:2; 34:19). The Lord took note, regard, for Abel and his offering.

Cain, a tiller of the ground, "in the course of time," brought an offering of the fruit of the ground. God "did not have regard for Cain and his offering." It made Cain furious and despondent. Why?

Was it because it was not a blood sacrifice? Let's look in the New Testament for the answer. Hebrews 11:4 tells us, Abel, by faith, made his offering. Cain is described as "of the evil one" (1 John 3:11,12). It was the attitude of his heart and the actions through what he offered—jealousy and anger.

Notice the phrase, "Sin is crouching at the door." It means ready to pounce. Cain could open the door or slam it in the devil's face. He "must rule over it" (v. 7). Cain had a choice, like his parents, master over his attitudes, thoughts, and feelings "by consciously and intentionally rejecting sin and choosing to do what is right before God and following His will through the power of the Holy Spirit" (Lifeway).

Sentenced (Gen. 4:8-12) – Cain opened the door to sin. He lured Abel to a field. Was it pre-meditated? The CSB translation indicates it was. Envy may have driven Cain's decision. If he couldn't have God's favor, neither could Abel. This act is called fratricide (murder of a family member).

Nothing is hidden from God! He knows the motive of the heart. He knew Cain's true intent and his lack of remorse. God asks Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" The question has a two-fold meaning. First, God stresses the family relationship. Second is the connotation of a guardian; carrying for others is a duty to God (Matt. 22:37,39).

Cain refused to confess what he has done (see Gen. 3:13). Therefore, God pronounces judgment. The curse would fall directly on Cain. Never again would the ground yield what it

had done in the past for him. Never again would Cain have a permanent home. He would “be a restless wanderer on the earth” (v. 12) with some type of a visual mark.

Pleas (Gen. 4:13-15) – And what is Cain’s response? “My punishment to too great to bear” (v. 13). Cain deserved death! “However, God was gracious to allow Cain to live and fulfill God’s mandate upon humanity – reproduce, and fill the earth” (Gen. 1:27-28) (Lifeway).

Note Cain’s statement, “I must hide from your presence,” indicating that the first family enjoyed a relationship with God – communicating and worshipping Him.

Fearful, Cain was concerned that he would be a hunted fugitive. Someone might kill him as he had killed Abel. God’s reply, “Whoever kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.” God placed a prominent mark on Cain for his protection (v. 15). Scripture doesn’t describe it, and we are not to speculate.

Cain would eventually settle in Nod, marry, and have children. He built a city in the area and named it after his son, Enoch (Gen. 4:17). Cain’s descendants were destroyed in the flood (Gen. 10:32).

How would you answer the following questions: 1) What are the dangers of letting jealousy and anger go unchecked? 2) To what extent are we responsible for others? How does that affect our personal responsibility toward God? 3) In what ways does God’s grace work in conjunction with His justice and righteousness? (Lifeway)

Moses warned, “. . . be sure your sin will catch up with you” (Numbers 32:23 HCSB).

Leathers is a member of First Church, Lexington. Contact her at laura.l.leathers@gmail.com