

# THE GOSPEL PROJECT

## THE STORY BEGINS

### GOD THE CREATOR

#### *The Spread of Sin*

Before we consider the spread of sin, I want to point out that Satan, the Prince of the Power of the Air, who works in the sons of disobedience is not omnipresent, meaning everywhere at one time, and he is not omniscient meaning he does not know everything and he is not able to read our thoughts. And finally, the Devil would like for us to believe that he is omnipotent meaning all-powerful but that old Deceiver is not all-powerful. However, these traits do belong to Someone he likes to imitate, that is the LORD God.

Jehovah is **omnipresent**. *Psalm 139:7-10 (ESV)* <sup>7</sup> *Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?* <sup>8</sup> *If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!* <sup>9</sup> *If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,* <sup>10</sup> *even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.* The Creator of heaven and earth is also **omniscient**. *1 Kings 8:39 (ESV)* <sup>39</sup> ... *(for you, you only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind).* The Great I Am is **omnipotent!** Job declared in *Job 42:2 (ESV)* <sup>2</sup> *"I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.*

Satan was there in the Garden of Eden on a particular day when the first couple yielded to temptation and contracted a deadly communicable disease. Researchers today know that there are numerous physical diseases that are passed down through families. Since the beginning of time there has been an infectious spiritual disease that has been inherited from our first ancestors, Adam and Eve. Its repercussions have been ugly throughout the history of mankind. This fatal inherited disease is our sin nature lurking within all of us. The spread of sin begins with evil desires.

**Read Genesis 4:1-7 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> *Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD."* <sup>2</sup> *And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground.* <sup>3</sup> *In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground,* <sup>4</sup> *and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering,* <sup>5</sup> *but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.* <sup>6</sup> *The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?"* <sup>7</sup> *If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."*

Like all parents, the first parents must have wanted to give their best to their children but because of their own disobedience they passed along a sin nature. Some Bible scholars think that Eve believed that Cain was the "seed" that God had promised in *Genesis 3:15 (ESV)* <sup>15</sup> *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."* If Eve believed that Cain would be the one born to crush Satan's head, she must have been really perplexed when Cain

grew up and gave in to his inherited sin nature and chose evil over good. The thought of God's promise to Eve not being found in any of her immediate descendants is a reminder of how when God's promises are delayed, they still come right on time. **Galatians 4:4 (ESV)** <sup>4</sup> *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law.*

I am not convinced Eve was thinking about the Promised Redeemer. I see she as rejoicing like any new mother over the birth of her son. It is a beautiful picture knowing that the LORD helped her. Do you give the LORD praise for the times that He helps you? Do you acknowledge the power of His Presence in your life? **Psalm 146:2 (ESV)** <sup>2</sup> *I will praise the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.*

It is natural to wonder why God did not accept Cain's offering? Would God see a difference between meat and grain offerings? No! It was not the differences in the sacrifices that caused God to prefer one sacrifice over the other. It was the heart difference. The prophet Samuel centuries later would explain in **1 Samuel 15:22 (ESV)** <sup>22</sup> ... *"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.*

It is possible that Cain did not bring his best offering. But, on the other hand, maybe Cain did bring his best. We must understand that our human best is never good enough. **Isaiah 64:6 (ESV)** <sup>6</sup> ... *all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment....*

Abel brought the best that he because his heart sought to please God. The heart of Abel reminds me of the heart of Mary of Bethany in the New Testament when Jesus said of her in **Luke 10:42 (ESV)** <sup>42</sup> *but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."*

I mentioned in the beginning that Satan is NOT omniscient and that the LORD Almighty is. The LORD was able to look straight into the hearts of these two sons of Adam just like He continues to look into our hearts today. During His ministry, Jesus, the Son of God, looked into the hearts of a Pharisee and a tax collector who were both praying in the temple. In the Pharisee's heart, Jesus saw pride and selfishness and in the tax collector's heart, He saw genuine repentance.

Cain wasn't rejected because of his offering, but his offering was rejected because of Cain: his heart wasn't right with God. **Jude 1:11 (ESV)** <sup>11</sup> *Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain...* The "way of Cain" is the way of religion without faith.

It was by faith that Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, which means that he had faith in God. **Hebrews 11:4 (ESV)** <sup>4</sup> *By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.*

The scriptures do not relate how Cain and Abel knew that God accepted Abel's sacrifice and did not accept Cain's. It is possible that fire came down and consumed Abel's offering. Recall what happened when King Solomon would later make an offering in the newly constructed temple. **2 Chronicles 7:1 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> *As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.*

When Cain saw God's delight in Abel's offering and not in his own, Cain got mad and the sin of anger spread through his being. Even though the Creator knew that this son of the second generation was bending towards his sin nature, God continued to speak with Cain. The LORD knew that Cain was allowing his sin nature to take root through resentment, jealousy, and rejection. There is rarely one cause alone for anger. Anger smolders within and will most assuredly lead to other sins if we do not douse its flames. The LORD spoke personally to Cain: *If you do well, will you not be accepted?* It was the Lord's desire to draw him back from the clutches of sin. The LORD also gave a warning: *And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.*" Just like the Creator spoke to Cain, the Word of God and the Holy Spirit of God still speak personally to us today. The choice is ours – to listen and obey or give in to the sin crouching at the door.

The spread of sin results in condemnable actions against others.

**Read Genesis 4:8-12 (ESV)** <sup>8</sup> *Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.* <sup>9</sup> *Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?"* <sup>10</sup> *And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground."* <sup>11</sup> *And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.* <sup>12</sup> *When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth."*

Here we find one of those small differences that people complain about regarding the New International Version of the Bible. The NIV has Cain saying, "let's go out into the field" while the KJV, the ESV and the NASB all say, *they were in the field*. The NIV translation leaves more of an indication of premeditated murder. But, anyway you look at it, what happened in the field was not self-defense or temporary insanity, or being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Cain murdered his own brother because he yielded to sin. **1 John 3:12 (ESV)** <sup>12</sup> *We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.*

There is a definite parallel between God's dealings with Cain and His dealings with Adam and Eve. In both instances, the Lord asked questions, not to get information (don't forget, God already knows everything already). The intent of the questions was to provide opportunity to tell the truth and confess their sins.

When the LORD asked the question, *Where is Abel your brother?* We learn that Cain was not only a murderer but a liar! *He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?"*

The All-Knowing One was not about to accept a cover-up! *And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground.* Jesus spoke to the Pharisees of the righteousness of Abel in **Matthew 23:35 (ESV)** <sup>35</sup> *so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.* The first martyr of the Old Testament was Abel; the last martyr recorded in the Old Testament was Zechariah.

Cain had defiled the holy ground with his brother's blood; therefore, the ground would no longer reward him for his labors. So, he couldn't continue as a farmer. He was condemned to wander. The spread of sin is overcome only by God's mercy and promise.

**Read Genesis 4:13-16 (ESV)** <sup>13</sup> *Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. <sup>14</sup> Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."* <sup>15</sup> *Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold."* *And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.* <sup>16</sup> *Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.*

In the words of Cain, we find regret but not true repentance. **Psalm 51:17 (ESV)** <sup>17</sup> *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.* Regret can bring us to tears. However, we might call any tears that Cain shed "crocodile tears," a term that alludes to the ancient notion that crocodiles weep while devouring their prey. We can be sorry we "got caught" and still not be repentant. Cain never said "I am wretched that I killed my brother." He didn't say, "I repent of this sin that has brought mourning to my parents." His only concern was about his own skin – what was going to become of him since he "got caught."

Another question from this story is always, "what is the mark of Cain?" The Hebrew word translated *mark* is *'owth* and refers to a mark, sign, or token. So, the Hebrew does not identify the exact nature of the mark. Some think it was a scar or tattoo. The mark is not the focus of the passage. The focus is that God would not allow others to exact vengeance against Cain. **Romans 12:19 (ESV)** <sup>19</sup> *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."* Some have falsely taught that God changed the color of Cain's skin to black in order to identify him. This interpretation of the mark of Cain is completely unbiblical. *'owth* is never identified as skin color.

It is also natural to wonder about the Land of Nod. Some would think because of the mention of Nod that it was a place already existing with people when Cain went there. More than likely Moses just used the name of the place that became the new home for Cain. Probably, the place didn't amount to much upon Cain's arrival.

One more question! Who was Cain's wife? The only possible answer is that Cain's wife was his sister or his niece. The fact that Cain was afraid for his own life indicates that there were likely many children and perhaps even grand or great grandchildren of Adam and Eve already living at that time. Intermarriage was not forbidden until much later.

There are many things to be curious about regarding this book of beginnings, many things we will not know on this side of heaven. Our focus should be on avoiding the spread of sin in our own life. We have recently talked in class how the shingles virus lurks beneath the skin of those who have had chicken pox – it is there – waiting to erupt. Our sin nature is within us – it's only cure is a blood transfusion – the precious blood of Jesus. God's grace is greater than all our sins.