

December 11, 2005 AM

**WORSHIP WAR
GENESIS 4:1-7**

3. THE WARRING SEEDS OUTSIDE THE GARDEN (4:1-26)

A. BIRTH, BATTLE AND BANISHMENT (4:1-16)

1. THE BATTLEFIELD SET (1-7)

A. THE BIRTH OF THE CHILDREN (1-2A)

Adam knew his wife - obviously a euphemism for having sexual relations. Adam and Eve are acting in accord with the word of God. It must be remembered that sin had brought death (i.e., separation) to Adam and Eve. Now, they are coming together in this one flesh relationship.

Eve responds in jubilation. Some have speculated that the jubilation was concerning the promise of *the seed* of Genesis 3:15. I think we can say for a certainty that she was elated over the fact that God had made them fruitful according to his promise.

Cain - Eve that names the child. She called him “Cain” because “I have gotten a man with [the help of] YHWH.” In Hebrew “Cain” and the verb translated “gotten” are phonetically similar.

The difficult part is the translation of what Eve says. We don’t need to get into all the details of this. But there are several ways that people have taken this.

“With the help of” is not a literal translation. Literally: “I have gotten a man with YHWH.” God is the giver of life. And in this context it means that he has overcome the effects of sin to make Adam and Eve fruitful.

Cain (as it comes to be realized) is the “fruit” of an adulterous relationship with the serpent. She worshiped and served the serpent, and now she is “imaging” the creature by producing his fruit. (Cf. **1John 3:12**).

Abel - no explanation given as to the meaning of Abel’s name. The explanation is in the story.

Abel means “breath.” It is used on occasion throughout the OT to speak about the passing nature of human life on the earth (cf. **Ecc 1:2; Ps 144:4; Job 7:16**). Abel’s name is given to him because of what would become of Abel.

B. THE VOCATIONS OF THE BROTHERS (2B)

Interesting here about this set up is that Cain is the one who is doing precisely what God commanded in **3:23**. It is Cain who is working the ground. Abel is a shepherd.

C. THE “SUBSTANCE” OF WORSHIP (3-4A)

At the end of days - common translations: (NKJV; AV) “And in the process of time it came to pass” or “In the course of time” (ESV). Indicate a simple passing of an indefinite period of time.

Literal: “And so it was at the end of days.” The question then comes, What does “end of days” mean? Used to refer to “undefined lengths of time” (**1Ki 17:7**) as well as non-seasonal but appointed times (cf. **Jer 13:6**). It also could refer to a yearly cycle (cf. **2Sam 14:26**).

Could mean “at the end of the year.” But Cain’s offering of fruit seems to indicate that this is harvest season.

But this also has the resonance of the Sabbath. This is the time of worship, and, therefore, evaluation by God. This is the climax of a period of time in which worship is to take place.

The offerings - The offerings are tied to what each man’s vocation.

The place of worship - they “brought” these offerings unto YHWH. Possibly the “door” of the garden on east side of Eden..

Where the cherubim are is the place of God’s throne, the place where God dwells.

The nature of the offerings - debate over the legitimacy of the “substance” of the sacrifices offered.

Note the differences between the “quality” of the two offerings: Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground. No quality at all is specified. (In the law) God always requires the firstfruit of the harvest (cf. e.g., **Ex 23:16**). Grain offerings of whatever sort were not wrong *per se*. In fact, they were required by God on a number of occasions. But they must be the firstfruits or the best of the crop.

God had blessed Abel, and he brings the *firstlings* of the flock and *of the fat* thereof. Abel is bringing the best of the best. Later in God’s law firstborn animals were to be (1) brought and sacrificed or (2) redeemed (i.e., a clean animal was to be offered in the place of an unclean animal). Firstborn children were also to be redeemed through the substitute of an animal. Cf. **Ex 13:2, 12, 15; Lev 27:26; Deut 15:19**.

Hebrews 11:4 - Abel offered his sacrifice in faith. This is not necessarily limited to a particular disposition at the time of the sacrifice (e.g., Abel felt a certain way toward God). Abel offered his sacrifice in obedience to God.

D. THE EVALUATION OF THE WORSHIPERS (4B-7)

God accepts Abel’s offering and rejects Cain’s - Various theories as to why: (1) God prefers shepherds to farmers. This is not all likely in light of what God says about working the ground in **2:15** and **3:23**.

(2) Animal sacrifice is more acceptable than vegetable offerings. This may or may not be true.

Consider: (a) God does not condemn Cain for refusing to bring a blood sacrifice. (b) There is no emphasis in the text concerning the difference between Cain and Abel’s sacrifice as to the presence or absence of blood but rather the “quality” of the sacrifice (i.e., “first” over “some”). (c) Grain offerings were accepted and even demanded in the law later on as acceptable. In fact, there is a provision made in the law that if a man cannot afford to give animal sacrifice—the lowest of which is turtledoves and pigeons—then he may offer grain (i.e., “fine flour”) unmixed with oil or frankincense upon it. It is a sin offering. Cf. **Lev 5:11-12**

(3) God’s choice has to do with his secret will of election. This is basically a position that says that there is no apparent reason for God’s choice. But the text presents that Cain does not do well, but if he does well he will be accepted (**4:7**).

(4) God accepts Abel and rejects Cain on the basis of the quality of their worship reflected in their offerings.

In the presentation of our worship the offering cannot be separated from the worshiper. When a worshiper brings his sacrifice/offering to God, he is bringing himself.

Worship is tied in with the vocation in this way. God has given you life and ability to go and transform the world—bringing his life to the world. You do that and come back to God with the best of that. What you are bringing back to God is yourself so that the process (for lack of a better term) will continue in a positive direction.

Application: (1) Worship is about bringing yourself to God. It is about *you* being transformed from glory to glory.

Application: (2) There is no separation between the offering and the worshiper. One is an inseparable part of the other.

God’s “respect” or “acceptance” of the offering - God could have shown through fire (cf. **1Ki 18; Lev 9:23-24**)

Cain’s anger - Becomes angry instead of confessing.

YHWH’s questions - Note **3:8ff.** - Cain is given opportunity for confession and repentance. Refusal to accept God’s judgment is a lack of faith. Interestingly enough God tells Cain that if he does well he will be accepted.

YHWH’s warning - possibly dealing with serpent who lies at the door of the garden. He must be overcome.

Application: (3) Your vocation is tied to your worship.

Application: (4) God accepts some worship and rejects others.

Application: (5) You have the responsibility to rule over sin.

Application: (6) Our works are only acceptable in Christ.