

Cain and Abel

Key Verse:
“By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man.”

Hebrews 11:4

Extra: What does the Bible teach us about murder?

Level 5 lesson 5

Read: Genesis 4:1-16
Further Reading: Exodus 20

Cain and Abel were the first two sons of Adam and Eve. Born after ‘The Fall’ (when Adam and Eve sinned), they were born with the same sinful nature as their fallen parents, just as you and I are. All humans are “evil” sinners by nature (not “good” as the humanists would have you believe!) and as a consequence, we do sinful things.

The story of Cain and Abel is well-known, however, it is vital we see clearly the great lesson it teaches. What happened early in fallen man’s history is recorded in the Bible so that the following generations of people might learn to avoid the ‘way of Cain’ and follow the example of Abel.

OFFERINGS BROUGHT:

Both boys grew up and pursued their chosen careers - Abel as a shepherd, and Cain as a farmer of crops. One day they brought a sacrificial offering to God. Cain brought some of his best fruit and sacrificed it before the Lord, while Abel selected the first spring-born lamb, which he killed and sacrificed on the altar as an offering to the Lord.

Verses 4-5 tell us that God accepted Abel and his gift, but rejected Cain and his gift. Why was that? Is God partial? Did He love Abel more than Cain? Was He prejudiced against Cain? No! In fact, God was just as desirous of receiving Cain as He was Abel. God reminded the sad and angry Cain that He was ready to receive him, provided he did the right thing. Chapter 4:7 spells this out clearly. God also warned Cain of the consequences of not controlling his sinful anger: sin was “crouching at the door, ready to devour him!”

OFFERING ACCEPTED:

So why was Cain’s offering rejected? It would have certainly looked better than Abel’s, but it would not do for God. There was no blood-shed connected with his offering, as there was with Abel’s. The Lord had demonstrated this earlier when He took the life of animals to provide a covering of skins for Adam and Eve’s sin in the Garden of Eden.

But why must there be shed blood? Simply, because both men were sinners and the penalty of sin is death. Abel recognised this and came with his slain lamb; Cain denied this and came with beautiful fruit. The great lesson taught is that “without the shedding of blood there is no remission” (of sins). This is the lesson of Calvary’s Cross. Abel’s lamb pointed forward to our Saviour who would die on the Cross to bear the punishment for the sin of the world.

Our Key Verse reveals that Cain didn’t come with fruit merely because he was a fruit-grower; neither did Abel come with a slain lamb merely because he was a keeper of sheep. No, Abel came in faith, in the way appointed by God. But Cain came in unbelief, in a way he’d chosen.

Similarly, God has provided His acceptable way of salvation through Christ, the once-slain ‘Lamb of God.’ Those who place their faith in Christ and His perfect sacrifice for their sin, are accepted into the family of God and have their sins forgiven. Those who choose some other way, like Cain, will one day find themselves rejected and banished from God’s presence to suffer eternal punishment.

OPPORTUNITY GIVEN:

Despite God’s further opportunity to bring an acceptable sacrifice, Cain refused to budge from his position of unbelief and defiance toward God. In fact, after talking with Abel one day (probably about this very thing) he invited Abel to go out into the field with him. There, while they were alone, Cain attacked and killed his own brother, and so became the first murderer.

However, while no human eye had witnessed the event, as always, God did! “Where is Abel your brother?” He demanded of Cain. “I don’t know!” lied Cain insolently. “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Of course God was not fooled. “Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground!” He replied, before placing a terrible curse upon Cain.

Verse 16 sets out clearly Cain’s response. “Cain went out from the presence of the Lord,” never to return. What a terrible tragedy! May God in His grace draw all who read this sombre lesson, to faith in Christ, so that none may ever go “the way of Cain.”

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What is the vital lesson we should learn from this story?	.....
2. What happened to the nature of Cain and Abel, and ours also, as a result of The Fall?	.....
3. What gifts did Cain and Abel bring to the Lord?	.....
4. What did Abel’s sacrifice of a lamb point forward to?	.....
5. How did Abel’s approach to the sacrifice differ from Cain’s?	.....

My Name is Age

Before The Flood

Key Verse:

“For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark.”

Matthew 24:38

Extra: What similarities do you see between Noah's times and ours today?

Level 5 lesson 6

Read Genesis 6:1-22

Further reading: Matthew 24:36-39

Now, more than 1,600 years after Adam was created, we come to the time of Noah. During this long period the achievements and works of the human race are passed over practically unnoticed in the Bible. The world's population would have increased enormously and great cities would have been built. Vast strides would have been made in knowledge, and the arts and sciences may well have reached a height of which we have no real understanding.

Remember, there are still many things dating back to ancient civilizations which we are unable to explain. For example, we still can't figure out how the pyramids were built! We should never be deceived by evolutionary thinking which teaches that man was some pre-historic cave-man character - God's Word teaches that he was created in God's image with a tremendous intellect and capabilities.

GOD'S CONCERN:

Yet, God's Word says very little of any accomplishments of mankind and his mighty civilisation up to this point, choosing instead to offer only these words on his moral state: "the wickedness of man was great in the earth; and every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time." What a sad indictment!

You see, it was man's spiritual and moral condition that concerned God, and it's the same today. Even the legitimate and necessary things of life, such as eating, drinking and marrying, had become an offence to God, because He was totally ignored in all of them.

GOD INTERVENES:

The second verse of our reading advises us of something which was particularly offensive to God. "The Sons of God" we are told, "saw that the daughters of men were beautiful and they married any of them they chose." To go into the question of who "the Sons of God" were, and the exact nature of the sin is not possible in these lessons. However, it is clear that there was an unholy alliance; a mingling of two classes that should have kept apart, which plunged mankind into an abyss of wickedness, and ultimately caused God to intervene.

These unholy alliances produced Nephilim ("giants" and "mighty men of renown") on the earth. They were mainly responsible for making the flood a terrible necessity, because of their great wickedness. God said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years" (v3). Note that the Lord took no pleasure in taking this terrible action, because "the LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain" (v6). In His holiness and sovereign wisdom, the Lord pronounced this solemn judgement, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth!" (v7).

GOD'S GRACE:

One man however, "found grace in the sight of the Lord." Of all mankind, only Noah still lived in obedience and faith toward God. To this man God revealed His plans for the coming judgement of the world, and gave him instructions so that a remnant of human (and other) life might be preserved through it. In this way, his family would be preserved to carry on the human race. This eventually assured the fulfilment of the promise concerning our Saviour, as foretold in the great prophecy concerning the "seed of the woman" (Genesis 3:15).

God told Noah to build an Ark to safely accommodate his family and the animals, for the duration of God's promised judgement. God's instructions and the dimensions of the Ark are given in verses 14 to 16. It was a huge boat designed for stability, a heavy load, and a large capacity—with plenty of room for eight humans, many creatures, and all their food. This then was to be the refuge for Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives, and for all the other life to be preserved. At the right time, God sent the animals to Noah.

GOD PROVIDES:

Noah faithfully obeyed God's instructions to the letter, despite all the probable ridicule of those around him. We can well imagine what taunts he had to endure, as he worked hard to assemble the giant boat on dry land. Up till then it had not even rained on the earth! But Noah was obedient and faithfully carried out God's explicit instructions, all the while preaching righteousness and warning the people of the coming judgement.

Thank God there is also a refuge for you and me today. That refuge, that place of safety, is a Person, our Lord Jesus Christ. Only through believing in Him by faith can we escape the promised wrath of God against our sin.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. How did God sum up the condition of man in spite of all his achievements?	.....
2. What solemn judgement did God pronounce?	.....
3. Why did God preserve some life?	.....
4. What kind of man was Noah?	.....
5. Where can we find a refuge from judgement today?	.....

Shut In and Shut

Read Genesis 7

Further reading: Hebrews 11:7

Key Verse:
“(Those) who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet; and the door was shut.”

Matthew 25:10

Extra: How does this lesson relate to us being obedient to God today?

Level 5 lesson 7

In our last lesson we saw Noah building the Ark in faithful obedience to God’s command. Can you imagine being the ONLY Christian family on earth! It must have been extremely difficult to continue on at times, in the face of all that mocking opposition. Yet Noah worked away until the huge boat was completed as God had directed. One final act of faith remained though; God told them to get into it! Again Noah obeyed, despite clear, sunny skies and no sign of rain or judgement! He simply believed God and obeyed. Today the Lord invites us to come to Him for salvation, too. Just like the Ark saved Noah, Jesus Christ can save us, and so we’d be wise to accept His offer!

JUDGEMENT COMMENCES:

In addition, Noah was instructed to take into the Ark various kinds of life (animals, birds, insects, etc), some by sevens and some by twos. What a busy time Noah and his family must have had during this week! So how did the animals know to come? I believe that their Creator simply called them. As the Angel of the Lord later rebuked Abraham’s wife Sarah; “Is anything too hard for God?” Undoubtedly, God’s care, power and wisdom were made known in this and in many other ways during the loading of the Ark and the subsequent catastrophic flood.

Finally all were inside. Then we read these significant words, “The Lord shut him in” (v16). The time of opportunity was past. Those inside were safe, but those outside were all shout out! How solemn, eight human beings inside, millions outside. When the Lord comes again and shuts the door of grace, this scenario will no doubt be repeated.

Jesus said, “Small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to Life, and only a few find it!” Friend, these are serious matters of eternal importance. God’s coming judgement upon sin is as sure as this judgement was in Noah’s day. “It is appointed unto man once to die, and after this, the judgement” (Hebrews 9:27 KJV). Don’t be found on that day with the majority, who will discover, like those in Noah’s day, that having neglected and ridiculed God’s offer of salvation, there was no escape from His righteous judgement. “How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?” (Hebrews 2:3)

SAVED FROM JUDGEMENT:

One week after the door was shut, the rain began falling. And for forty days and forty nights, it rained like never before, or since. At the same time there were mighty upheavals in the depths of the earth, “...all the springs of the great deep burst forth.” So the whole earth including the high mountains was covered by the flood waters to a tremendous depth (v18-19). But those in the Ark floated on the waters, safe from God’s judgement. What a wonderful picture of Christ; our “Ark” today; if we are ‘in Him’ through faith that is.

JUDGEMENT’S END:

What of those outside the Ark? We can imagine them fleeing in terror from the advancing waters as the deluge began; we can imagine their shrieks and appeals for mercy, but all in vain. Nothing could exceed the solemnity of verses 11-21. Read them slowly. Every living thing that moved on the earth perished. “Only Noah was left and those with him in the Ark.” For those outside the Ark, their life was over; and so the ungodly world of that time perished in the waters of the Flood.

In conclusion, remember this story is no fairy tale or legend, as many today would claim. This is a God-given factual account of what really happened. There is also much ‘secular’ evidence for the truthfulness or veracity of the Genesis account, including;

1. TRADITION: The ancient Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, Indians, and every other civilization, all have records of a world-wide Flood.

2. GEOLOGY: The fossil record is itself a real testament to the flood. Many scientists, who have investigated the earth’s strata, now admit that this earth has been the subject of a vast deluge which altered its physical features and destroyed human and animal life everywhere.

However, the ultimate proof of the truth of the Genesis record comes from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Himself. In Mathew 24:37-39 Jesus was describing the world in the days just prior to His second coming. Here’s what He said: “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating, drinking and marrying up to the day Noah entered the Ark, and knew nothing about what would happen, UNTIL THE FLOOD CAME AND TOOK THEM ALL AWAY. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.”

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What gracious invitation did the Lord give Noah?	.....
2. What gracious invitation does the Lord give us?	.....
3. Why is this important?	.....
4. How is the Ark a picture of Christ for us today?	.....
5. What other sources apart from the Bible tell us about The Flood?	.....

Out of The Ark

Key Verse:
“By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear, built an ark to save his family.”

Hebrews 11:7

Extra: Having completed this study, what should your response be to God?

Level 5 lesson 8

Read Genesis 8:1-22; 9:1-17
Further Reading: Psalm 86

WONDERFUL SAFETY:

After 40 days, the tremendous downpour stopped and the waters began subsiding. For about five months Noah and his companions must have had a pretty rough time in the Ark— safe, but uncomfortable! Finally it came to rest on Mt. Ararat in modern-day Armenia; 150 days after the rain had started. God’s purpose had been accomplished, for verse 1 tells us, He “remembered Noah and every living thing... in the Ark with him.”

After another 40 days, Noah opened the Ark’s window and looked out; and what a scene of desolation he must have gazed on! To test the situation, he sent out two birds, a raven and a dove. The raven, a scavenger, flew around for a while and then disappeared. But the dove returned. Things had obviously not improved enough to venture outside. After another week, Noah again sent out the dove. This time it returned with a fresh olive leaf in its beak!

Again after seven days, the dove was sent out and this time it did not return. Noah, encouraged by this, removed the covering of the Ark and saw the earth was dry. This was the twenty-seventh day of the second month; Noah and the others had been inside the Ark for just over one year (see Genesis 7:11 & 8:14)!

However, God had “shut them in” and Noah did not leave until God commanded him, “Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you ... so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number upon it” (v15-17).

WORSHIPFUL START:

This was a fresh start for mankind. The earth had been cleansed and he now had another opportunity to glorify God in a renewed environment. I am sure it was Noah’s fervent desire at this time, that the lessons of the past would not be forgotten and that history would be nobler and purer in the future.

The first thing he did, once the task of unloading the Ark was completed, was to erect an altar and sacrifice burnt offerings of thanksgiving to the Lord.

This is a great example, because Noah was expressing his gratitude to God for the great deliverance. He showed his determination to put God first and to continue His worship in the future.

WONDERFUL SIGN:

Noah’s act of worship was very pleasing and acceptable to the Lord. Verse 21 tells us that “The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma” and promised that He would never again bring such a universal flood. God said, “even though every inclination of [mankind’s] heart is evil from childhood, never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.” These were gracious words, showing us that God hates to smite and “has no pleasure in the death of the wicked.”

God went on to say that “as long as the earth endures, seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.” This promise has been faithfully kept during the ages since the Flood, despite man’s subsequent sin and continued wickedness. And this will continue while earth remains; that is, until it is finally destroyed by fire when “the heavens... and the earth and everything in it shall be burned up” (see 2 Peter 3:10)

Before establishing His covenant with Noah and his family to never again destroy the earth by a flood (vv8-17), God gave two other instructions which are of interest and importance to us today. Firstly, mankind was given permission to eat meat, (Genesis 9:3) with the exception that “you shall not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it” (v4). Although the Jewish people were later restricted from eating various types of animals and reptiles under the Mosaic Law, God clearly showed Peter in Acts 10 that these restrictions no longer applied to New Testament Christians.

Secondly, God gave Noah another hugely important precept: Human life is sacred. It is GOD’S prerogative to give and take human life; not anyone else’s! God told Noah that “from each man, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed!” (vv 5,6). These are God’s words and have real relevance to us all today. Many countries have banned the death penalty for murder as being “barbaric,” resulting in escalating rates of murder and violence. Yet at the same time, millions of innocent young lives are snuffed out at the hands of “civilised” abortionists each year around the world and we now face calls to legalise euthanasia! It is a sad indictment indeed.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What did Noah do to discover the condition of the earth?	.....
2. How long were Noah and his family in the ark?	.....
3. What was the meaning of Noah’s altar and sacrifice after leaving the Ark?	.....
4. What did God promise as a result of Noah’s obedience?	.....
5. Comment on this statement: “Human life is sacred”.	.....