"Abel – More Than You Think"

The Bible is so popular that everyone has something to say about it and yet so many know so little about it. My preferred deeper level of study is Word studies, Theme studies, and Typology. From my study of over 40 different methods, I concluded years ago that God wants our attention. In this study I am going to take the reader into the realm of Genesis. Why Genesis? In Bible study and theological analysis, Genesis becomes vitally important as a starting point in what the Creator deemed essential content in understanding our world. As an example, the issue that plagued me most was the six-day creation story.

I had two years of geology in college that taught me the earth was roughly 5-billion years old and the universe was roughly 14.5-billion years old. If that doesn't present a problem for a pre-ministry major, one is either deft or asleep. Nuclear physicist Gerald Schroeder is the author of 'The Science of God', and several other books that reconcile science with faith. For a large part of my life I did not believe the Genesis creation story of the universe being created in six days until I viewed his presentation on the 'Big Bang' theory. The question was "Which is true: Science or the Bible?" Working from the Hebrew text, Dr. Schroeder was able to reconcile the issue and shows how both Science and Faith are correct. It all comes down to which end of the telescope you are looking through. After watching Dr. Schroeder's presentation, I came away from the matter, reconciled that both were correct. In the future, what I could not make sense of in my head, I would accept on faith!

Have you ever thought about the phenomenon referred to as "crop circles"? Recently I saw a scientific presentation on the secret space-age technology where the presenter revealed how through the use of computers, satellites, GPS, and directed-energy beams they are able to create those fascinating images in the rural wheat fields of the U.K. Now you know! But my focus of this topic is about the faith of a guy by the name of Abel.

Abel's offering was an expression of his faith in God's Word. "And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof" -(Genesis 4:4). "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" -(Hebrews 11:4). Abel's faith must have been based upon a divine instruction given to Adam and Eve and their family; namely, for sinful man to approach a holy God, he must do so by offering an animal sacrifice. A sinner today must approach God by faith in the offering of Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross as atonement for sin.

Abel's offering was acceptable to God. "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering" -(Genesis 4:4). The Lord regarded Abel's approach to Him with favor through an offering because he came in the divinely appointed way. He came bringing the divinely acceptable offering for sinners. Any sinner coming to God in penitence, and pleading only the merits of Christ and His sacrifice on Calvary, will be accepted by God.

The offering of Abel was not like that of Cain. "And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord" -(Genesis 4:3). Cain was self-righteous, not thinking it was necessary to approach God as a sinner needing a sacrifice, but rather offered God the fruit of the ground, the result of his own labors. His actions are typical of many modern men who think God will accept them on the ground of their good works, instead of coming to God as lost sinners needing a Savior.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" - (Ephesians 2:8, 9). The offering of Abel was a blood sacrifice, and thus prefigured Calvary. "And to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" - (Hebrews 12:24). "That [blood of Abel" here means the blood of his sacrifice, which was a type of the better blood of Jesus shed on the cross. It was this blood that was lacking in the offering of Cain. "Without shedding of blood is no remission. [i.e.] of sin]" - (Hebrews 9:22)

Join me in a study of Genesis 4. God has presented us another word-picture or "object lesson" as a lesson or "Type" to reveal God's love for you and me. At the close I will sum up the many examples of how Abel is a type of the Messiah.

"And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD." -(Genesis 4:1)

(4:1) - The word "know" (Heb. "yada") in the Bible is used of the closest personal relationship at whatever level is indicated in the context. If you were a viewer of Jerry Seinfeld you may recall his frequent retort "yada, yada" or "I know, I know." Knowing God means knowing Him on the spiritual level in the closest personal way. Adam knew his wife by entering the closest personal relationship at the husband-wife level, a relationship of love, and Cain was born.

Cain (Heb. "Qayin" "one gotten," "acquired one"), is similar to the root of the verb, "I brought forth." "From the Lord" probably refers to her hope that Cain might be the "seed (offspring) of the woman" who would crush the old serpent's head. It thus refers to her faith in God's promise. (Heb. here, means "with" or "with the help of." It is not the sign of the direct object here, for that would call for an 'eth before "a man," Heb. 'ish as well, in the case of a woman, and there is none there.)

"And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground." -(Genesis 4:2)

(4:2) - Eve named her second son Abel (Heb. "Hebel", means "vapor, breath, emptiness"), probably referring to her disappointment with life outside the Garden of Eden. (Some wish to connect Abel with the Akkadian word ablu, "son." But there are no real grounds for this.

When Abel matured he became a keeper, literally, a "feeder" (a shepherd) of a flock (the Hebrew includes sheep and goats with the emphasis on sheep). A consistent theme of the "Lamb" is the

unchanging thread through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Cain became a worker (cultivator) of the ground or soil, that is, a farmer. Evolutionists suppose that human beings started out as food gatherers and hunters and only later became shepherds and farmers. But it could very well be that people fell back into food gathering and hunting occupations later.

"And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD." -(Genesis 4:3)

(4:3) - Cain apparently had a good harvest, with more than he needed. So he took some of what was left over and brought of (that is, some of) the fruit (produce) of the soil as an offering to the Lord. "Offering" (Heb. "Minchah", "gift, tribute", cf. 2nd Chronicles 26:8; 32:23) is not a sin offering (no sin offering was required before the Law was given at Mount Sinai; see Romans 5:13). The same word is translated "meat offering" in Leviticus 2:1, where "meat" is the old English word for food in general, and which was a vegetable offering under the Law. There is no indication that he brought the best or that he was whole-heartedly wanting to honor the Lord. He just brought "from" the fruit of the ground, whatever was available. He may have been looking for a reward for himself.

"And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:" -(Genesis 4:4)

(4:4) - In contrast, Abel brought the firstborn and the "fat parts" of the flock. Giving the firstborn indicated he put God first. "Fat parts" is a Hebrew way of saying the very best of the best. The same word is translated "finest" (of the wheat) in Psalm 147:14.

The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering (Heb., "minchah", as in Leviticus 2). God's acceptance was first of Abel and then his offering. God has always wanted people, not just offerings. Even under the Law no one ever pleased God because of bringing the right sacrifices if they were not offered in the right spirit.

Abel presented his best through faith that expressed trust in God and a desire to obey Him (cf. Hebrews 11:4). The Bible does not tell us how God showed He accepted Abel and his offering. Possibly, He did it by sending fire from heaven that consumed the offering, as He did in the case of the first offerings in the later Tabernacle and Temple -(Leviticus 9:24; 2nd Chronicles 7:1).

"But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell." –(Genesis 4:5)

(4:5) - God did not accept Cain or his offering, which means Cain was without real faith or trust in the Lord. He revealed this attitude by flaming up in anger and by a crest fallen appearance, full of self-pity. If he truly wanted to please God, he would have humbled himself and asked how he could be accepted.

"And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?" - (Genesis 4:6)

(4:6) - God did not ignore Cain. He asked him for an explanation of his attitude (his anger and his crest-fallen appearance). God was more concerned about Cain than about his offering.

"If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.

And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." -(Genesis 4:7)

(4:7) - Cain still had an opportunity to do what was good and right. If he did God would accept him. But if he did not do what was good and right, sin was crouching at the door like a wild beast ready to spring. It was "at the door" because Cain's attitude brought him very close to sin. Sin was desiring or striving to get at Cain. But he could still reject the desire of sin and rule or take control over it. God was thus calling on Cain to repent of his wrong attitude and exercise self-discipline. But Cain would not worship God when He did not favor him. Cain put a higher priority on himself than on God.

"And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him." -(Genesis 4:8)

(4:8) - An ancient copyist may have dropped out part of the sentence in the Hebrew text here. The Greek Septuagint version, made about 200 years before the time of Christ, states "Cain said to Abel his brother, 'Let us go to the field.'" There Cain rose up against Abel and killed him. Thus, the results of the fall led to further sin and death - the first murder. The following verse indicates Cain buried Abel there.

"And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?" -(Genesis 4:9)

(4:9) - God gave Cain an opportunity to repent by asking him where his brother was. But Cain tried to cover up his sin by lying about it, saying he did not know. One sin usually leads to another. He also showed his unbrotherly spirit by saying "Am I my brother's keeper?" "Keeper" includes the idea of guard and protector. He still was showing a wrong attitude. How often have we heard that expression in life?

"And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." -(Genesis 4:10)

(4:10) - "What hast thou done?" was the cry of God's broken heart, broken by Cain's attitude and sins as well as by Abel's violent death. From the ground where Abel's body was buried his blood was symbolically calling out, demanding justice.

"And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;" -(Genesis 4:11)

(4:11) - Now a curse was put on Cain from the very ground that had received his brother's blood. God is concerned about justice for wrongdoing.

"When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth." -(Genesis 4:12)

(4:12) - The ground would not yield it strength - that is, Cain would not have good crops and he would be forced to go from place to place. God further condemned him to be a fugitive continually, a restless wanderer, straying aimlessly, far from home and from the favored spot he formerly cultivated. Why a fugitive? Sin brings separation. We can be sure also that Adam and Eve did not wait until Cain and Abel were fully grown before having other children (see Genesis 5:4). Abel's other brothers and sisters would want to see justice done.

"And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear." -(Genesis 4:13)

(4:13) - Cain's reply could be translated in three possible ways: "My punishment is greater than I can bear," "My guilt is more than I can bear," or, "My guilt is more than can be forgiven." The latter is more likely because Cain was not confessing, but rather whining in self-pity.

"Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me." -(Genesis 4:14)

(4:14) - Cain's self-pity is also seen as he complained about God's judgment on him that demanded he wander. He also recognized that his guilt would cause him to be hidden from God's face, that is, to be separated from God's presence. Without God's presence and blessing he was afraid that whoever (that is, of his brothers) would find him would kill him - to avenge Abel's death.

"And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him." - (Genesis 4:15)

(4:15) - Possibly because there had been no human physical death before, God was merciful and promised that anyone killing Cain would suffer seven times the vengeance. Then God provided a sign (Heb. "owth"), for Cain.

The Hebrew word probably does not mean that God put a physical mark on Cain. The Hebrew normally means a supernatural sign or miracle, as in Exodus 4:8. Possibly God gave something like fire from a rock. Thus God assured Cain that no one would kill him.

"And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden." -(Genesis 4:16)

(4:16) - Cain left the presence of God, never to experience it again. He wandered east from Eden. "Nod" means "wandering," and the country was given that name because Cain wandered there.

"And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch." -(Genesis 4:17)

(4:17) - Since God created only one man and one woman, it was necessary for brothers to marry sisters in order to continue the human race. There was nothing wrong with this in the beginning. The genetic pool was pure at this point in time. Even in the time of Abraham, Sarah, his wife, was his half-sister -(Gen. 20:12).

But as time passed, the effects of the fall multiplied. Mutations (gene changes), originally meant to bring additional variety, brought weaknesses, inherited diseases, and conditions that could be fatal if the genes for the weaknesses were received from both parents. That is, they were usually recessive so they would not show up in any of the children unless both parents carried the gene. The House of Rothschild have genetic issues because of several hundred years of inbreeding due to marriage among family members.

Thus, if close relatives married, defects would be more likely. It was probably for this reason that God forbade marriage between close relatives in the Law of Moses.

The son born to Cain was named Enoch (Heb. "Chanowk"), which can mean either "trained one" or "dedicated one." In this context Cain is not a worshiper of the Lord, so "trained one" is the proper meaning here. Cain also showed defiance by building a city which he named Chanokh. The city was probably not more than a small, walled citadel. But by building it Cain was saying, "I may have to wander, but my son Enoch will not have to." Thus, Enoch lived in a permanent settlement.

"And unto Enoch was born Irad: and Irad begat Mehujael: and Mehujael begat Methusael: and Methusael begat Lamech." -(Genesis 4:18)

(4:18) - Five generations are named in this verse. No ages are given, and like most genealogies in the Bible, it is probably not complete. (Note that Matthew 1:8 leaves out 3 generations found in the Old Testament and in Ezra several names are left out found in First Chronicles.) This genealogy leads to Lamech who is the climax of Cain's line.

"And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah." -(Genesis 4:19)

(4:19) - With Lamech we see dramatic evidence of moral breakdown in the line of Cain when Lamech took two wives. God's purpose was for a man to cleave or stick to his wife (2:24), letting nothing and no one come in between. No man can have that kind of relationship with two or more women. Man cannot love two women equally. Adah probably means "bright ornament" or "adorned one." Zillah may mean "shaded or protected one." Their names show they were loved by their parents, cared about by God, and should not have been abused by Lamech.

"And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle. And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ. And Zillah, she also bare Tubalcain, an instructer of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubalcain was Naamah." -(Genesis 4:20-22)

(4:20-22) - Lamech's children were involved in the beginnings of a pre-flood civilization that seems to have ignored God. Jabal became the ancestor of those who lived in tents and had wealth in cattle. Jubal was the ancestor of musicians who play the harp (or lyre, similar in sound to a guitar) and flute, something that denotes the development of culture. There is nothing wrong with culture if it celebrates how God made us and the world. But if it is used to draw attention away from God it is wrong.

Tubal-cain (Tubal the smith) became an instructor (or hammerer, forger) of tools and weapons of bronze (or copper) and iron. Archaeologists have not found iron tools from before Noah's flood, but the Flood must have destroyed that early civilization. Also, iron rusts away rather quickly when moisture is present. Naamah means "pleasant" or "beautiful." A godless civilization may point to beautiful things but their materialism causes them to drift further and further away from God.

"And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold." -(Genesis 4:23-24)

(4:23-24) - Lamech showed the beginnings of another kind of moral breakdown in his use of violence. He would avenge himself (probably using his son's weapons). His defiance of God is also seen by the way he said he would avenge himself more than God promised to avenge Cain. He as much as said, "Now that I have my son's weapons I can take care of myself. I don't need God."

"And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew." -(Genesis 4:25)

(4:25) - After dealing with Cain's line and the beginnings of corruption and violence, Genesis goes back to the beginning. The purpose is to show that in spite of the direction Cain's line was taking, there was still hope. To Adam and Eve, Seth -(cf. 1st Chronicles 1:1, "appointed one" or "one given for a set purpose") was born as another seed instead of Abel. The term "seed"

recalls the promise of Genesis 3:15 - not that Seth was the Promised One, but through his line the Promised One would come. Seth was "instead of Abel" for Abel was the one accepted by God, so Eve believed Seth would also be accepted by God.

"And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD." –(Genesis 4:26)

(4:26) - Seth's son Enos (Heb. "Enowsh") means "mortal one." By this time people realized that everyone would die. Thus, the Hebrew became a term used for people from the angle of having weaknesses. But some of the people (apparently those in Seth's line) began to call upon the name of the Lord. The Hebrew uses the collective singular ("he began to call") and could mean they began to call down a blessing in the name of the Lord, implying that He is the Giver and Preserver of life. It can also mean they began to call themselves by the name of the Lord, and thus might be called the "sons of God." This could be in the same sense that God later called Israel "my son."

Now that I have taken the reader through Genesis 4 and the story of Abel, the murder of his son Cain, let's move down to my summary of the attributes, characteristics, and actions of Abel as a pre-figuration of the larger message of the Bible, the Messiah, Christ Jesus. The Old Testament is filled with hundreds of "Types" and most readers simply pass over them obliviously to the deeper truths revealed by our Creator. You can see why readers of the Bible were so turned off by the "schools of Higher Criticism". They literally ate our lunch in their hate for God's Word!



ABEL WAS A TYPE OF JESUS CHRIST

- 1. Abel was a shepherd. -(Genesis 4:2)
- 2. It was as a shepherd that he presented his offering unto God. -(Genesis 4:4)
- 3. Though giving no cause for it, Abel was hated by his brother. -(Genesis 4:8)
- 4. Cain was jealous of his brother Abel and it was out of envy the Cain slew Abel. -(Genesis 4:7)
- 5. Abel did not die a natural death. -(Genesis 4:8)
- 6. Abel met a violent end at the hand of his brother. -(Genesis 4:8)
- 7. Punishment was meted out upon his murderer. -(Genesis 4:11,12)
- 8. The offering Abel presented was an offering 'unto God.' -(Hebrews 11:4)
- 9. The offering which Abel presented was 'the firstlings of his flock', a 'lamb.' -(Genesis 4:4)
- 10. In bringing his offering 'by faith' he demonstrated that he believed the Word of God. (Hebrews 11:4)
- 11. The offering which Abel presented is described as an 'excellent' one. -(Hebrews 11:4)
- 12. God had 'respect unto Abel and to his offering'. God accepted the offering of Abel. (Hebrews 11:4)
- 13. In the presentation of his offering, Abel 'obtained witness that he was righteous.' (Hebrews 11:4) Abel was already saved and made righteous.
- 14. After Abel's presentation of his offering, God publicly 'testified' of His acceptance of it. (Hebrews 11:4)
- 15. Abel's offering still 'speaks' to God. By it Abel 'being dead yet speaketh.' -(Hebrews 11:4)

JESUS CHRIST WAS PICTURED BY THE LIFE OF ABEL

- 1. Our Lord is a Shepherd: 'the Good Shepherd.' -(John 10:11)
- 2. It was as a Shepherd that Jesus Christ presented His offering to God. -(John 10:11)
- 3. Though giving no cause for it, Jesus was hated by His brethren according to the flesh the Jews. -(John 15:25)
- 4. It was through 'envy' that Jesus was delivered up to be crucified. -(Matthew 27:18)
- 5. Our Lord did not die a natural death. He was slain by 'wicked hands.' -(Acts 2:23)
- 6. Jesus was crucified by 'the house of Israel', His brethren according to the flesh. -(Romans 9:5)
- 7. After His death, our Lord's murderers were punished by God. -(Mark 12:9)
- 8. The Lord Jesus was presented an offering 'to God.' -(Ephesians 5:2)
- 9. The offering He presented was Himself; a 'lamb.' -(1 Peter 1:19)
- 10. In presenting Himself as an offering He was obedient to 'the Word of God.' -(Hebrews 10:7-9)
- 11. The offering Christ offered was an 'excellent' one. It was 'a sweet smelling savor.' (Ephesians 5:2)
- 12. God accepted His offering: the proof being that He is now 'seated at the right hand of God.'
 -(Hebrews 10:12)
- 13. While presenting Himself on the Cross as an offering to God, 'He obtained witness that He was righteous'. The centurion saying, 'This is a righteous man.' -(Luke 23:47)

- 14. God publicly testified His acceptance of the offering by raising Him from the dead. -(Acts 2:36)
- 15. Christ's offering now 'speaks' to God. -(Hebrews 12:24)

Sadly, we see the effects of the fall of Adam and Eve already in the next generation, where the first murder is recorded. Poor Abel is mentioned in this chapter only for his birth, his offering and his death. His birth is recorded in verse two and his murder in verse eight. He is mentioned in several other places in Scripture, though. It's there that we get a commentary of what went on here in Chapter Four.

"By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks." – (Hebrews 11:4) Jesus also referred to him as "righteous Abel".

"...that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar." -(Matthew 23:35)

Abel is both a type of the true believer and a shadow of Christ. He is a type of the true believer because of his offering and his faith. He brings an offering of "the firstborn of his flock, and their fat." This represents the first and best, as fat was considered the best part of an animal. We also know the animal was slain, or else they could not get the fat. So a blood sacrifice is implied. Abel did this in faith, seeing the lamb as his substitute before God, until the Promised Seed would come.

Cain, by contrast, brought "an offering". He came with neither his first-fruits nor his best. He came with the work of his hands, thinking he could approach God his own way, rather than the way God prescribed. Cain and Abel would have learned from the example and teaching of their parents, that God must be approached by faith and with blood. This was their first expression of faith and dependence on God as adults.

God sees the heart. It wasn't just the type of sacrifice that was a problem, but the attitude. The offering and the worshipper are inseparable. When God appeals to Cain in mercy, Cain gets angry. He had no reason to be angry, and he could still make it right. Cain was envious. He takes his brother out to a field where he thinks no one will see them, and kills him. He should have loved him because he was his brother, and even more so, protected him as a younger brother. Instead we see, "...not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous." —(1 John 3:12)

God asks, "Where is Abel, your brother?" I find this interesting; as if there was any other Abel in town. God does this to emphasize the heinous nature of the crime and to strike at Cain's conscience. Cain lies. "I do not know," as if he could conceal his crime. Then he goes further with a surly response which questions the right of the Almighty to even ask. "Am I my brother's keeper?" His response reveals his hard heart and a lack of any natural brotherly affection. "And He said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground." -(Genesis 4:10).

This shows God's outrage. Remember, God never asks a question to get information. He knows all things. He asks, as a parent would, to see if Cain will confess and repent. Just as earlier, He asked, "Adam, where are you?" Cain complains that his punishment is greater than he can bear. He is not sorry for his sin, only sorry he got caught. He fears a violent death, like his brother. Even so, God again shows mercy to him by delaying the sentence of death already over his head because of the disobedience of his parents.

Abel is also a shadow of Christ because Abel's sacrifice is imperfect, whereas Christ's is perfect. "Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the most holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption." —(Hebrews 9:12). He is also a shadow because of the contrast between the intent of the blood of Abel vs. the blood of Christ. Abel's blood cries for vengeance, but Christ's blood cries for forgiveness. "…to Jesus the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel."—(Hebrews 12:24)

Because of Christ's death, we can enter the presence of God, from which our first parents were banished. "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus..."—(Hebrews 10:19)

Pastor Bob, EvanTeachr@aol.com

