

Chapter 8

Genesis 4:1-12

The Story so Far

In the beginning God established a Kingdom - God's people, living in God's place, under God's rule and blessing. However, through the influence of God's enemy (Satan) they disobeyed God. The result was a broken relationship with God and the Kingdom was ruined. God judged human beings and threw them out of His place and did not let them go back into the Garden of Eden. The punishment was a broken relationship with God and with each other. But God also acted in grace and promised a Rescuer-Ruler who would come and defeat Satan and rebuild God's Kingdom. The Rescuer-Ruler would come from the family line of Adam and Eve and rescue people back into the Kingdom of God.

Objectives

- To show how sin was passed on in the human race
- To highlight the consequences of human rebellion against God
- To introduce the concept of election

Connections

- Adam's rebellious nature is seen in Cain and Abel
- God remains gracious despite the progress of human rebellion

Summary

The sin of human rebellion has been passed on to the whole human race.

Human Rebellion and Death Advances

Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-2)

God in His grace allows Adam and Eve to live and have children. Eve's first two children are boys called Cain and Abel. Cain is the oldest and is a farmer – he grows crops. Abel is a shepherd.



God's choice (Genesis 4:3-5)

After a period of time the two sons bring an offering to the Lord. Cain brings vegetables, but Abel brings the fat from some of the firstborn animals. God accepts Abel's sacrifice and not Cain's.

From Genesis 3:21 we know that the right sacrifice to give would be an animal – that is how God covered Adam and Eve's sin. At this stage in the Bible we are not told exactly why God chooses Abel's offering instead of Cain's. In one sense God simply acts in grace and chooses Abel instead of Cain, the younger instead of the older. But this will be a pattern that will continue through the whole Bible – God choosing the younger instead of the older.

God chooses Abel's sacrifice instead of Cain's. God chooses the younger instead of the older.

Right and wrong sacrifices (Hebrews 11:4)

However, later in the Bible we are told that Abel did offer a better sacrifice than Cain. There are three important things in this verse. First, Abel offers God the correct sacrifice – an animal. Death is the punishment for disobeying God, and so this animal is like a substitute dying in Abel's place. This is a theme that will be developed as the Bible progresses - an innocent animal dying in the place of guilty people. For now, all we need to know is that this is God's way of offering forgiveness – through the death of an animal.

Second, Abel offers his sacrifice in faith. He trusts that God will accept him because of the death of an animal. He believes God's way of forgiveness, just as God had shown to his parents Adam and Eve. Abel is declared righteous before God, which simply means that he is put right with God through this sacrifice.

Thirdly, although Abel died long ago, the Bible still speaks to us through him. Abel's sacrifice is an example to us, to have trust in God's way of sacrifice. Cain is a bad example, for he did not trust in God's way of sacrifice, but in his own way – vegetables. Abel still speaks to us today by his life example encouraging us to have faith in God's way of sacrifice.

The progression of human rebellion (Genesis 4:1-5)

When Adam and Eve rebel against God the devil is present. When Cain disobeys God the devil is not present. And yet Cain decides for himself which sacrifice is right and wrong. This teaches us that the sin of human rebellion has been passed on to the human race. This means that we have inherited that spirit of human rebellion against God, deciding for ourselves what is right and wrong.

The progression of relationship breakdown (Genesis 4:8-12)

We saw in the Garden of Eden that disobedience leads to relationship breakdown. The same pattern follows outside the garden, except things start to get worse.

Murder and lying

Cain murders his brother Abel. This is the first murder of a human being in the Bible. In the garden there is blame and shame in the marriage of Adam and Eve, now there is murder in the family.

When God asks Cain where his brother is, he lies, saying, "*I don't know*". Cain knows very well where Abel is, because he has killed him. We then see evidence of further social breakdown, "*Am I my brother's keeper?*". What brother does not look out for his brother? The Adam family is falling apart.

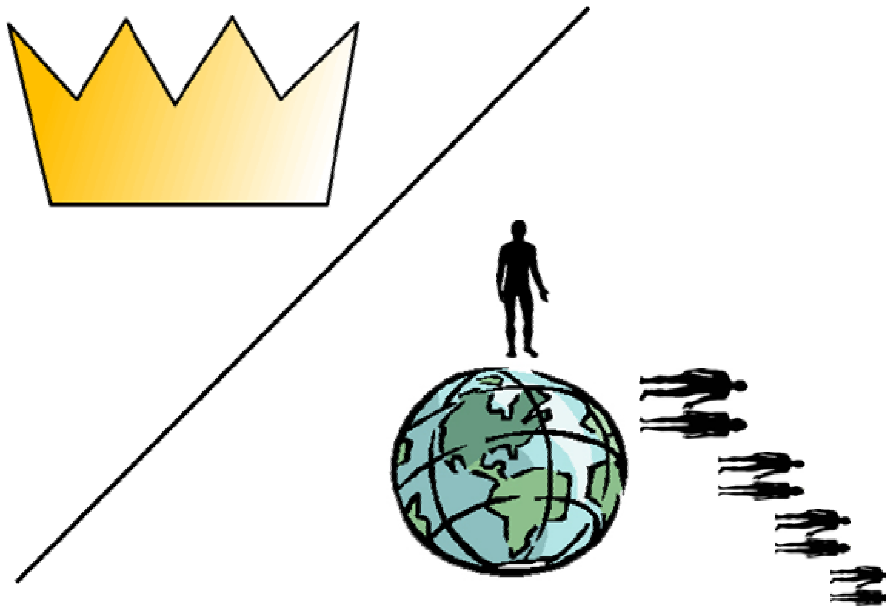
The pattern of disobedience leading to relationship breakdown is continuing in the Bible.

The God of grace – again (Genesis 4:24-25)

Whilst human beings are acting in rebellion against God He still shows grace. God in His grace gives Eve another son in the place of Abel. His name is Seth meaning “Elect One”. The chapter closes with some hope.

The reign of death (Genesis 5)

Genesis 5 highlights that God’s punishment for rebellion is taking effect in the human race. Death is reigning. Later in the Bible we see that rebellion is not only connected to death, but is also inherent within all human beings. We all die because we have all sinned. We all want to be the rulers of our own lives. Like Cain, we don’t even need the devil present to make us like this. We are born like this.



The sin of human rebellion has been passed on to the whole human race.



Think it through & discuss

1. What does the story of Cain and Abel teach us about human rebellion?

2. How does this story of Cain and Abel relate to us?

3. What do you think God is saying to us in Genesis 5?