



October 29/30, 2011  
Genesis 3:21-4:7  
*"Rejecting Cain"*  
Pastor Gary Hamrick

This is the third and final study in Genesis chapter three, and Pastor Gary will tie it in with the first part of chapter four. In order to understand why God accepted Abel's offering and why God rejected Cain's offering, we need to understand how chapter three ends. Adam and Eve's sin caused them to lose the privilege of living in Paradise, and God banished<sup>1</sup> them from the Garden.

Before Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden, God taught them two important things that are inferred in the closing verses of chapter three: substitutionary sacrifice and the way of worship.

### Substitutionary Sacrifice

1. We read in [Genesis 3:21](#) about the first inference of the slaying of animals.
2. God is teaching them something about blood atonement that would later be codified in the Law, namely that an innocent life must be slain as a substitutionary sacrifice for a sinful life.
  - a. [Leviticus 17:11](#) - *"For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."*
  - b. [Hebrews 9:22b](#) - *"... without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."*

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<sup>1</sup> We get the word, "banished" from a Hebrew word that indicates God forced them out, because they did not want to leave. ([Genesis 3:23](#))

- i. This verse helps us understand why Jesus had to die on the cross, to shed his blood for each person.
    1. The innocent died for the guilty.
    2. The righteous died for the unrighteous.
3. Animal sacrifice in the Old Testament would be the temporary means to atone for man's sin until, in God's timing, Jesus would die for the sins of the world - once for all - to bring us to God.
4. Christ would be the ultimate and only perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world, but something had to exist for people prior to Jesus dying on the cross, which is what God taught Adam and Eve when he clothed them with the skin of animals.

### The Way Of Worship

5. **Genesis 3:22b** helps us understand that God banished them from the Garden for their own good.
  - a. *"... He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."*
  - b. The other named tree in the Garden, beside the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was the tree of life.
  - c. Apparently it had eternal properties attached to its fruit, and if Adam and Eve had eaten it *after* they sinned, it would have permanently sealed them in their sinful condition without the possibility of redemption.
  - d. The good news is that God didn't excommunicate them altogether and cut off all possibility of contact, he graciously provided a way for them to commune with him, albeit from a distance.
6. We read in **Genesis 3:24** about the first reference to cherubim in the Bible.
  - a. Cherubim are not the chubby, naked babies with curly blond hair and wings that grace the covers of Christmas cards!
  - b. They are awesome, majestic, powerful angelic beings mentioned 89 times in the Bible.
  - c. They adorned the Temple walls, curtains and doors, as well as the lid of the Ark of the Covenant.
  - d. Nine times in the Old Testament, we read that God sits enthroned between the cherubim.
    - i. **1 Samuel 4:4** - *"So the people sent men to Shiloh, and they brought back the ark of the covenant of the Lord Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim..."*

ii. **Psalm 99:1** - *“The Lord reigns, let the nations tremble; he sits enthroned between the cherubim, let the earth shake.”*

1. This is why the ancient rabbis would write in the Jerusalem Targum <sup>2</sup> that the east side of Eden became the appointed place of worship where God sat enthroned between the cherubim.

7. Cain and Abel brought offerings to the Lord. (**Genesis 4:2b-5a**)

- a. It must be the case that they would have known about this offering and the “how to,” and it’s obvious that Adam was the one who communicated this to them.

8. Pastor Gary used creative license to tell the story of Adam’s conversation with Cain and Abel.

Adam addressed his sons and said: Mom and I used to live beyond the flaming swords of the cherubim. There was a time and a place that was unspoiled and perfect, and we used to walk with God in the cool of the day, and God would commune with us. But your mother and I failed. Mom was deceived by Satan and disobeyed God, and I didn’t step in to protect her or defend God’s Word, so we both sinned, and we were kicked out of Paradise. But God taught us something about blood sacrifice when he clothed us with garments of skin. He taught us about the way of worship where he sits enthroned between the cherubim. And, sons, this is how you are supposed to commune with God.

9. If we understand the background, then it makes a lot more sense, because on the surface of this Scripture, it looks like God was in a mood to accept the meat offering because he didn’t want vegetables, however, it’s much more than that.

- a. **Genesis 4:3** indicates that there was not only an appointed place, but also an appointed time.
- b. Both men came with an offering to the Lord.
- c. Both men came to the same place.
- d. Both men came at the same time.
- e. One offering was a sacrificial act and the other was a selfish act.
- f. One involved blood, and one involved sweat.
- g. One was God’s way and one was man’s work.
- h. It is for this reason that God did not accept Cain’s offering.

10. **Hebrews 11:4** - *“By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.”*

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<sup>2</sup> The Jerusalem Targum is an ancient Aramaic translation and commentary on the Hebrew Old Testament.

- a. It is by faith that still approach God today, and the only difference is that in God's timing, he brought about the sacrifice of Jesus as the perfect, permanent blood sacrifice to atone for the sins of the world.
  - b. **Ephesians 2:8-9** - *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast."*
11. Abel came by faith, and Cain came his own way, which is how many people today attempt to approach God.
- a. They think there are different ways to get to heaven and there are multiple paths that lead to God.
  - b. They think that if they live a life that is good enough, and do enough good things, donate to worthy causes, help their neighbors, and love others, then God will have mercy on them and they'll go to heaven.
  - c. While these things are noble, they are never enough; if they were, then Jesus would not have had to die.
    - i. There's only one way to be forgiven, to approach God and get to heaven - and that's a relationship with Jesus.
      - 1. **John 14:6** - *"I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me."*
  - d. The result of God's rejecting Cain's offering was that he became *"very angry."*<sup>3</sup>
  - e. **Genesis 4:7** indicates Cain knew what was right, but he chose not to do what was acceptable to God.<sup>4</sup>

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Genesis 3:21-4:7** to provide an overview for this study.
3. Prior to hearing Pastor Gary's message, were you aware of the inference that animals were sacrificed to provide clothing for Adam and Eve?
4. What was your understanding of the way God made coverings for them?

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<sup>3</sup> The Hebrew means, "seething, furious, boiling." The 1828 edition of Noah Webster's Dictionary of the English Language indicates "angry" means: Raging, furious, tumultuous.  
<http://1828.mshaffer.com/d/search/word/angry>

<sup>4</sup> *"If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."*

5. Read and discuss #7 above.
  - a. How have you viewed this incident and how have you judged Cain? ([Genesis 4:2b-5a](#))
  - b. Have you considered the fact that, at the very least, he came with something?
  - c. Review and discuss the statements in #9 above.
  - d. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's caution against falling into the trap of being a church consumer.
    - i. Pastor Gary said Christians ought to come into the House of the Lord to give of their time in serving, their money in providing, their voice in worship, and their hands in helping.
    - ii. Allow the people in your group to share experiences they've had regarding being a church consumer.
    - iii. Do you agree with Pastor Gary's statement: "Too often people come into the church to consume and critique, rather than to commune and contribute"?
    - iv. How has the Lord led to you to grow in these areas?
    - v. What is it the Lord is leading you to do in the next few weeks, months, years?
6. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's account of Adam's conversation with Cain and Abel (#8 above).
  - a. How do you think Cain and Abel reacted/responded to their father?
  - b. How would you have reacted?
7. Pastor Gary made the statement that Abel came by faith and Cain came his own way.
  - a. Spend time talking about personal experiences with this incorrect theology.
  - b. Do you know people who believe a person can come to know God in a multitude of ways?
  - c. Have you been able to find ways to speak truth into his or her life?
8. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: thank God for Christ's sacrifice on the cross (include [Hebrews 9:22b](#) in your prayer of thanksgiving); understand there is a correct way to worship the Lord; know that the Lord rejects works and man-made/man-sanctioned religious attempts to approach the Lord; to be willing to speak truth into the lives of people who embrace the incorrect theology that there are many ways to God.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).