

Thought For The Week

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The Seed of the Serpent vs the Seed of the Woman

The Battle of the Seeds Begins

The promise spoken in the garden still echoed when the first family stepped into the world outside Eden. Genesis 3:15 had declared that the seed of the woman would one day crush the head of the serpent, while the serpent would bruise His heel. That ancient word was not a distant hope. The conflict it announced was already under way in the very next generation. The prophets would later search and inquire carefully concerning this salvation, asking what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but those who would receive the good news. Even angels long to look into these things. In Genesis 4 the battle of the seeds begins in earnest, and the angels are watching.

John's first letter captures the heart of the chapter in a single sentence. "We should not be like Cain, **who was of the evil one** and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous." The phrase "of the evil one" is another way of saying that Cain belonged to the seed of the serpent. Jude places him in sobering company with Balaam and Korah, men who walked in the way of rebellion and gain. From the beginning Cain was not a righteous man. When the Lord regarded Abel's offering and not his own, Cain became very angry and his face fell. The Hebrew is vivid: his countenance collapsed under the weight of rage and dejection. Instead of examining his own heart, he burned with resentment against God and against his brother.

At this moment the narrative introduces the first use of the word "sin" in the Bible. God Himself initiates the conversation. He does not wait for Cain to seek answers. "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it." Three crucial observations rise from these words. First, opportunity for repentance still remains open. "If you do well" shows that a right offering and a restored relationship are still possible. Second, sin is personified. It is not merely an abstract action but a living predator crouched at the door, waiting to spring. The language deliberately echoes Genesis 3:16, where the woman's desire is for her husband and he will rule over her. Now sin's desire is for Cain, and he must rule over it. The same Hebrew word for "desire" appears in both places. The tension will surface again in Paul's anguished description in Romans 7 of sin as a power that wages war within. Sin wants to be master. Third, responsibility remains. Even after the fall, even with sin crouching, the human being is still called to mastery. God is already pointing Cain toward the doctrine of righteousness—a righteousness not of our own making and not without faith.

Cain refused the warning. He spoke to Abel—some ancient versions add the words "Let us go out into the field"—and when they were alone he rose up against his brother and killed him. The first human death recorded in Scripture is not a natural death but premeditated fratricide. God comes again with a deliberate question: "Where is Abel your brother?" The question does not seek

information; it creates space for confession. It echoes the earlier question to Adam, “Where are you?” Cain answers with an outright lie wrapped in defiance: “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?” The first murderer refuses the most basic human responsibility to guard the life of his brother—an especially weighty duty for an older sibling.

God’s reply is thunderous. “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground.” This is the first occurrence of the word “blood” in the Bible. Blood has a voice; the ground itself has become a witness. The curse that fell on the ground in Genesis 3 is now intensified for Cain. The ground has opened its mouth to receive Abel’s blood and will no longer yield its strength to him. Cain is sentenced to be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth. His response is pure self-pity. “My punishment is greater than I can bear.” He fears for his own life yet never once expresses remorse for the brother he murdered. There is no confession, no grief over Abel—only terror at the consequences for himself.

Yet even here mercy appears. God places a mark on Cain and declares that anyone who kills him will suffer sevenfold vengeance. The precise nature of the mark is not the point; the point is protection. God restrained blood vengeance. At this early stage there is no civil government, only a small family circle. Capital punishment for murder is not instituted until after the flood in Genesis 9:6, grounded in the image of God. The protection of Cain was not primarily about Cain as an individual; it was about restraining further bloodshed within the fragile human family. Romans 5 teaches that sin was in the world before the law and that sin is not counted where there is no law. The principle is already at work. Cain is punished, yet not with the full and proper penalty later generations would recognize. What God intended as mercy, a later descendant would twist into license.

Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. The text does not merely say he moved away from his parents; it says he went away from the presence of the Lord. That phrase summarizes the entire direction of his line. The question inevitably arises: where did Cain get his wife? Genesis 3:20 states that Eve was the mother of all living, and Paul told the Athenians that God made from one man every nation of mankind. If a population is to be built from a single couple, the first generations must intermarry. Cain married either a sister or a niece. There is no other possibility. The later prohibition against close intermarriage appears in the law of Moses roughly twenty-five hundred years later. At this point there is no such law. Where there is no law, there is no transgression. Adam and Eve were created very good, and the early generations closest to them would have carried far fewer genetic defects. Lifespans remained long until after the flood. The same necessity appears again with Noah’s family. These early marriages do not overturn the later command; they illustrate the principle Paul applies to those who are in Christ.

The genealogy of Cain traces both cultural advancement and moral decline. Cain builds a city and names it after his son—the first mention of city-building. The line continues through Enoch, Irad, Mehujael, and Methushael to Lamech. Lamech takes two wives, Adah and Zillah—the first explicit polygamy in Scripture. Their children introduce foundational human arts: Jabal is the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock; Jubal is the father of all who play the lyre and pipe; Tubal-cain is the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron. A daughter, Naamah, is also named. These civilizational advances—urban settlement, pastoral nomadism, music, and metallurgy—are real historical developments. The nomadic lifestyle is tied to the curse on Cain: the ground would not produce for him, so he and his descendants could not stay in one place.

Yet the moral trajectory is downward. The genealogy culminates in Lamech’s song: “I have killed a

man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold." Lamech takes God's protective word to Cain and turns it into a personal boast of escalating vengeance. What God gave as restraint, Lamech claims as license. Polygamy and violence sit together at the climax of the line. The seventh generation in Cain's line is a violent, self-asserting man. By deliberate contrast, the seventh generation in Seth's line is Enoch, who walked with God. Cain's line illustrates how cultural and technological advancement can flourish while the heart moves further from God. The pattern echoes Romans 1, where humanity suppresses the truth and descends into greater corruption. Cain's descendants never reappear as individuals later in Scripture; their story ends here, and the flood later erases them.

God did not allow the "game over" moment to stand. Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth. Eve had earlier named Cain with language that sounded like "to acquire," expressing her hope that she had acquired the man who would crush the serpent's head. That hope had been dashed; Cain proved to be of the seed of the serpent. Now she says, "God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him." The name Seth itself carries the idea of appointment or granting. God has not abandoned the promise of Genesis 3:15. The seed of the woman continues. To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord. In contrast to Cain's line, which builds cities, develops arts, and boasts of vengeance, the line of Seth is marked by turning to the Lord. Public worship, dependence, and invocation of God's name begin to characterize this family.

Scripture sets the two lines side by side on purpose. Similar or identical names appear in both genealogies, underscoring the deliberate juxtaposition. Cain's genealogy is short and terminates; Seth's continues through Genesis 5 to Noah and the remnant that survives the flood. Technological and cultural progress in itself is not condemned. What is condemned is the trajectory away from the presence of the Lord. Human achievement without God does not lead to life; it deepens the corruption that will eventually require a flood.

The chapter leaves two clear paths. One path leaves the presence of the Lord, builds its own security, develops an impressive culture, and ends in escalating violence and self-justification—the way of Cain and Lamech. The other path receives God's appointment, names the next generation in faith, and begins to call upon the name of the Lord—the way of Seth and Enosh. Several deep theological currents run through the chapter. The promise of the woman's offspring is still alive, yet it will not be fulfilled in the firstborn who looked so promising. The conflict between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman continues. Faith is not mere ritual; it is what God regards. Sin is personal, predatory, and must be mastered or it will master us. Even in judgment God shows restraint and mercy. The blood of Abel still cries out, but Hebrews 12:24 tells us that the blood of Jesus speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. Abel's blood cried out for justice; Christ's blood cries out for mercy and reconciliation.

The story of Cain is not ancient history only; it is the story of the human heart. When God regards another's offering more highly than ours, do we examine ourselves or burn with anger? When sin crouches at the door of jealousy, resentment, or bitterness, do we rule over it or open the door? Do we live as our brother's keeper, or do we still answer with Cain's question? The good news is that the true offspring has come. He is not named Cain; His name is Jesus. He did not bring an offering of fruit or of flocks; He offered Himself. His blood does not cry from the ground for vengeance; it speaks from the cross for forgiveness. Ultimately the appointed seed is Christ, who both suffered and entered into glory—the very things the prophets searched out and the angels longed to look into.

The question the text presses is simple: which line are we walking in? Are we building our own cities and multiplying our own defenses, or are we calling upon the name of the Lord? The invitation remains open. Call on His name. Let no one go away from the presence of the Lord as Cain did. Notice that it was Cain who moved away. Let us instead come near by the blood that speaks better things than Abel's.

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Genesis 3:15 promised that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head. That conflict is already raging in Genesis 4. John writes that Cain was **of the evil one** and murdered his brother because his own deeds were evil and Abel's were righteous. When the Lord regarded Abel's offering and not Cain's, Cain burned with anger. God warned him: "Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it." Cain refused. He rose up against Abel and killed him. The first recorded human death was fratricide. Abel's blood cried from the ground. God intensified the curse on Cain, sentencing him to be a fugitive and wanderer, yet still showed mercy by placing a protective mark on him.

Cain went away from the presence of the Lord. His line produced cities, music, metalwork, and tents—real cultural advances—yet ended in Lamech, who took two wives and boasted of seventy-sevenfold vengeance, twisting God's protection into license. The seventh generation of Cain was violent; the seventh of Seth was Enoch, who walked with God.

God did not abandon the promise. Eve named another son Seth, saying God had appointed another offspring in place of Abel. With Enosh, Abel's son, people began to call upon the name of the Lord. Scripture sets the two lines side by side: one builds its own security and multiplies violence; the other receives God's appointment and turns to Him.

The true appointed Seed is Christ. Abel's blood cried for justice; His blood speaks a better word—mercy and reconciliation. Two paths remain. Will we walk in the way of Cain, or will we call upon the name of the Lord?

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