**Cain and Abel, Extra Stuff Bible Study.**

30 September 2018.

1. What does Cain mean?

2. Ambiguity in the Hebrew of 4:1:

A. I have begotten a man with the Lord.

B. I have begotten a man­–the Lord.

3. What does Abel mean (cf. Ecclesiastes)?

* meaningless
* vanity
* futile
* vapor

4. What does Seth mean?

5. What exactly was the difference between Cain’s and Abel’s offerings in vv.3–5?

6. What do these references add to your understanding of Cain’s sin?

Hebrews 11:4: By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was approved as a righteous man, because God approved his gifts, and even though he is dead, he still speaks through his faith.

1 John 3:11-12 For this is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another, unlike Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother’s were righteous.

Jude 10-11: 1But these people blaspheme anything they do not understand. And what they do understand by instinct—like irrational animals—by these things they are destroyed. Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, have plunged into Balaam’s error for profit, and have perished in Korah’s rebellion.

Matthew 23:33-36: “Snakes! Brood of vipers! How can you escape being condemned to hell?, This is why I am sending you prophets, sages, and scribes. Some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. So all the righteous blood shed on the earth will be charged to you, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Truly I tell you, all these things will come on this generation.

7. How did they know if the Lord was pleased or not?

8. In 4:8, it literally says, “If you do good, lifting.” What could this mean?

9. There is a strange textual issue at 4:8. Here is a note from the NET Bible:

“The [Hebrew text] has simply “and Cain said to Abel his brother,” omitting Cain’s words to Abel. It is possible that the elliptical text is original. Perhaps the author uses the technique of aposiopesis, “a sudden silence” to create tension. In the midst of the story the narrator suddenly rushes ahead to what happened in the field. It is more likely that the ancient versions (Samaritan Pentateuch, LXX, Vulgate, and Syriac), which include Cain’s words, “Let’s go out to the field,” preserve the original reading here. After writing אָחִיו (’akhiyv, “his brother”), a scribe’s eye may have jumped to the end of the form בַּשָּׂדֶה (basadeh, “to the field”) and accidentally omitted the quotation.

10. Note that the word “brother” occurs 6 times in 8-11. What does this subtly highlight?

11. How do you see this in the Cain and Abel story?

“In his portrayal of events Moses does not employ the familiar profusion of language of the heathen, who embellish and give finish to a single scene, sometimes with one descriptive detail, then with another. But we know from experience that human eloquence cannot draw an adequate picture of the emotions, and oftentimes a profusion of words has the result that the emotion being described appears less intense than it actually is. Moses, therefore, proceeds differently and by means of few words suggests a great profusion of situations.” – Martin Luther

12. A famous modern scholar making a similar point:

A summary of Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*: “In chapter six, Alter examines the topic of characterization. The key to a good story that draws readers in emotionally is characterization. One might think that giving as much description as possible would be ideal, but Alter argues that the key to good characterization is often the wise use of ambiguity with a character that leaves a reader seeking to know more about the person.”