



Beginnings

A Look at Genesis

The Book of Genesis is a book of beginnings, it reflects on the human struggles that we all encounter. During this month of June we will be looking at situations in Genesis that reflect on our present existence. There is a temptation to believe that the people of the Bible did not struggle with the same problems we struggle with. But just because they did not have the same cultural reality or technological advances it does not mean that they did not experience the same kinds of questions and problems.

What Is At Your Door?

Genesis 4:6-7 -[Romans 2:5-6]

This Sunday we will look at the monster of temptation and sin that we each struggle with. As a child I used to imagine a monster hiding in my closet or under the bed. When I grew up I realized that curled up in front of my heart door was a monster of my own making. It came from my own selfish desires and it wished to master me and cause all kinds of evil in my life. On this Sunday we will be looking at our struggle with temptations and motivations through the lens of the story of Cain and Able.



Genesis 4:6-7

6 So the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it.”

Romans 2:5-6

5 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who “will render to each one according to his deeds”:

What Is At Your Door? *Genesis 4:6-7*

A Confession:

Each of us have within us “defiling passions” that curl up on the welcome mat of our door waiting to pounce on us and dominate our lives. This was brought home to me many years ago. I became deeply jealous of the successes of a colleague in ministry because I felt I was a more able minister than he was. I used this logic to justify my growing resentment against this man. It has just been in the last few years I have overcome my personal shame to admit what happened in my heart. I became so inflame with my jealousy that I was in the process of planning ways to sabotage his reputation. What is frightening to me now, is that I saw nothing wrong with this. I argued that I had been unfairly treated and had more ability.



What Is At Your Door? *Genesis 4:6-7*

A Confession:

Providentially, the Holy Spirit confronted me before I acted on these plans and wounded a fellow brother in Christ. It happened this way: I was working my way through the book of Genesis preparing a series of messages on creation when I read chapter 4. At that moment, a strong sense of conviction came over me and the Holy Spirit impressed on my heart “that’s you”. I sat stunned at my desk. I then left my office and went to the church sanctuary where I spent a long time in prayer repenting for entertaining this evil monster of jealousy in my heart.

Mark 7:20-23



Mark 7:20-23

20 And He said, “What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”

How we like to view Cain.

Until this incident I viewed Cain as someone completely unlike me. He was a villain, a monster...inhuman. When I looked closer at Cain, I found an intelligent talented man, sensitive and desiring to succeed. A man who wanted to be spiritual and godly. In the Septuagint the translators must have thought something like this because they translated these verses into Greek. They translate into English:

6 And the Lord God said to Cain, Why art thou become very sorrowful and why is thy countenance fallen?

7 Hast thou not sinned if thou hast brought it rightly, but not rightly divided it? be still, to thee shall be his submission, and thou shalt rule over him. - Brenton LXX English Translation 1856

We would like Cain to be so very different from us. Most paintings make Cain a monster, but what was he really like? Ruben' paints him as a monster, Tissot painted him as a confused man led by his desires.

"Cain and Abel" by Peter Paul Reubens, mid 1500s

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What Is At Your Door? *Genesis 4:6-7*

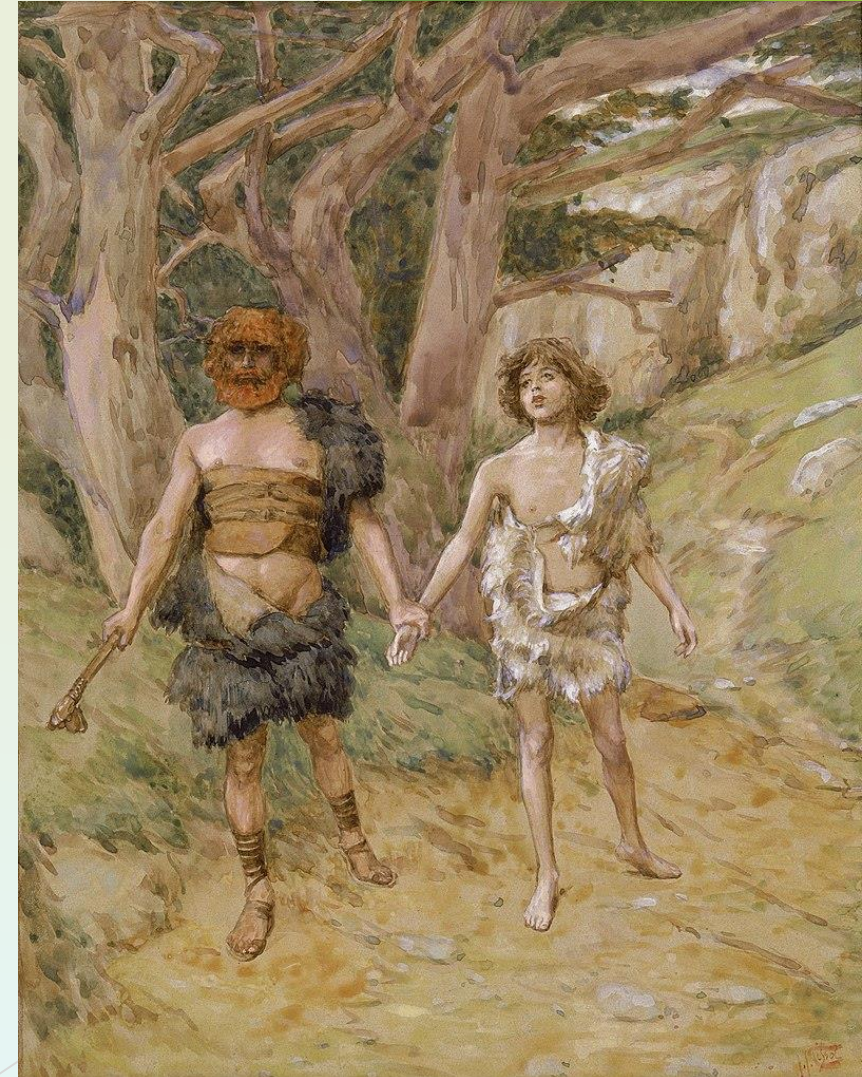


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Cain's Attributes:

1. He was the pride and joy of his parents. Eve especially had high hopes for her son. Her statement about him indicates that she thought of him as the promised son.
2. He was a skilled farmer. He had learned how to coax from of the land the fruit that was difficult to obtain after Adam's curse.
3. He wanted to please God.
4. He was intelligent.
5. He was responsible.
6. He was convincing.
7. He was a leader.
8. God clearly intended to honor him if he mastered himself. The word for "accepted" means to receive honor. It is the Hebrew word "she-ayth". [This is word from which Adam got the name for the son born following Abel's murder - Seth.]
9. Cain seems to have been a leader.
10. Cain seems to have encouraged the arts among heirs.

What Is At Your Door? *Genesis 4:6-7*



"Cain Leads Abel to His Death" by James Tissot, 1900.

C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* indicates that sins are really God's good creation twisted by our self-centered natures. That which God intended for good now becomes evil. Everything from sexual desire to our desire for holiness or success.

God asks Cain "Why are you angry? Why has your face fallen?" This is a curious set of questions.

The Hebrew word for anger is "khaw-raw" which means to be hot and burn. It reflects the intense emotion that burns at the center of our acts of real evil.

The down cast face reflects a man who feels that he has been diminished because of what he does not have. At the center of most sin is covetousness [the desire to have that which does not belong to us].

As we contemplate our emotion [passion] and our want we begin to devise and justify all kinds of evil.

James 1:13-15

"Cain and Abel" by Peter Paul Reubens, mid 1500s

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The sin nature that Adam and Eve bequeathed to their descendants was a self-centeredness. When this is combined with our desires it leads inevitably to sin.

James 1:13-15

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

The word “tempted” in James 1 means basically to try the limits. It can mean “testing”. The word for sin in Greek means either to “miss the mark” or “cross the boundaries”. In Genesis 4 the Hebrew word for sin in verse 7 is “khat-tawth” which means a “trespass action”. In Jewish thought “sin” was not an “objective” concept like became in Greek philosophy.

In Greek philosophy “sin” became a “state” or condition. For the Jewish people sin did not exist outside to will of the individual.

Under the Hebrew concept people have a choice. Sin is the choice to trespass the intentions of God to fulfill our own ends.

James lays down 2 very distinct pictures in this passage. The first is of an animal or fish lured by its own desires into a trap. He used 2 very interesting words the word “dragged away” was a term for luring an animal out. The 2nd term for “enticed” is a word for “baiting” a hook or trap.

Romans 7:7-10

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Romans 7:7-10

7 What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.”

8 But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil desire*. For apart from the law sin *was* dead.

9 I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

10 And the commandment, which *was* to *bring* life, I found to *bring* death.

Here in Romans 7:8 and James 1:14 we have the same Greek word for “desire” it is the “epithumia”. In Greek it is a compound word meaning basically “upon intense emotion”.

The main portion of the word comes from a word that at its base means “anger” which was viewed as the most intense of emotions. Remember anger is central to Cain’s sin.

Our most intense emotions are related closely to anger. When we act on this emotion and move across God’s boundaries we have sinned. We often convince ourselves this is for good or noble purposes. But in reality it is based in self-centered desire. This is why James tells us not to deceive ourselves in verse 16.

Strangely the word “epithumia” is not evil or good in itself meaning it simply means a “strong desire”. The context of the word shifts its meaning toward either good or evil. In Genesis 4:7 the monster laying on Cain’s doorstep “desires” to have him. The Hebrew word indicates the concept of an “appetite”. It does not become “sin” unless Cain is Mastered by it. **Genesis 8:21**

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Genesis 8:21

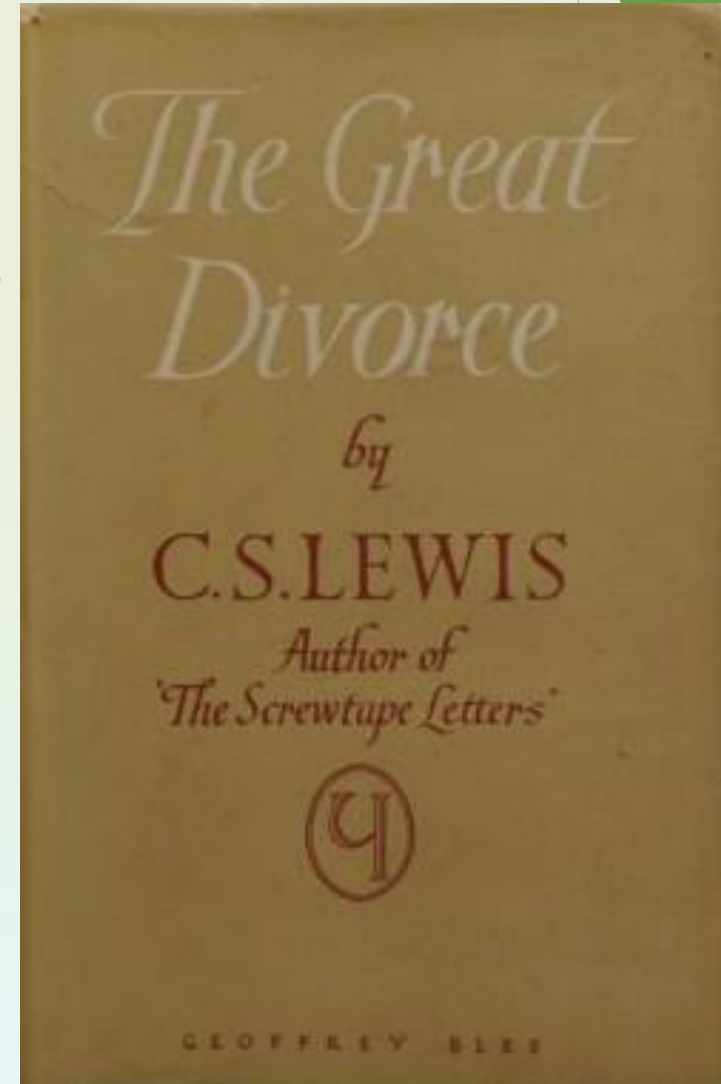
21 And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart *is* evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.

Wm. Blake a British free thinker and Romantic in 1793 wrote the book “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell” where he promoted the idea that humans should follow their own passions. In 1945 C. S. Lewis published the book “The Great Divorce” it was titled in mockery of Blakes book.

In this book a bus load of human ghosts arrive at the boarder of heaven desiring entry until they find that everything about the place is painful to their soft ghostly flesh. They must make a decision to give up the desires they have been pursuing in order to go on into heaven. Only a few are willing to surrender their long held desires. These desires are intense yet in most cases cleverly disguised and hidden. Strangely their friends and acquaintances who come out of heaven to convince them to stay are not at all fooled by their desires and confront them plainly about their sinful attitudes and actions. It is repudiation of Wm. Blake. Paul in Romans 2 tells us that when we follow our desires without repentance we become hardened and fall deeper into our sin. **Hebrews 3:12-15**

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Written in 1943-45. Originally titled, “Who Goes Home?”. The Publisher insisted on a different title, so Lewis called it “The Great Divorce” in mockery of Wm. Blake’s “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell” [1793]

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Hebrews 3:12-15

12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; 13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, 15 while it is said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

What Is At Your Door? *Genesis 4:6-7*

One of the greatest dangers in our lives is “following our Passions” it leads to a desert and destruction. The writer of Hebrews goes on in chapter 3 to speak of the children of Israel who in the desert followed their passions and died in the wilderness under the anger of God.

**FOLLOW YOUR
PASSION**

As Christians we struggle with the monster of temptation, but that monster finds its strength in our own passionate desires. We must master them and lead our passion rather than follow them..

What Is At Your Door? *Genesis 4:6-7 -[Romans 2:5-6]*

