Studies In

## GENESIS

Book 4 Chapter Four

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Book 4

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## CHAPTER FOUR

In our study of chapter three, I said that if we were to omit that chapter from the Bible, we would be at a loss to comprehend all that follows beginning with chapter four. In chapter three, we learned of the commencement of sin in the human race. In our present chapter we will see the continuation of sin, the course it took. This chapter, like the first three, contains a number of "firsts." Here we are introduced to the first birth, the first motherhood, the first family, the first murder and the first discoveries and developments of man.

As I read this chapter several times, I saw a series of couplets which suggested the following outline:

Two Sons

Two Sacrifices

Two Sins

Two Seeds

Two Societies

First, there are the two sons, Cain and Abel. "And Adam knew his wife Eve; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD" (4:1).

The Scripture says that Adam *knew* Eve and she conceived. With a sacred delicacy the Holy Spirit chose the word "knew," an inoffensive expression that is used to describe the proper sexual relationship between married persons. It was this conjugal intercourse God had in mind when He said to the man and the woman, "Be fruitful, and multiply" (1:28). The term is used in both the Old and New Testaments. When the angel Gabriel told Mary that she would conceive and bear a son, she replied, "How shall this be, seeing I *know* not a man?" (Luke 1:34). While the word originally conveyed a true sexual union in marriage, it came to lose its original meaning as we see its use in Genesis 19:5.

Some commentators point out that the word "Cain" (Hebrew's gana) means to get, to acquire. The name, as Eve used it, memorializes a great truth, namely, she conceived and bore the child by the power and help of Jehovah. She realized that God was the author of life, the only One Who could produce life. One writer said, "She would have been a cold-blooded atheist had she believed anything else." God had not abandoned her in spite of her sin.

But there is something more to be considered in Eve's words, "I have gotten a man from the LORD." There is good reason to believe that Eve expressed a deep hope that this first child was the promised "Seed of the woman," the Redeemer. It is no mere stretch of the imagination to suggest that Eve would look upon her newborn son as the promised Seed. I have no problem with seeing her statement as a reflection on Genesis 3:15. She believed that God had already fulfilled His promise. So when her first child was born, a male, in her mind he was the Seed who would bruise the serpent's head. But she was wrong. Instead of Cain being the Messiah, he became the first murderer. She did not know that it would be a long time before the Deliverer would come. However, we must admire her faith.

"And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground" (4:2).

There is the possibility that the brothers were twins; however, this cannot be proved. The idea that these two sons of Adam were twins is suggested because the Scripture does not say again that "Adam knew his wife, and she conceived." But this is not a strong enough argument to prove that Cain and Abel were twin brothers. There are repeated references to children being born without the mention of the husband *knowing* his wife. (See 4:20, 22, 25.)

Pfeiffer points out that the Hebrew name Hebel means "breath," "vapor" or "vanity." Borrowing from Leupold he adds that the vanity of human existence had impressed itself on our first parents, that the sum total of human existence marred by sin had stamped life with the emptiness of it all.

The first two children born on earth introduce two occupations. Cain followed the calling of the farmer while Abel, the shepherd of sheep. No doubt both were practiced to some degree by their father Adam, and both were necessary to human existence. The one occupation was neither more nor less important than the other.

Second, there are two sacrifices. "And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell" (4:3-5).

The expression "In process of time" should read "at the end of days." It might suggest the idea that the sacrifices of Cain and Abel were brought at a definite determinate period. The time element is not the important lesson in the narrative. Both appeared to worship at the same place, at the same time, and both brought an offering. The bringing of the sacrifices was an expression of worship, a way of reflecting gratitude to the Giver of every good gift (James 1:17).

The really important lesson in these verses is to be found in God's reaction to the two offerings. While Cain's offering is mentioned first in verse three, God responded first to Abel's sacrifice, a response that reflected His favor toward Abel's offering and His disfavor toward Cain's. "And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." Why did God show regard for Abel's offering but none for Cain's? We are not told how God showed His reactions to the sons and their sacrifices, only that He did.

The first piece of evidence that leads one toward a solution of the problem is found in the New Testament: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:4). This verse tells us that Adam's sons were worshipping God on the basis of some revelation from Him, otherwise Abel would not have offered his sacrifice "by faith." The Apostle Paul wrote, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Certainly there had come some word from God, or Abel could not have come by faith. Faith in the matter of worship is always a response to Divine revelation. Possibly he heard it first from his parents as they related to their children God's promise of the coming Seed and His provision through the coats of skins (3:15, 21). At some time in his life he learned that a sacrifice involving the shedding of the blood was required by God.

I have no idea where or what that place of worship was so early in human history, but I do know that Abel brought to God "of the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof," which means that he brought to the place of worship an offering that had been slain. He drew nigh to God through the

death of another. God called Abel's sacrifice "excellent," and the man himself God called "righteous." Abel brought a lamb and killed it before the Lord as a substitute for himself, and God accepted both the man and his offering. He came with blood, and God was pleased. Moreover Abel knew that he was accepted by God. Abel's offering pointed to Christ, and it portrays God's way of salvation. Our Lord referred to "the blood of righteous Abel" (Matthew 23:35), a further witness that God looked with pleasure upon Abel and his offering. Abel, by his faith and his offering, bears a continuous living witness, for "he being dead yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:4).

With Cain we have a totally different picture. "But unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell" (4:5). We are not told exactly how God showed His disfavor toward Cain and his offering, but we do know that Cain got the message clearly and reacted to it. He became angry and showed his resentment. Now, do not look upon Cain as a crude, vulgar, irreligious atheist. He was as much a cultured gentleman as was his brother Abel. He is much like some cultured religious people in our own times.

In the Epistle of Jude there are at least seven evil characteristics of apostasy, one of which the writer calls "the way of Cain" (Jude 11). Strictly speaking, there are only two religions in the world; God's and man's. These two are witnessed in the worship of Cain and Abel. As a matter of fact, the two religions got their start with the Adam family. Now the rivalry was not between two ways of life, the agricultural and the pastoral, but between a carnal religion and the truly spiritual. Man's religion is a religion of works, a mere perfunctory effort to appease God. It is a bloodless religion. In principle Cain denied what God required, namely, a sinless substitute whose vicarious death would protect the guilty sinner. Cain brought an offering to God, but it was the promptings of his own heart which were "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9).

"The way of Cain" is a divinely inspired, comprehensive term describing every form of religion which denies the substitutionary, vicarious death of our Lord Jesus Christ. "The way of Cain" is man's religion of self-will and unbelief. Twice in the Book of Proverbs we read, "There is a way

which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). There is only one way. Our Lord said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6). Are you a follower of the way of Cain, or God's Way? The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of "the way into the holiest" (Hebrews 9:8), and then he proclaims plainly that it is "by the blood of Jesus" (10:19). Abel worshipped God in God's way; Cain came to God in his own way.

I see the worship of Cain as a mere formal act. The story of Cain is pathetic and tragic. There are many persons who find it difficult to understand how an act of worship could occasion Cain's crime. But it did just that! The way of Cain continues to this day to divide men, causing hatred, strife and cruelty. And I am constrained to repeat, for emphasis, that Abel's offering of a lamb indicates, if only in type and symbol, God's provision for sinful man to receive forgiveness and pardon. Abel's lamb pointed forward to "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), and even beyond the Cross to Heaven's adoration of God's Lamb when angels will join in saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Revelation 5:12).

Third, there are two sins. "And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell" (4:5). It seems clear from this statement that Cain was guilty of having a sin of the spirit, one of those hidden sins of the inner man. Instead of searching his heart to learn why he and his offering were rejected by God, he allowed anger to take possession of him. He had not learned that "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger. . ." (Proverbs 19:11), and that "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous. . ." (Proverbs 27:4). There is an anger which is sinful, unjustifiable, and when we allow it to take hold of us we cannot worship God acceptably. "The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind" (Proverbs 21:27). "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools" (Ecclesiastes 7:9). When we are guilty of the sin of a wrong spirit, we should pray as David prayed when he said to God, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).

But in spite of Cain's bad behavior we can see the condescending grace and mercy of God. "And the LORD said unto Cain. . . If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shalt be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him" (4:7). God's great heart of compassion was reaching out to rescue Cain, giving to him another opportunity to be accepted by God. The statement, "If thou doest well, thou shalt be accepted," does not suggest that salvation can be obtained by works. Such an interpretation has no biblical support. "For by grace are ye saved through faith. . . not of works" (Ephesians 2:8,9). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us. . ." (Titus 3:5). In verse seven the voice of God to Cain is the voice of love and longsuffering. He is giving Cain a second chance. Listen to the Psalmist as he describes God: "For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee" (Psalm 86:5). "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy" (Psalm 103:8). The doing well in Genesis 3:7 refers to the offering, not to Cain's doing good. The New Testament passages we examined which treat these verses in Genesis will support this idea.

It has not been easy for me to come to a judgement in my understanding of verse seven, particularly its last parts—"And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire." Here I see two possible meanings. First, there are some fine Bible teachers who interpret the words, "sin lieth at the door" as meaning a "sin offering" lies at the door. Their conclusion is based on the fact that the Hebrew word chattah, which is translated "sin," is frequently translated "sin offering." If this view is correct, then the final phrase, "unto thee shall be his desire" would refer to Abel and at the same time assure Cain that neither God nor Abel would be displeased with him.

A second interpretation which has much to recommend it is as follows: "If thou doest not well, sin is lying at the door ready to leap upon you. Be very careful about this! If you refuse to repent, to turn back and bring the blood sacrifice, sin will fasten itself upon you and destroy you." God was giving to Cain a second chance to bring the same kind of an offering that Abel brought. But Cain refused to repent, continued to nurse his jealousy and thereby conceived the idea to kill his brother. This is the way of Cain. There is a somber lesson here for us all.

The second sin grew out of the first. The hidden sin of jealousy

and hatred led to murder. "And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him" (4:8). It is at this point in the narrative where we see the open conflict between the two seeds. God had said to Satan, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed" (3:15). Here for the first time the open conflict between the two seeds is in evidence. And from this point onward the history of civilization is a record of the battle of the seeds, the conflict between the godly and the ungodly. The two seeds are in deadly antagonism toward each other, the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Sin had ruined the first man, and then prompted the second man to murder the third man. Cain, the first son of Adam, became the first murderer, and Abel, the second son, the first martyr.

I do not believe that Cain was ever aware of how vulnerable he was to sin and Satan. When God said to him that "sin lieth at the door," little did Cain realize to what extent sin would lead him, that it would pounce upon him and make him a murderer. We are all the children of Adam and each of us possesses Adam's sin nature with its evil potentialities and possibilities. It is a part of us and it will not be eradicated in this life. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8). "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Corinthians 10:12). Now we know that Cain was not a true believer, nevetheless he and his wicked deed remain as a solemn reminder of the power of the enemy and the presence of sin. Cain was given the opportunity to get victory over sin, but it conquered him instead. The conflict between the seeds continues to this very hour.

It appears that the first conflict in the battle of the seeds was won by Satan. Cain did the actual killing of his brother, but Satan was the master-mind and the instigator of the wicked deed. When our Lord said of Satan that "he was a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44), I believe He was alluding to this first murder, for even the anger that drove Cain to kill Abel was prompted by Satan. We see this in Ephesians 4:26 and 27 where the Apostle Paul said, ". . . let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil." In the Scripture, sinful anger and murder are linked together, and both are said to come from Satan.

I saw this more clearly recently while reading the First Epistle of John, chapter three, where the two seeds are contrasted. In the

following selected portions there is an obvious link with Genesis, chapter four:

"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil (vs. 8). . . In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother (vs. 10). . .love one another (vs. 11). . . Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer. . ." (vss. 12-15).

The italics are mine and they are designed to draw attention to the relation between Satan, hatred and murder on the one hand, and Christ and love on the other. It is this difference which distinguishes the two seeds, "the children of God. . . and the children of the devil" (vs. 10). The point for application to you and me is that "the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8). He is at the door, waiting for the first opportunity to attack us. And we give him that opportunity when we allow anger and hatred to linger in our hearts. While Cain killed Abel physically, he allowed Satan to destroy him in every way, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Beloved, let us not harbor hatred in our hearts, but forgive and love one another.

"And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, "I know not: Am I my brother's keeper"? (4:9) This verse records God's question and Cain's answer. God knew what Cain had done, therefore His question was not to seek information, but rather was it intended to go straight to Cain's conscience. But with brash, arrogant effrontery Cain lied to God and cast off all natural affection for his brother. How utterly strange for a man to

stand before God and deny a crime for which he knew he was guilty! Did he think that God did not see his sin, or that He had forgotten it? He is like the sinner who said, "God hath forgotten: He hideth His face; He will never see it" (Psalm 10:11). Satan puts into the minds of his children the lie that men can sin and escape the punishment of their wrong. Let us learn well from this incident the truth that God in His holiness hates sin, "and be sure your sin will find you out" (Leviticus 32:23).

"And He said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground" (4:10). The writer to the Hebrews seems to refer to this statement when he wrote of "the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel (Hebrews 12:24). This is not a reference to the blood of Abel's lamb but to Abel's own blood which Cain shed when he murdered his brother. It has been said often that wrongs cry out to be made right. An example of this is found in Revelation 6:9, 10. The blood of the martyrs cries out to be avenged, but the blood of Christ testifies to better things, namely, redemption, forgiveness and cleansing, for "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7). Abel's blood cries for wrath and judgment; Christ's blood heralds the message of God's love and mercy, and it cries out to God saying, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Now do not miss the fact that Abel's blood is crying out for vengeance from God, not from man. Man is quicker to seek revenge than to forgive. Vengeance is something that belongs to God, for He only knows all and judges in righteousness (Deuteronomy 32:35; Psalm 94:1).

And so Cain receives his sentence from God, the inevitable punishment for his sin. His future days would be spent as a vagabond, roaming across the earth as a fugitive with no permanent culture and no way of protecting himself from those who would seek to avenge Abel's death (4:11,12).

In response to God's sentence upon him, "Cain said unto the LORD, my punishment is greater than I can bear" (4:13). His complaint reveals self-pity but not the faintest sign of remorse or sorrow for his sin. True repentence leads the sinner to renounce his sin and take sides with God. This Cain would not do. His comment, "Every one that findeth me shall slay me" apparently anticipated that other children would be born of Adam and Eve, as of course there were (5:4). He considered himself to be a man marked for death (4:14).

"And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him" (4:15). This "mark" has been the subject for much discussion and thus much speculation. Frankly, I do not have the slightest idea what that mark was. However, we are sure that the mark upon Cain was intended for his protection. It was an act of God's grace and mercy. He would not permit any person to take vengeance upon Cain. The mark was a sign to him that he would have God's protection. Now do not get any wrong ideas about God and His dealings with sin. God is neither condoning Cain's sin nor covering it. Cain was a sinner but not a transgressor. You see, no law had been given as vet which said, "Thou shalt not kill." Cain committed murder before the Divine decree was spoken, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man" (9:6). Until God introduced His law of capital punishment, no man had a right to take the life of even a murderer. God's attitude toward Cain was a grand display of the riches of His grace.

Fifth, there are two societies. "And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch" (4:1, 17). Two societies, or two civilizations can be traced beginning with this passage in the Bible. The first of the two is the ungodly society, made up of Satan's seed, his children. Cain is its founder. The second is the godly line of Seth which is introduced at the close of the chapter in verses 25 and 26.

The godless society began with Cain's marriage and the birth of his son whom he names Enoch. Cain's wife was in all probability his sister. We know that Adam and Eve had other sons and daughters (5:4). The marriage of a brother to his sister was not uncommon and certainly not prohibited until it was forbidden in the Mosaic Law (Leviticus 18:9). In the early stages of the human race it was unavoidable. Cain's first son is not the Enoch whose birth is mentioned in 5:18. There was an Enoch in both the Cainitic line and the line of Seth.

The Cainitic society was a mixture of good and bad. Lamech, the great, great-grandson of Cain, was the first to violate God's marriage ordinance. We read that "Lamech took unto him two wives" (4:19). That was bad for it introduced the evil of polygamy, a growing practice that God never approves. Polygamy is "the way

of Cain" which is not the way of true righteousness and holiness. Our Lord taught that a monogamous relationship in marriage was what God intended (Matthew 19:4-6). The names of Lamech's wives are Adah, meaning *beauty*, and Zillah, which means *adomment*. Possibly there was a worldy and fleshly glamor about the young women that appealed to the lusts of Lamech.

But not all was bad in the Cainitic society. Nine decendants of Cain are mentioned, and among them we find the first agriculturists, musicians and metal workers (20-22). Agricultural advancement, music and works of art can all be good in themselves, but here they are developed in a wicked society which sought to increase its happiness by means of them. This same spirit prevails in our modern society as it continues in "the way of Cain." Cain and his offspring pursue progress and success, and then attempt to soothe their sorrows and hide their sins with music and pleasure. Now, there is no sin in building cities, pursuing secular enterprise and enjoying the rich strains of good music. But when God is not in any of those things, they are often used to destroy a society.

God has His Holy City and His magnificent temple and much music, but it was all for His praise and glory. "Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psaltries and harps" (I Chronicles 15:28). It was a joyful occasion when David and the elders of Israel brought up the ark of the covenant. David called those instruments "the musical instruments of God" (I Chronicles 16:42). But the Cainites devised their musical instruments to aid them in shutting God out. There is no sin in manufacturing and metallurgy and music, but there is sin in a worldly and selfish use of those skills while God is forgotten. When men build cities and adorn them for their own pleasure, that they may be able to carry on without God, all of their art and architecture and attractions, and their beautiful Adahs and Zillahs, are in vain. Listen to Job as he describes how the wicked sons of Cain live: "They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways" (Job 21:12-14). This is "the way of Cain" and it can lead only to disaster.

As regards Cain's society there is a final word from Lamech the first polygamist. "And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah,

Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold" (4:23, 24). Cain was the first murderer, and his great, great-grandson the second. But Lamech's boast only shows how the godless society of Cain was deteriorating. In substance he boasted to his wives, "If anyone dares to lay a hand on me, I will retaliate with a vengeance ten times greater than that which God promised to avenge on any person who would injure my great, great-grandfather."

On this note of braggadocio, the sons and society of Cain reveal "the way of Cain." It is a society of technical brilliance, a variety of luxuries, of sexual excesses and violence. Human nature has not changed. Lamech is with us today in spirit. Our society breaks God's law of marriage, men murder and then boast of their violence as they show no fear of judgement. In the six generations of Cain mentioned in these verses there flows forth the stream of irreligion, irreverence and irresponsibility. It was a civilization without God.

But our chapter concludes on a positive and an encouraging note as we are introduced to the second of the two societies. "And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew. And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos; then began men to call upon the name of the LORD" (4:25, 26). In contrast with the godless line of Cain, we are introduced to the godly line of Seth. The death of Abel might have left the impression that Satan was the conqueror in the battle of the seeds. But we know that such an outcome would be impossible. God had both promised and prophesied that the Seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head, an assuring statement that Satan would be ultimately defeated.

Now the scene changes. God goes into action. Eve becomes pregnant and gives birth to her third son. Again she recognizes God as the Giver of life when she testifies, "For God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew." She called his name "Seth," meaning appointed. She not only recognizes that her third son is a gift from God, but that he is divinely appointed to carry on the good line which was temporarily suspended when Cain killed Abel. This is a remarkable expression of her faith in God. The new birth marked a new beginning, a fresh start. The hope of the fulfillment of God's promise came alive again in Eve's heart. She learned that when a man of God dies, God's plan is not

defeated, His work does not end. God allows His workmen to be buried, but He carries on His work.

Chapter four closes on a bright note—"Then began men to call upon the name of the LORD"(4:26). There is no further mention of the godless line of Cain and Lamech. They disappeared from the scene in dishonor and disgrace. And then, God raised up His own man who led men and women to identify themselves with the name of Jehovah and to gather together to worship Him. There was a revival of interest in prayer and dependence upon Him. That revival doubtless resulted in the salvation of many, for "then began men to call upon the name of the LORD," and the Apostle Paul wrote, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13).

Which way are you taking? Are you following the way of Cain or the way of Christ. Are you depending on human achievements, or have you called in faith on the Lord Jesus Christ?

To Be Continued

