

THE LORD'S GREAT MERCY

Lesson: Genesis 4

The story I am going to tell you is about two brothers and the great mercy of the Lord. The names of the two brothers were Cain and Abel. They were the sons of Adam and Eve, who were the first man and woman the Lord created. Cain was the older son and Abel was his younger brother.

When these two brothers were old enough, they had to work just as their father Adam had worked when he was sent out of the Garden of Eden. Abel was a kind and gentle shepherd. He kept his father's sheep. Cain was a farmer, a tiller of the ground. He grew the food for his family to eat: the grain and fruit. But Cain was not kind and gentle like his brother, and he was very selfish.

Now, when they were ripe, Cain wanted to give some of his grain and fruit to the Lord as an offering. So he built an altar of stones piled one on top of another, and put his offering of grain and fruit on the altar. Abel also wanted to make an offering to the Lord of the very best that he had, so he brought the firstling of his flock, the lamb which was the first-born, the fattest and best one. Abel killed the lamb and put it on his altar.

Then fire came down from heaven, and the flame and smoke from Abel's offering went up to the Lord. And the Lord was pleased with Abel and his offering. But not so with Cain, for the Lord was not pleased with Cain and his offering. When he saw that the Lord accepted Abel's offering, and not his, Cain was very angry. And the Lord said to him, "Why are you angry? If you do well your offering will be accepted. But if you do evil, your offering will not be accepted." The Lord wanted to accept Cain's offering, but He knew Cain did not love Him as he should. So the Lord could not accept his offering.

Cain was not only angry with the Lord, but he was also angry with his brother Abel and hated him. Cain was so angry that, when they were out in the field talking together, he rose up and struck Abel his brother, and killed him.

Then the Lord asked Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And Cain answered the Lord, "I do not know, am I my brother's keeper?" And the Lord said to Cain, "What hast thou done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground."

Then the Lord told Cain that he would have to be punished, because he had killed his brother, and now he would have to work much harder for his food. Also, the Lord said he must go away and wander from place to place like a fugitive and a vagabond.

When Cain heard this, he was sorry; and he said to the Lord: “My punishment is greater than I can bear. You have sent me away from my home, and I shall be hidden from your face. Nobody will want me near them, so I will have to wander all over the earth. I will be alone, and people will try to kill me.”

When Cain said he was sorry for the wicked things he had done, the Lord, who has great mercy, said to him that He would set a mark upon him so that everyone might know that the Lord Himself was taking care of him. No one was to harm Cain.

And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and lived in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.