

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Genesis, Session 14, Podcast Audio

Biblicalelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

All right, so let's jump into this deep dive, and today we're looking at Genesis chapters 4 and 5, Cain and Abel, and you sent over Professor Robert Vannoy's lecture transcript. And wow, this story is more intense than I remember. It's pretty heavy-hitting, isn't it? It is.

Yeah. It starts with like the first death in the Bible. Yeah.

It's a murder. Right out the gate. Right.

And then it's like, why did God accept Abel's offering, but not Cain's? It's the question. The text doesn't really say. Well, and that's something that Professor Vannoy points out, is that this is something that's fueled debate for centuries.

Really? Oh, yeah. So you've got the Piacular Theory and the Gift Theory, and those are kind of the two big ones. Can you break those down for us a little bit? Yeah.

So the Piacular Theory, which is favored by theologian B.B. Warfield, argues that Abel's offering was about atonement for sin. So it wasn't just a gift. It was like expressing regret for wrongdoing, asking for forgiveness, whereas Cain might have just been acknowledging God's power without really understanding his own failings.

So it's like the intention behind the offering, not just the offering. Yeah. The heart behind it.

Okay. So that's the Piacular Theory. Yeah.

That's one. What about this Gift Theory? So the Gift Theory that comes from theologian John Murray, he proposed that maybe God had given specific instructions about what kind of sacrifice was needed, and Abel followed them and Cain didn't. Oh, so maybe it wasn't even about the intention.

Right. It could have just been a matter of obedience. Wow.

So it could have just been like, hey, I said this and you did that. Yeah. Interesting.

It could have been really straightforward. Makes you wonder how much we can even really know about this. Right.

We're talking about an ancient text. There's a lot of room for interpretation. Okay.

So let's move on to what happens after the murder. Okay. So Cain is punished, right? Yes.

God curses him, makes his work even harder. And Cain gets scared. He's worried about- who is he worried about? Dying.

But- He's like, who's going to kill me? If Adam and Eve are the only people. Right. That's what's so interesting.

No, where did all these other people come from? Yeah. And where did he get his wife? Right. Like that never made sense to me.

So Professor Van Noy, he addresses this. He suggests that Adam and Eve must have had other kids that aren't in the Bible. Okay.

I mean, Adam lived for over 900 years. That's a long time. So plenty of time for a big family.

Okay. That makes more sense. Right.

So maybe Cain was worried about like vigilante justice. Oh, so like revenge for what he did. Yeah, exactly.

So he builds a city. Yeah. He goes off and builds a city.

Which brings up another thing I've always found fascinating. Okay. This antediluvian technology thing.

Oh, yeah. So we're seeing them building cities. Uh-huh.

So that requires organization and planning. Yeah. Right.

Like they couldn't have been as primitive as we might think. Yeah. It challenges that view, doesn't it? Totally.

Like what did they know how to do? Yeah. We don't have all the answers. It's like a little puzzle.

Yeah. But okay. So back to Cain being worried about being killed.

Right. If murder was so serious, shouldn't there have been like an official punishment? Well, that's a good point. And Professor Van Hoy brings up the idea of an eye for an eye.

Oh, right. That comes later in Genesis. Okay.

Like God didn't establish formal capital punishment until Genesis 9. So before that, it was kind of like the Wild West. Basically. Yeah.

Yeah. It seems like revenge might have been more of a gut reaction. Oh, so God was protecting him from that.

It seems like. Why did he do that? It's not stated outright. Okay.

But Professor Van Hoy suggests maybe God was letting the weak and the strong develop together. Even though that would leave the problems. Well, yeah.

I mean, it does seem like things went downhill pretty quickly. And what about that mark on Cain? Oh, yeah. What about that? Did God actually brand him? It's not totally clear.

Okay. The Hebrew word can also mean sign. Oh.

So it's possible it was more like a symbol. So like a warning to others? Maybe. Or a promise of protection or just a reputation that followed him.

Wow. It's amazing how much is packed into these verses. Isn't it? There's so much to think about.

Yeah. It really makes you dig deeper. It does.

Yeah. Yeah. It really gets you thinking, doesn't it? Oh, yeah.

Like these early chapters of Genesis. It's like just the tip of the iceberg. It's like the seed that contains all the stuff we still think about today.

Right. So, Professor Vannoy. Yeah.

He spends a lot of time talking about Genesis 4:7, where God confronts Cain about his anger and warns him about sin lying at the door. That's a powerful image. What's so important about this verse? Well, on the surface, it seems pretty simple, right? Yeah.

But the Hebrew word for sin can also mean sin offering. Oh. So that adds another layer.

So are you saying that God was actually offering Cain a chance to like fix things? Some scholars believe that. Even after he murdered his brother. There's this one commentator, Atkinson.

Okay. He even suggests that God was hinting at the sacrifice of Christ. Wow.

Like foreshadowing. Okay. So like the ultimate sacrifice.

Yeah. The Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world. That's a huge jump.

It is a big connection to make. Yeah. But it's interesting to think about.

It is, but it sounds like Professor Van Hoy sees it a little differently. He does. He focuses more on that image of sin waiting at the door.

Like it's going to pounce. Okay. It's like that constant temptation.

So it's more about like this internal struggle. Yeah. The choice we have.

Between good and evil. Exactly. So like resisting that pull to do bad stuff.

Yeah. Have you ever felt that? Oh, yeah. Totally.

To just give in. Even when you know better. It's like the devil made me do it.

Right. But this verse is saying you have a choice. You do have a choice.

Yeah. Don't let sin control you. Okay.

So we're seeing humanity like take its first steps outside of Eden. Mm. Facing the consequences.

Right. They messed up. Yeah.

And now they're dealing with it. It's not paradise anymore. Nope.

But even with all that. Yeah. We see these glimmers of like ingenuity.

Cain building a city. Naming it after his son. It's like they're trying to rebuild.

Creating something new. Yeah, but what were their lives actually like? That's the question, isn't it? Like, what did they eat? Did they have music? We can only imagine. We get these little hints.

But it's a mystery. But okay, so going back to Cain's wife. Right.

This just doesn't make sense if Adam and Eve. Yeah, if they were the only ones. It's like a plot hole.

But remember, the Bible doesn't say they didn't have other kids. Well, that's true. Adam lived for a long time.

Yeah, like a really long time. Plenty of time for a big family. So Cain's wife could have been like a niece.

Mm. Or. Cousin? Or even like a distant relative.

It's possible. It's like we try to fit this ancient story. Into our modern way of thinking.

Yeah. But their world was probably much more complicated. It was probably way messier.

Yeah. And it reminds us that we don't have all the answers. We don't.

And that's okay. Okay, so let's talk about this antediluvian technology. What is Professor Vannoy even talking about? Well, it's about all the stuff that existed before the flood.

Okay. Like the advancements. Okay.

But we always think of that time as primitive. Right, like backward. But Cain built a city.

Exactly. That takes some serious skill. It's not just about building; it's about the knowledge.

The planning. Yeah, all the stuff that goes into it. Even like early engineering.

It's fascinating to think about. What else did they know how to do? What was lost. Right, like in the flood.

Yeah, what secrets are still out there? It's kind of mind-blowing. It is. And it shows how the Bible, it's not just like a spiritual guide.

It's about how we got here. It's like faith and reason. They can go together.

Yeah, they're not opposites. Right, they can work together. And it's okay to ask questions.

Oh yeah, we should always be asking questions. To dig deeper. To learn more.

Yeah, and to not be afraid of what we find. Exactly. Yeah, it's like we're peeling back the layers of an onion.

I like that. Every layer you get something new. And it shows how we should approach these texts with reverence, not at face value.

Right, exactly. Like, have a conversation that spans like millennia. A conversation across time.

That's a good way to put it. So for me, what's most interesting about Cain and Abel is that it's such a simple story, but it touches on all these basic human things. Jealousy, anger, guilt, wanting to make things right.

Atonement. Yeah, and the weight of our choices. Those are all things we still deal with today.

It's not like those things are gone. Nope, they're still there. And it makes you think about good and evil, free will.

What does it mean to be human? Yeah, like what does it all mean? Big questions, right? Huge questions. It's interesting that even with all our technology and stuff, we're still asking the same questions. Like we haven't figured it out.

Not even close. And it shows the power of these stories. Yeah, like these ancient narratives.

Yeah. They still matter. They do because they're about these universal things that go beyond time and culture.

So it's not just about these people from a long time ago. No, it's about us too. It's like we're all part of this bigger story.

Yeah, a story that's been going on forever. With good and bad. Tragedy and triumph.

And the possibility of redemption. Exactly. So what does this all mean for us today? Well, I think it tells us to look inside ourselves.

To think about why we do things. Our motivations. And to really consider the consequences of our choices.

Like what happens when we do stuff. Yeah, because our actions matter. But also it reminds us that we're not alone.

Right. Other people have felt these things too. They've asked these same questions.

And I think that's hopeful. Like even when things are bad, there's always that possibility of grace. Forgiveness.

A fresh start. So it's not all doom and gloom. No, there's always hope.

It's like Cain and Abel. It's not just a story. It tells us what it means to be human.

With all the good and bad. And that our choices matter. We shape the world around us.

Every single day. Well, thank you for joining us for this deep dive into the story of Cain and Abel. It's been great talking about this.

It really has. Until next time, keep exploring. Keep asking questions.

And keep looking for those deeper meanings. Exactly.