

## **Commentary Highlights**

### **Genesis 4:1-26**

<b>NAC</b>	New American Commentary
<b>PTW</b>	Preaching the Word
<b>BST</b>	The Bible Speaks Today
<b>GIG</b>	Gleanings in Genesis
<b>CAL</b>	Genesis: Calvin's Commentary
<b>SOG</b>	The Story of God Bible Commentary
<b>BKW</b>	Genesis by Bruce K Waltke
<b>KUR</b>	Genesis by Abraham Kuruvilla
<b>REC</b>	Reformed Expository Commentary

**\*\*The views presented in these commentary excerpts may not reflect the general understanding of these passages as expressed by Faith Bible Church, but are presented to help us better understand the Scriptures and how various scholars have interpreted them\*\***

(BST) – “This chapter shows us both how the sins and disorders of Genesis 3 extend outwards in history to subsequent generations, and also that sin which is expressed in personal terms in the story of Adam and Eve also has a social dimension. Sin has now become a fact of human nature. Now we find wrongdoing arising within the depths of the human heart—there is no reference here to an external serpentine tempter.”

#### **Genesis 4:1-2**

(BKW) – “Here “knowing” is used of the most intimate, hallowed relationship between a husband and a wife. “Knowing” is never used of animals, for which coitus only fulfills an instinctual appetite.”

(CAL) – Eve uses the noun “man” to refer to her infant whom she calls Cain. “Eve called a newborn infant a man because she saw the human race renewed.” In other words, with Cain, she believed he would be the seed that would crush the head of the serpent.

(KUR) – Quoting Umberto Cassuto, Abraham Kuruvilla writes, “the first woman, in her joy at giving birth to her first son, boasts of her generative power, which approximates in her estimation to the Divine creative power. “The Lord formed the first man, and I have formed the second man”... literally, “I have created a man with the Lord ... I stand together with Him in the rank of creators.” In Eve’s perspective she is a quasi-creator reveling in her generative power.

(SOG) – The name “Abel” comes from the same Hebrew word used by the author of Ecclesiastes to refer to a quickly vanishing vapor. So in this way, the name of Abel refers to his shortened life by his murderous brother.

(BKW) – “Eve’s lack of comment (referring to the name of Abel) is fitting in light of his name, which means “vapor, breath” and is used metaphorically for what is insubstantial and fleeting. Here also in the name is an ominous foreshadowing of his life.”

#### **Genesis 4:3-4**

(PTW) – “Very likely this was not the first occasion (for offering sacrifices) because the opening words of verse 3 – “In the course of time” – nearly always denote a precise period of time, here likely referring to the end of an agricultural year when sacrifices would be presented.”

(NAC) – “Cain did not bring the first fruits; he only brought “some” of his crop. This is contrasted with the offering of Abel (“but Abel”), who brought not only “some” of his “firstborn” but the best of the animal, the fatty portions. Later Israel acknowledged the efficacy of both grain and blood offerings, but of these, particularly the first fruits and firstborn were reserved for God.”

(SOG) – “Cain offered the ordinary and Abel the best, and of course the quality of their offering reflects the condition of their hearts. Abel is enthusiastic in his worship, while Cain is basically disinterested.”

(PTW) – “Cain evidently was indifferent about his offering, but Abel was careful about his...“fat” and “firstborn” mean that Abel gave God the pick of the flock...Abel’s offering was one of faith.”

(KUR) – “In sum, Abel appears to have taken pains to give the best; Cain, on the other hand, appears to have been rather indifferent, simply discharging a duty. One engages in “acceptable, heartfelt worship”; the other merely conducts an “Unacceptable tokenism.””

(CAL) – “Therefore, in the first place we must hold that all deeds done before faith, however righteous they may have appeared to be, were nothing but sins, being defiled from their roots and offensive to the Lord, whom no one can please without inward purity of heart.”

(NAC) – “God’s response toward Cain and Abel, therefore, was not due to the nature of the gift per se, whether it was grain or animal, but the integrity of the giver...Both giver and gift were under the scrutiny of God...As Luther noted, “The faith of the individual was the weight which added value to Abel’s offering.” Unlike a human observer, God sees the condition of the human heart and weighs the motive of the worshiper. Elsewhere Scripture shows that the Lord requires of the giver an obedient and upright heart.”

#### **Genesis 4:5**

(NAC) – “Cain’s anger revealed his true attitude.” In 1 John, John refers to Cain as “of the evil one” which connects Cain with the seed of the serpent and disqualifies him as the seed of the woman who would crush the serpent. “By appealing to Cain as example, the apostle proved his premise: the one who hates a person is a murderer. In the New Testament, Cain

is viewed as the forefather of an unrighteous seed who had drawn first blood in the perpetual struggle between the ungodly and the godly seed first anticipated...Israel's acceptance was not automatic due to their status as God's firstborn. Cain and his unrighteous offspring served as a reminder to Israel that its destiny was measured in the scales of ethical behavior."

(PTW) – "Cain's hatred was so intense that it distorted his body."

(CAL) "Cain wished to appease God, as one discharging a debt, by external sacrifices, without the intention of dedicating himself to God. But in genuine worship we offer ourselves as spiritual sacrifices...the strong scent of burning fat did not procure divine favor for the sacrifices of Abel; rather, being pervaded by the good odor of faith, they had a sweet-smelling savor."

### **Genesis 4:6-7**

(NAC) – God questions Cain for the same purpose he queried the man and woman in the garden—not to scold but to elicit Cain's admission of sin with view to repentance."

(NAC) – If Cain were to do what is right, the text explains that Cain's face will go from fallen to uplifted before God. "When Cain practices what is right, there will be an uplifted face, meaning a good conscience before God without shame...It is best to take the expression "lifting up" as figurative referring to the uplifted face, indicating acceptance from God that comes with a pure heart."

(BKW) – "The depiction of sin as a demon or a vicious animal lying in wait to devour is possibly an allusion to the serpent waiting to strike the heel."

(PTW) – "The sin at the door was Cain's own sin, and its interior growth cycle would do him in."

### **Genesis 4:8**

(NAC) – "The virus of sin has infected the parent's children; Adam and Eve do not have to await their own death to experience the devastating effects of their rebellion in the garden. They witness the murder of their youngest and the exile of their firstborn."

(BKW) – "Cain's bad feelings against God spill over into irrational behavior and an unjustifiable jealous rage against his brother."

(PTW) – "The stark simplicity of the homicide accentuates the horror of the deed." While this murder initially reveals Cain's hatred for his brother, it ultimately reveals his hatred for God.

(KUR) – "Cain is never called Abel's brother; rather it is the other way around: Abel is always Cain's brother. Thus, in literary fashion we are being told that Cain does not act as Abel's

brother.” The fact that Cain took Abel out to a field and that the text uses the term “killed” five times highlights that this act was premeditative.

(PTW) – Kent Hughes argues that Moses is intentionally highlighting the heinous nature of this murder by his use of the word “brother” twice in this verse. “This was Cain’s little brother who, no doubt, was very much like him since both were direct offspring of the mother and father of the human race. Abel’s flesh felt the same. Abel’s eyes were mirrors of his own. Abel’s breath bore the same aroma.”

#### **Genesis 4:9**

(NAC) – God’s question of where Cain’s brother was, is an echo of the similar question asked to Adam in Genesis 3:9 (where are you?).

(SOG) – Cain’s statement that he is not his brother’s keeper is reminiscent of Adam’s mandate in the Garden. The Hebrew word “keep” carries with it the idea of guarding something. Therefore, just as Adam did not “keep/guard” the garden from the entrance of the serpent and sin, Cain maintained that he was not in charge of “keeping/guarding” his brother Abel.

(KUR) – Responding to God’s invitation for a confession, Cain throws the question back at God, asking “Am I my brother’s keeper?” “To keep is the prerogative of God and characteristic of his relationship to his people. It appears that Cain is blaming God: “*You* are the keeper—that’s *your* job, not mine.” This reminds the reader of Adam’s attempt to inculcate God: “The woman *you* gave me.””

#### **Genesis 4:10**

(NAC) – God’s question to Cain, “what have you done?” is reminiscent of God’s question to the woman in Genesis 3:13 (what is this that you have done?).

(CAL) – “It is a wonderfully sweet consolation to good men who are unjustly harassed when they hear that their own sufferings, which they silently endure, go into the presence of God of their own accord to demand vengeance.”

#### **Genesis 4:11-12**

(NAC) – “The language “you are cursed” is the same as the oracle delivered against the serpent: “Cursed are you above all the livestock” is parallel to “cursed are you from the ground.” This linkage shows that like father like “seed,” both the serpent and Cain are murderers who receive the same retribution. Because Cain has polluted the ground with innocent blood, he is “driven” from it as his parents were from the garden.”

(NAC) – “As a fitting punishment Cain the farmer no longer enjoys the fruit of the ground and is thus by necessity cosigned to live as a vagrant.”

(SOG) – “Cain alienated himself from his brother and God, so God will alienate Cain from the arable soil. He will be a nomad without home or security.”

(PTW) – “Cain would not merely become a wandering bedouin – the curse went beyond that. All his relationships with his family were broken. He was a lifelong pariah. The earth itself would be his enemy.”

(NAC) – “Abel’s corpse is left rotting in the open field. Cain’s expulsion from the tainted land has its later parallel in Israel’s experience of exile as the just deserts for choosing to live immorally. Moses’ Israel was cosigned to a life of wandering because of disobedience at Kadesh. But unlike Cain’s family, the subsequent generation emerged from the desert and possessed Canaan. Nevertheless, the threat of expulsion remained for later Israel all its days, and the desert memory haunted them; for the Mosaic community and generations to come, early Genesis depicted what awaited those who transgressed covenant.”

#### **Genesis 4:13-14**

(NAC) – “Cain protests that his penalty is too harsh; he argues that isolation from God’s protective presence effectively results in a death sentence...Cain expresses no inkling of remorse, only self-pity and resentment. That Cain does not receive divine forgiveness is shown by his expulsion from “the Lord’s presence.””

(BKW) – “Cain responds with self-pity instead of repentance. He fears physical and social exposure but not the invisible God who has made him.”

(PTW) – “Cain falls to pieces! But not because he felt any compassion for Abel and his parents, or even because he had sinned against God. His cry was one of terror and self-pity.”

(BKW) – “Ironically, the murderer fears death.”

(CAL) – “It is true that the reprobate are never conscious of their evils until they are overtaken by a calamity from which they cannot escape.”

(KUR) – “All throughout the account, Cain’s attitude has been one of pride displayed in choleric irritability. He worships half-heartedly. He sulks when called to account. His petulant outbursts reflect his angry and envious disposition. He ends up a fratricide. And in all of this, there is no remorse or repentance displayed. Neither is there any gratitude for God’s grace in protecting him from potential avengers. Only self-pity marks Cain. That he does not once ask for or receive forgiveness is telling.”

#### **Genesis 4:15-16**

(NAC) – While God had every right to discipline and judge Cain for his murderous action, He chose to provide grace to Cain by protecting him, even though Cain did not deserve it. In this grace, God promises to enact vengeance sevenfold on anyone who kills Cain. “Seven

as a figure of speech meaning completeness or fullness expresses the certainty and severity of God's vengeance against a vigilante." By showing grace to Cain, "God is declaring that life and death are his prerogative, which he does not share with anyone except by divine sanction. God's judgment against the culprit is restrained by his grace. His promise of procreation is not thwarted even by human murder."

(BKW) – Bruce Waltke believes the mark given to Cain was some sort of outward physical marking similar to a tattoo.

(KUR) – "In any case, just as the clothing given by God to Adam and Eve after the fall reminded them of their sin and God's mercy, so also the sign on Cain indicated his sin/guilt; but it also served as a token of God's mercy upon the sinner—Cain was not to be killed in vengeance by anyone."

(PTW) – "By all estimates God's mark, whatever it was, was an amazing grace. Cain was cursed and separated from God, yet guarded by God. Cain's life still belonged to God. He bore God's image, however disfigured that image was."

(NAC) – "Cain's residing in the "land of Nod, east of Eden," implies that he is further removed from the garden than Adam." The term "Nod" is a play on the term for "wanderer" which may mean that Nod is simply anywhere that Cain traveled, which would justify the land being called "land of the wanderer."

(CAL) – In an attempt to answer the question of why God would preserve Cain's life, Calvin suggests that "God did this not because he was granting the murderer a favor, but for the sake of posterity, in order to preserve human life."

### **Genesis 4:17-18**

(NAC) – Through the genealogy of Cain's lineage we see that "God's promise of preservation for Cain was honored. Generously, the Lord grants even the wicked Cainites the power of propagation, and therefore they too share (partially) in the blessing of all those who bear the "image" of God."

(SOG) – While Cain was cursed to be a wanderer, he continued to rebel against God by instead setting up the very first city. "Cain's punishment was that he would be a wanderer, but here he is taking steps to create for himself and others a permanent habitation. This act may be seen as an act of resistance against God's punishment and thus sinful."

(PTW) – "Cain's building a city at the time of Enoch's birth was a defiant, in-your-face violation of God's revealed will for Cain...Cain's decision to settle down and establish his own line of descent indicates that he was determined to go his own way, rejecting the word of God." The term city can be used for any settlement, whether that be great or small.

**Genesis 4:19-22**

(NAC) – “The first alarming evidence of Lamech’s moral decline is his inauguration of polygamy, a dismal departure from the divine norm.”

(BKW) – “Lamach represents both a progressive hardening in sin – polygamy and grossly unjust vendetta—and the extension of the cultural mandate from animal husbandry to the arts and sciences.”

(PTW) – “Godless, Cainite civilization birthed massive cultural advances that have enriched all of life.”

(NAC) – Jabal is mentioned as the ancestor of animal husbandry, Jubal is the father of music, and Tubal-Cain begins the renaissance of metal works. All three names of Lamech’s sons are taken from the Hebrew word that means “to produce.” These men are the inventors of much of modern society.

**Genesis 4:23-24**

(NAC) – Lamech “boasts before his wives his prowess as a combatant, and he revels in the glory of his victims. It indicates that violence encircles Cain’s lineage.”

(NAC) – “The term “young man” can mean anything from an infant to a young adult, but the case is clear that Lamech’s violence is unrestrained and repugnant.

(PTW) – “Lamech’s song must be a woman’s worst dream. The reference to his wives in this violent context points to the worst outworking of the judgement oracle of Genesis 3:16: “Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.” Adah and Zillah suffered the humiliation of polygamy in their marriage to a brutal, remorseless male.”

(SOG) – “From the perspective of the narrator, people are not getting better as time progresses; they are worsening.”

(CAL) – “Moses describes the ferocity of Lamech to teach us that so far from being terrified by the example of divine judgment that he had seen in his ancestor, Cain, Lamech only hardened his heart. Lamech boasted that he had enough courage and strength to kill anyone who dared attack him.”

**Genesis 4:25-26**

(BKW) – “Now the story flashes back to the birth of Seth to reveal hope in the progress of the godly seed.”

(NAC) – “Eve attributes the birth of the child to the mercy of God, who has proved her a third son.

(PTW) – “Eve’s faith also shined because “another offspring” is literally “another seed”... the gift of baby Seth ensured that the promise would stay alive in Eve.”

(KUR) – “It is likely that Eve has had a change of heart here. Her firstborn, she referred to as “man”; this one she calls “seed.” In the first case, her explanation was self-centered: “I have gotten”; here it is God-focused: “God has appointed.””

(NAC) – “Enosh’s birth marks an important point in the development of the righteous lineage of Adam. At this time people “began to call on the name of the Lord.” This concluding remark serves as a linkage with the following genealogy (ch 5), which formally presents Adam’s lineage through Seth down to the flood survivor, Noah...Here Enosh and his descendants contrast with Cain’s descendants, who are remembered for their urbanization of society and the vices introduced by Lamech.”

(NAC) – “In effect, by attributing to Seth’s first genealogical descendant the innovation of public worship, the versions draw an even sharper distinction between Cain’s offspring and that of Seth: Cain’s first born and successors pioneer cities and the civilized arts, but Seth’s firstborn and successors pioneer worship.”

(PTW) – Through the line of Seth a people group was formed who would proclaim the name of the Lord.

(CAL) – “The verb “to call on” is a synecdoche, for it includes the whole worship of God. Religion is here correctly named by its principle part, for God prefers this service of piety and faith to all sacrifices.”



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