

Redemption 304: Priesthood & the Kinsman Redeemer



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Priesthood and the Kinsman Redeemer – Part 3

Section Two: Early Knowledge of the Priestly Redeemer

Now that we have spent some time studying biblical teaching on the fall of mankind into sin, we can turn to the next segment of our study. This portion of our investigation will turn our attention toward early scriptural revelations about the redeemer of mankind. We will consider how passages in Genesis (and afterwards) were intended by Moses in relation to how they would have been understood by their original audience. Our inquiry will focus on such important themes as the priesthood, intercession, and redemption from bondage.

Introduction: Genesis 3 & 4 in the Historical Context of the Levitical Priesthood

In this first segment, we will explore how much the earliest patriarchs of humanity may have understood about priestly intercession and sacrifice. The topics discussed here are an extension of related issues developed in section one of this study (entitled: “Redemption and the History of Mankind’s Fall into Sin.”) One of the main conclusions of section one was that, before Adam and Eve’s children first sinned, they were able to go into the garden to be in the presence of the Lord, even though Adam and Eve were not able to enter because they had already sinned. Furthermore, since they had access to the garden until they had first sinned, the children were able to eat of the tree of life, which is offered as the best explanation of the long ages of the patriarchs prior to the Flood.

Additional material relating to these questions came when reading an article written in 1977 by Dr. Ernest L. Martin, entitled, “The Temple Symbolism in Genesis.” Though we have not accepted many of Dr. Martin’s specific conclusions, Dr. Martin’s general premise is an intriguing and somewhat compelling one. This premise centers on the fundamental hermeneutic principle of historical context which we have also described in section one above. Dr. Martin summarizes the premise saying, “The events associated with the story of Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden, Cain and Abel, the land of Nod, etc., will take on normal temple features which anyone in the time of Moses would have recognized.” In essence, Dr. Martin is simply pointing out that our understanding of the elements of Genesis 3-4 must be shaped in terms of how these elements

would have been perceived by Israelites at the time when Moses gave them instructions for the priestly sacrificial system involving the tabernacle. While it is a mistake to insert the elaborate complexity of the entire Mosaic system into Genesis 3-4, when similar terms and concepts appear their implied connection must be recognized.

The Jewish Tabernacle and Temple Built to Mirror the Garden of Eden

As we mentioned briefly in section one of this study, Dr. Martin's general premise is based on a little-known, but well-established fact. Solomon's Temple was deliberately oriented and decorated in connection with the Garden of Eden, including its entrance to the east, the two cherubim statues placed inside the Holy of Holies and also on top of the ark, and the widely-used plant motifs (1 Kings 6:29, 32, 35, 2 Chronicles 3:1-5).

(NIV) **1 Kings 6:29** On the walls all around the temple, **in both the inner and outer rooms, he carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers...** **32 And on the two olive-wood doors he carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers,** and overlaid the cherubim and palm trees with hammered gold... **34 He also made two doors out of juniper wood,** each having two leaves that turned in sockets. **35 He carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers on them** and overlaid them with gold hammered evenly over the carvings.

2 Chronicles 3:1 Then Solomon began to build the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David. It was on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the place provided by David. **2** He began building on the second day of the second month in the fourth year of his reign. **3** The foundation Solomon laid for building the temple of God was sixty cubits long and twenty cubits wide (using the cubit of the old standard). **4** The portico at the front of the temple was twenty cubits long across the width of the building and twenty cubits high. He overlaid the inside with pure gold. **5 He paneled the main hall with juniper and covered it with fine gold and decorated it with palm tree and chain designs.**

In fact, in their article on the "Temple of Solomon," the Jewish Encyclopedia online recognizes that "at Jerusalem the cherubim and palm-tree ornaments were survivals of an earlier conception—that the abode of God was a 'garden of Eden.'" Likewise, the Temple in Jerusalem was on the east side of the city of Jerusalem just as the garden was located in the eastern portion of Eden (Genesis 2:8.)

When it comes to the larger historical context, at the core of Moses' Law was the idea of one people chosen to be a priestly nation among mankind. And among that nation, there was a priestly tribe (the Levites) who served at God's tabernacle. And among that tribe was a particular family who served as priests who offered sacrifices on behalf of their fellow countrymen (and even the nations). And

among that family, one man was the high priest who went in to the Most Holy place once a year to offer sacrifice for the entire nation. In this historical context, there would have been an immediately obvious parallel when Genesis 3 ends with Adam and Eve's sin and Genesis 4 begins with Adam and Eve's close kin (their children) making offerings before the LORD.

Cain and Abel and Priestly Intercession

Genesis 3 records the sin of Adam and Eve and their being cast out of the Lord's presence in the garden. In that account (verse 15), we are told by God that Eve's seed would conquer the serpent and his seed. The following chapter begins with the birth of Cain and Abel. Both men are immediately presented as making offerings to the Lord. The word translated as "offering" throughout in this passage is the Hebrew noun "minchah" (04503.) It is the commonly used Hebrew word for referring to gifts as well as ritualistic sacrifices and offerings. The fact that Moses wrote Genesis 3-4 during the period when the Law was being given to the Israelites provides strong indications that the Jews of this period would have understood Cain and Abel's activities here in relation to the similar activity of making offerings that would later be required in much more comprehensive, codified form under the Law of Moses.

This historical connection between Cain and Abel and priestly duties on the day of atonement is perhaps further substantiated by the timing of Cain and Abel's offering. As Dr. Martin points out, the phrase "in the process of time," can literally be translated to "at the end of days," and would therefore imply that the offerings of Genesis 4 took place around the end/beginning of the year. This was around the same time that the high priest entered the Most Holy place to present the atonement offering for the entire nation of Israel. Again, the parallel is not exact and it would be a mistake to impose the specificity or entirety of the Mosaic Law into this passage, but the loose, prototypical parallels are present in the texts as explained in greater detail below.

According to Leviticus 25, there was to be a year of jubilee every fifty years. For the entire fiftieth year the Israelites were not to work the land. However, verses 9-11 make it clear that this Jubilee year began in the seventh month. Leviticus 16:29, 34 and 23:27 declare that the day of atonement was to occur on the tenth day of the seventh month. Scholars have concluded that although the religious calendar began in the first month with Passover, the civic year began in the seventh month, which is when the day of atonement occurred. Wikipedia's article on Rosh Hashanah denotes that Rosh Hashanah "is the Jewish New Year" and that it is "celebrated ten days before Yom Kippur...on the first two days of Tishrei, the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar." Of course, Yom Kippur is the day of atonement. Wikipedia concludes, "This day was not expressly called New-Year's Day, but it was evidently so regarded by the Jews at a very early period." Consequently, for the Levitical priesthood, the day of atonement occurred shortly after the end of a year. (Additional biblical and historical

discussion regarding Rosh Hashanah and its significance in relation to new year is presented in our study entitled “6,000 Years and 120 Jubilees” which can be found in our chronology study page entitled: “316 Chronology: Timeline of Biblical World History.”)

Genesis 4:3 And in process (7093) of time (3117) it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.

In Hebrew, the phrase “in process of time” is comprised of two words, the Hebrew word “qets” (Strong’s No. 7093) for “end” and the Hebrew word “yowm” (Strong’s No. 3117), which means “day, time, year.” Daniel 12:13 uses this phrase to speak of Daniel’s resurrection at the end of days, but apparently means either the end of time or the end of all days of human history. Jeremiah 13:6 combines this phrase with the word for “many” to discuss an unspecified number of days. And there are a few, more general uses like this. However, the nearest passages using this phrase occur in Genesis 8:6 and Deuteronomy 9:11, both of which combine this phrase with the number forty to designate the completion of a period of forty days. This suggests that the translation “end of days” is an appropriate translation, perhaps indicating a standard year whenever the number of days is not specified. (We might also consider that in Hebrew it is not necessary to have the ordinal number one in order to indicate a single unit of a particular measure of time. This can be seen, for example, in Daniel 12:7 where we find the phrase “time, times, and dividing of time,” in which “time” appears without a number and implies a single unit of the duration in question.) Moreover, the very next occurrence of the phrase “qets yowm” can be found in 2 Samuel 14:26, where the word “yowm” apparently occurs twice and the entire phrase is translated, “at every year’s end.” The next occurrence is in 1 Kings 17:7, where it is translated more generally simply as “and it came to pass after a while.” However, the next occurrence in 2 Chronicles 21:19 combines this phrase with the Hebrew word for “two” to designate “in process of time (3117), after the end (7093) of two (8147) years (3117).”

Consequently, 2 Samuel and 2 Chronicles both affirm a standard association of this phrase with the passage of a year. Consequently, a survey of the occurrence of this phrase in the Old Testament does corroborate that Genesis 4 can denote that Cain and Abel brought offerings around the time of the new year.

Another question concerns why Cain’s offering was rejected. The context of Genesis presents a very simple explanation for how Cain should have known that his offering would not suffice.

Genesis 3:6-7 is clear that when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they saw that they were naked and they covered themselves. This “nakedness” is presented throughout scripture in association with the exposure of guilt. Consequently, Adam and Eve’s attempt to cover their nakedness was an attempt to cover their exposed guilt. But what did Adam and Eve attempt to cover themselves with? Fig leaves, a covering made from a plant.

Moses' choice of arranging Genesis 3:6-7 (Adam and Eve's sin) in such close proximity (only 18 verses) to Genesis 4:3 (Cain and Abel's offerings) itself indicates his intention to connect these two events. In addition, two things are noteworthy about using plants as covering. First, as far as physically covering Adam and Eve, the leaves would have fulfilled the basic requirement. They would have covered Adam and Eve. Second, taking such leaves would not have killed the plant. Since it is doubtful that God would have been concerned with the practicality, durability, fashion, or comfort of using leaves, why did God insist on clothing Adam and Eve with animal skins, which required the death of the animals? And how would the Israelites who received the sacrificial system from Moses have understood such things? In particular, how would Israelites have understood God's disregard for the fig leaves as insufficient and God's insistence on killing an animal to cover Adam and Eve's exposed guilt? In the historical setting, one thing seems clear from Genesis 3. Vegetative offerings are not sufficient. God requires animal sacrifices to cover guilt. But the Law of Moses included allowances for offerings from plants (Leviticus 2:14-16, Numbers 18:12, Deuteronomy 14:23). Therefore, Genesis 4's dismissal of Cain's offering shows that this was an occasion upon which only an animal sacrifice would suffice. In this respect we should note that the Law of Moses does not call for grain offerings when the object of the offering is to atone for sin. These associations would certainly have been present in the mind of an Israelite reading Genesis 4 at the time of Moses. And they have implications for what Moses was communicating about the offerings of Cain and Abel. Again, this is especially true given Moses' arrangement of these offerings immediately after his account of Adam and Eve's sin and the attestation in that account that vegetation was not an adequate covering for Adam and Eve's nakedness and shame.

To take this a step further, it is unlikely that the Israelites of Moses' day would have been confused about why Cain's offering was rejected. With Genesis 3 clearly presenting the insufficiency of vegetative offerings to cover guilt, it would have been clear that God expected Cain to understand that an offering of vegetation was not going to satisfy God.

The only caveat is that in order to understand Cain's error in this way, the Israelites would have had to understand Cain and Abel's offerings in terms of sacrifices to cover guilt. Given Israel's role as a priestly nation including a particular family that served as priests to offer sacrifices for the guilt of the rest of their Israelite kin, this is an obvious connection. But it implies the simple and often overlooked fact that Cain and Abel were functioning as priests offering sacrifices. Moreover, several factors indicate that Cain and Abel were serving as priests offering intercessory sacrifices on behalf of their parents. In the section one (Redemption and the History of Mankind's Fall into Sin), we considered exegetical cues that Cain and Abel were able to enter into the garden of Eden (before Abel's death) where God's presence was located. Here we will note other textual details as we consider some additional significance that may be attached to Cain and Abel presenting offerings in the presence of the Lord in the garden.

First, it is only after his offering is rejected that Cain is told that sin is at the door (Genesis 4:7). This implies that Cain was not yet a sinner and that Cain was at that time inside “the door.” Second, Cain is clearly not expelled from God’s presence until after he kills Abel (Genesis 4:14, 16). In fact, before Abel’s death, both Cain and Abel are presented as being in God’s presence. Yet Adam and Eve were expelled from God’s presence when they sinned. Third, God speaks with Cain in Genesis 4. This must be understood in terms of God speaking with Adam, which occurred in both Genesis 2 and 3. But where did God speak with Adam? It was in the garden. With no outside source available at the time to indicate otherwise, assertions that Cain was in “God’s presence” and “talking with God” at a time when sin was not yet his master would imply that Cain was allowed into the garden just as Adam was before sin. This conclusion is also strengthened by Moses’ choice to arrange these accounts in such close conjunction with one another which again indicates that he intended his audience to ponder the connections present in these chapters.

In this scenario, unlike their parents, Cain and Abel are still sinless. And, given that Cain and Abel are close kin to sinners (Adam and Eve), Moses would be presenting Cain and Abel as acting as priests offering sacrifices to cover their parent’s guilt. All of these parallels would have been obvious to Israelites of Moses’ day who had received a similar, albeit more elaborate, system of priestly sacrifice on behalf of a nation descended from one man, Abraham.

There are a few other supportive facts for this conclusion.

First, as noted earlier, the parallels between the garden, the tabernacle, and later the Temple were well-known in the Old Testament times. The fact that Cain and Abel presented offerings “at the end of days,” near the end or beginning of the year, would parallel the annual day of atonement in the Law of Moses, when the high priest entered the Most Holy place to present an offering to cover the sins of his people. Again, compiling the details of Moses’ account, we have Cain and Abel after the end of the year, presenting offerings to God, the rejection of the plant offering (paralleling the inadequacy of the figs), the acceptance of the animal offering (paralleling sin offerings in the Law of Moses), Cain speaking with God (which Adam did in the garden). All of this occurs “within the door” before Cain had sinned and been barred from God’s presence. These are clear parallels to the high priest entering the Temple on the day of atonement, only in Genesis 4, Cain and Abel are functioning as priests, their offering is to atone for sinners in their community (Adam and Eve), and the “Temple” they are entering is the garden of Eden.

Second, Genesis 4 is not the only story involving a group of brothers offering sacrifices, one which is accepted and the other rejected. Moses’ brother Aaron and his sons were chosen to be the priests for Israel. Aaron had four sons, yet two of those sons were killed by God because they offered strange fire before the LORD. This account is provided for us in Leviticus.

Leviticus 10:1 Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. 2 So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. 3 Moses then said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke of when he said: **“Among those who approach me I will be proved holy;** in the sight of all the people I will be honored.” Aaron remained silent. 4 Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel, and said to them, "Come here; carry your cousins outside the camp, away from the front of the sanctuary." 5 So they came and carried them, still in their tunics, outside the camp, as Moses ordered. 6 Then Moses said to Aaron and his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not let your hair become unkempt and do not tear your clothes, or you will die and the LORD will be angry with the whole community. But your relatives, all the Israelites, may mourn for **those the LORD has destroyed by fire.**"

This incident left only two of Aaron's sons to serve as priests and offer the right sacrifices before God on behalf of their people. The people of Israel could very easily have compared the rejection of Cain's offering in relation to the rejection of Aaron's two sons who likewise offered an unacceptable sacrifice. This does not imply that the instructions to Cain and Abel were as specific or elaborate, and certainly Cain was not punished with immediate death as were Aaron's sons. However, this clear parallel would again have Moses placing Cain and Abel into the role of priests on behalf of their people, just like Aaron's sons. Of course, in the case of Cain and Abel, "their people" would simply have been Adam and Eve, their close kin who had sinned and were in need of intercession and atonement before God.

Third, the manner in which Aaron's two sons died also connects to Genesis 3-4. In Leviticus, these priests are killed when fire comes out from the presence of the Lord. Notice from Leviticus 10:3 that God is concerned about "those who approach" Him in the Most Holy Place. So, here we have two priests who approach God with improper sacrifices and fire comes out of the entrance to the Most Holy Place and kills them. This is remarkably similar to Genesis 3:24, which depicts not only two cherubim but also a flaming sword which turned every way. Not only is there the presence of a devouring fire in both Leviticus 10 and Genesis 3-4, but both passages contain stories of improper sacrifices brought by brothers before the Lord. Likewise, in both accounts we have the place of God's presence guarded by cherubim. In Genesis 3:24, cherubim guard the way to the garden and the tree of life. Similarly, in Leviticus 10, cherubim were not only on the ark of the covenant within the Most Holy Place, but they were also depicted on the curtain of the tabernacle (Exodus 25:19-22, 26:1, 21, 36:8, 35). Of course, this parallel more than implies that Cain and Abel are entering God's presence with offerings after the end of the year as priests, presumably on behalf of their sinful parents. Rather than thinking of the flaming sword of Genesis 3 as an unrelated and mysterious detail, Israelites of Moses' time would probably have connected that flaming sword with the fire that killed these two priests.

Now, of course, Cain was not killed by fire when he approached with an improper sacrifice. But this is simple enough to explain without undermining the clear parallels between the two passages. Prior to this point in time during the Exodus, God had already given an explicit command not to offer strange fire in the exact manner that these two sons attempted to offer (Exodus 30:7-9). Moreover, God followed this command by actually igniting the fire of the altar himself in Leviticus 9:24. This was the fire that God intended to be used. God confirms this analysis in chapter 16:12-13. After the death of these two priests, God reminds the priests that the fire for the censers was supposed to come from the fire off the altar. In other words, although both Cain and these two priests presented unsatisfactory offerings, these two priests were killed because God had explicitly told them what not to do and they did that exact thing anyway. In contrast, there is no record of Cain and Abel being told what to bring. They were most likely expected to reason from the fact that God required the death of an animal to cover the shame of Adam and Eve's sin while the fig leaves did not suffice. Thus, Cain did not die because, unlike Aaron's two sons, he had simply not reasoned correctly rather than violating explicit instructions. There was mercy for Cain on this basis.

Yet, the peculiar parallels between Leviticus 10 and Genesis 3-4 remain: God's presence, devouring fire, those who approach the Lord, two brothers making offerings, cherubim, and the appropriateness of the offerings. Consequently, these parallels make it clear that the people of Israel would have perceived the story of Cain and Abel as relating to priestly functions.

Fourth, Leviticus 16 begins with the phrase, "The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they approached the LORD." The central event is described in verse 17, which says "Aaron goes in to make atonement in the Most Holy Place until he comes out, having made atonement for himself, his household and the whole community of Israel." The idea here is clearly of one man entering on behalf his family and community. This already strikes similarities with Cain and Abel and their sinful parents, Adam and Eve. But Leviticus 16 contains an even more striking parallel. Verses 5, 7-9, 15, 20-22 instruct Aaron to select two young, male goats one of which Aaron is to kill and take its blood into the Most Holy Place and the other which is to be cast forth to wander in the wilderness. These two young goats are a perfect parallel to Cain and Abel. One is killed. The other is cast forth into the wilderness to wander. But again, this implies a close connection between Cain and Abel, Aaron's priestly role, entering the Most Holy Place, and atoning for the sins of Aaron's family and people, and the arrival of a new year. With these connections readily apparent to the people of Israel, the only issue is who were Cain and Abel acting as priests for and making atonement for? In the time of Cain and Abel, the answer is Adam and Eve. We will cover more on this point in the paragraph below.

Fifth, Numbers 25:10-34 outlines the prescription for cities of refuge where a man could flee to safety if he had killed someone unintentionally. As the passage describes, outside these cities, such an individual was subject to revenge by the "revenger of blood," a close family member whose duty it was to put the killer to

death. However, the relevant issue emerges in verses 25, 28, and 32, which stipulates that after the death of the high priest, the man who committed the killing was permitted to leave the city without fear of being harmed. In other words, the death of the high priest removed the guilt and the penalty of death for the man who committed an unintentional killing. Although it is not as clear, this precept bears some resemblance to the death of Abel at the hand of Cain. While Cain was warned in advance not to sin and was definitely angry toward Abel, Cain was not warned specifically about killing Abel and it is not certain that Cain intended to kill him. Still, the intent to kill is a potentially relevant difference, but there is also some striking similarities, particularly Cain's fear of revenge and the fact that Cain is marked to ensure that no man would kill him. In fact, God's mercy upon Cain in this regard is perhaps best explained if the killing of Abel was done unintentionally in some sense or another. It is certainly conceivable that while Cain did intentionally strike Abel, he did not intend for the result to be Abel's death. And ultimately, the parallels of killing of a man, the death of the high priest, and the cancellation of the revenge killing suggest that a connection between Genesis 4 and Numbers 25 would have been apparent to the Israelites at the time of the Exodus. And in this scenario, Abel would have paralleled the role not only of the dying man but also of the high priest, making offerings, upon whose death the revenge was cancelled. Nevertheless, it may have been the case that in the heat of anger, Cain did intend to kill Abel, in which case, some of the specific parallels to Numbers 25:10-34 would be lost, although a more general, potential similarity might remain.

Sixth, Adam and Eve are never described anywhere as presenting offerings. If Cain and Abel are sinners at this point and simply bringing offerings perhaps on their own behalf, why aren't Adam and Eve likewise depicted as bringing offerings alongside Cain and Abel in Genesis 4? Moreover, Adam and Eve are not depicted as presenting offerings before they sinned either. Consequently, the introduction of offerings in the chapter immediately following Adam and Eve's sin is intended to connect the need for offerings with the emergence of sinners in the human population. Yet right after the account of Adam and Eve's sin, their children are presented as bringing offerings while Adam and Eve are not. The most natural implication is that Adam and Eve are not presenting offerings, most likely because they are no longer suited for communion with God as a result of Genesis 3. Yet their children are presenting offerings because they remain qualified to do so. If it was Adam and Eve's sin that disqualified them, then in order to remain qualified for this priestly role, Cain and Abel must not have sinned. Furthermore, God's statements to Eve in Genesis 3:14-15 indicate that his remedy for the circumstances that resulted from Adam and Eve's sin would involve their "seed." The fact that Moses immediately presents Adam and Eve's children making an offering in Genesis 4 cannot be dismissed as merely incidental.

Seventh, Dr. Martin takes note of the phrase "sin lies at the door" from Genesis 4:7 and comments on the Hebrew word for "door." He writes, "The word in Hebrew is *pehthagh* and refers in other parts of the Old Testament to the entrance of any tent (Genesis 18:1), but more particularly to the 'door of the tabernacle'

(Exodus 29:4), or the ‘door of the temple’ (Ezekiel 8:7, 16), or ‘the door of the east gate of the Lord’s house’ (Ezekiel 10:19).”

It is important to once again keep all the pieces of the puzzle in focus. Here is Cain. Sin is not yet his master according to Genesis 4. He is not yet kicked out of God’s presence. And God is speaking to him. In the preceding chapters, these exact same conditions were true for Adam when he met with God in the garden. Consequently, this reference to the door is a clear warning to Cain that sin, in some form or fashion, lies outside the entrance to the garden. Sin is at the entrance. Sin is at the gate. But this is hardly a statement that God would make if He and Cain were themselves standing outside the gate as they conversed. This kind of a statement makes much more sense in terms of God and Cain within the door while sin was outside the door, waiting for Cain. We’ll talk more about this momentarily, but once again, this implies that Cain and Abel had not yet sinned and were allowed to function as priests who entered into the garden.

Eighth, there are several places in the New Testament where Abel and Cain are mentioned. In Hebrews 12:24, Abel’s blood is compared to Jesus’ blood in a verse that speaks directly about Jesus’ role as the ultimate intercessor for mankind. In fact, verses 18-24 of Hebrews 12 also mention Moses and the reference to Jesus as a mediator of a better covenant is clearly meant in connection with Moses as the mediator of the old covenant. It is in this context, with references to Moses and Jesus as mediators and Jesus as a priest sprinkling his own blood, that Abel is mentioned. It is also interesting, although not necessarily conclusive, that elsewhere in Hebrews Jesus is compared to Melchizedek, who was also a priest of God (Hebrews 5:6, 10, 6:10, 7:1-2, 10-11, and 15). Like Abel, Melchizedek was not a descendant of Abraham. The fact that Hebrews 11:4 uses standard language for priestly sacrifices and offerings to refer to Cain and Abel’s offerings further establishes that the New Testament understood Cain and Abel to be functioning in priestly roles in Genesis 4.

And, of course, Abel is mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 23:35 and Luke 11:51, where he is listed alongside “Zechariah son of Berekiah” who was murdered between the Temple and the altar. It is important to note that this location, between the Temple house and the altar, is one that would have been restricted to priests. In their article on Zechariah, Wikipedia comments on Jesus’ references to him, saying, “In the New Testament Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is quoted as stating that Zechariah son of Barachiah was killed between the altar and the temple. A similar quotation is also found in the Gospel of Luke. Although there is an indication in Targum Lamentations that “Zechariah son of Iddo” was killed in the Temple, scholars generally understand this as a reference to the death of a much earlier figure, Zechariah ben Jehoiada.” Whichever Zechariah is accepted as Jesus’ intended reference, it is clear that he is comparing Abel to a priest, and Abel’s death to the death of a priest.

2 Chronicles 24:20 And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus

saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you.

“**Zechariah. 1.** The eleventh in order of the twelve minor prophets. **He called in his prophecy the son of Berechiah and the grandson of Iddo...**Zechariah, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel before him was priest as well as prophet.” – Smith’s Bible Dictionary, p. 758

If we can learn things about Abel by those he is associated with, it would seem that Abel is often placed in association with priests and mediators between God and their people.

Some of these observations may be conclusive while others are perhaps circumstantial. Nevertheless, all of these considerations point to the conclusion that Cain and Abel were acting as priests, offering sacrifices for their sinful kin, namely Adam and Eve. What is so interesting about this concept is that it implies that by the second generation of man, it was already known that the offspring would serve in a priestly sacrificial role to redeem mankind from sin. This, of course, has enormous prophetic significance concerning Jesus Christ, the offspring who ultimately did fulfill this role. Of course, scholars have long suggested that Eve’s offspring was known to have a redemptive role, based on Genesis 3. Of course, the text of Genesis 3 also leads toward the idea of the conquering redeemer who overcomes God’s enemies, crushing the head of the serpent.

Genesis 3:14 So the LORD God said to the serpent: “Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. 15 **And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.**

The timing and logistics of Cain and Abel’s offering (as it would have been understood in the historical context by Israelites of Moses’ day) clearly show that the priestly and sacrificial role of redemption was also understood from the earliest generations in human history and intended by Moses to be comprehended by his audience well. In fact, this priestly and sacrificial role of the offspring was so well known that Adam and Eve apparently applied it to the next generation of their descendants, not knowing that it would not be for many years and many generations later that Jesus Christ would come and fulfill this promise.

Cain and Abel, the Kinsmen Redeemer, and Sacrifice

There is more we can learn about how the ancient Israelites of Moses’ day would have perceived Cain and Abel, particularly in terms of their priestly role in redemption. In the time of Moses, one of the central concepts of redemption involved a family member who had been sold into slavery particularly to pay off

debt. We find this concept of redemption plainly in Leviticus 25. Leviticus 25 states that if a man entered into bondage to a stranger because of his debts, his close family could buy him back from this servitude. The family member who bought a man out of servitude is commonly known as the kinsmen redeemer.

Leviticus 25:47 And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: 48 After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him: 49 Either his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or **any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him;** or if he be able, he may redeem himself. 50 And he shall reckon with him that bought him from the year that he was sold to him unto the year of jubile: **and the price of his sale** shall be according unto the number of years, according to the time of an hired servant shall it be with him. 51 If there be yet many years behind, according unto them he shall give again **the price of his redemption out of the money that he was bought for.**

Of course, the question arises concerning whether the Israelites would have associated redemption from indebted slavery with blood sacrifice. Here the answer is a clear “yes.” Very early in Exodus, God speaks to the Israelites about their impending deliverance from slavery to the Egyptians. In Exodus 6:6, God states, “I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you.” So, the Israelites clearly understood their own deliverance from slavery in terms of divine redemption. But would they have associated it with blood sacrifice? Of course they would.

Exodus 12:1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, 2 “This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. 3 Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month **each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household.** 4 If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. 5 **The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect,** and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. 6 Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when **all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them** at twilight. 7 **Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.** 8 That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. 9 Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire—with the head, legs and internal organs. 10 Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. 11 This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; **it is the LORD's Passover.** 12 “On that same night **I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals,** and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. 13 **The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and**

when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.”

Exodus 12 is clear that on the day when God would finally bring them out of Egypt, they had to take a lamb without defect, slaughter it, and put its blood on the doorposts of their houses. The blood of this slaughtered animal was the only thing that kept the Israelite firstborn from being killed by the destroyer and allowed them to live and leave behind the slavery in Egypt. The next chapter of Exodus further strengthens this connection.

Exodus 13:11 “After the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and gives it to you, as he promised on oath to you and your ancestors, **12 you are to give over to the LORD the first offspring of every womb. All the firstborn males of your livestock belong to the LORD.** **13 Redeem with a lamb** every firstborn donkey, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. **Redeem every firstborn among your sons.** **14** In days to come, when your son asks you, ‘**What does this mean?**’ say to him, ‘**With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.**’ **15** When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed the firstborn of both people and animals in Egypt. **This is why I sacrifice to the LORD the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons.’**

Here in Exodus 13, God tells the Israelites that when they enter the Promised Land, they are to redeem every firstborn, including the animals, with a lamb. God goes on to explain in verse 15 that this lamb is sacrificed to commemorate God bringing the Israelites out of slavery. The words “redeem,” “sacrifice,” and “slavery” all explicitly appear in the text.

The New Testament confirms this Jewish connection of these issues. 1 Peter and Revelation clearly state that it is Jesus’ blood that redeemed us. In fact, the language of Peter describes Jesus’ blood as a purchase price, comparable to silver and gold, but of course infinitely superior in value.

1 Peter 1:18 For you know that **it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors,** **19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.** **20** He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

Revelation 5:9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast **redeemed us to God by thy blood** out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Hebrews 9 describes how the Jewish high priest would enter once a year with the blood of a Lamb into the Most Holy Place of the Temple. Then Hebrews 9 states plainly that Jesus entered God’s tabernacle in heaven and that it was Jesus’ blood which obtained redemption for us. So, here we have the blood associated with redemption of sinners.

Hebrews 9:6 When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. **7 But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people** had committed in ignorance...**11** But when **Christ came as high priest** of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. **12** He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but **he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.**

And in addition, this imagery is very similar to the story of Cain and Abel, who entered into the presence of God at “the end of days” and brought offerings, including Abel’s offering of livestock, quite possibly a lamb. In fact, Hebrews 11:4 refers to Abel’s offering as a sacrifice, using the same Greek word for sacrifice that is applied to Mosaic sacrifices.

Hebrews 5:1 For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, **that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices (2378) for sins.**

Hebrews 7:27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice (2378), first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

Hebrews 8:3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices (2378): wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

Hebrews 11:4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice (2378) than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

Perhaps even more interesting, some of these other passages in Hebrews are stating that the offering of sacrifices is a high priestly function. This becomes quite relevant given that the high priest entered into the Most Holy Place only once a year after the year had ended and Cain and Abel are said to have presented sacrifices at this same time of year.

Hebrews 10 captures the kinship aspect of redemption when it addresses “brothers and sisters” and declares that these family members can now enter into the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus as does Hebrews 2, which ties in to Leviticus 25’s presentation of redemption of kin from bondage.

Hebrews 10:19 Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus.

Hebrews 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he

might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. 16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. 17 **Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.**

This is a direct parallel of Genesis 3-4. Here, there is a priestly sacrifice by one family member serving with the hope of allowing sinners back into God's presence in the Most Holy Place. And, of course, the New Testament is clear that Jesus' death and the blood that he shed for us was a fulfillment of the Passover sacrifice in Exodus 12-13.

1 Corinthians 5:7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. **For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.**

These New Testament passages demonstrate that in the first century AD, Jewish people understood sacrifices, such as Passover, in association with redemption from slavery, with the blood of the sacrifices as the price to obtain that redemption. Of course, we have already seen this directly in the time of Moses based on the texts of Exodus 6, 12, and 13.

This association in the Jewish mind between priestly sacrifice and redemption from slavery no doubt set the stage for Jesus' own teaching. Consider the fact that when speaking to his fellow Jews, Jesus repeatedly illustrated sin as financial debt which again finds parallels in Leviticus 25. In Matthew 18, Jesus even drew upon the Jewish historical concept of being sold into servitude to pay off debt and then compared this entire process to the forgiveness of sin.

Luke 7:40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. 41 **There was a certain creditor which had two debtors:** the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. 42 **And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.** Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? 43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Matthew 18:21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? 22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. 23 Therefore is **the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.** 24 **And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.** 25 **But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.** 26 The servant

therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 27 **Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.** 28 But the same servant went out, and found **one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence:** and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. 29 And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 30 And he would not: but went and **cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.** 31 So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. 32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, **O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt,** because thou desiredst me: 33 Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? 34 **And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.** 35 **So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.**

Even Paul spoke of the Law of Moses and even obedience to Christ in terms of **debts.**

Galatians 5:3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. 12 Therefore, brethren, **we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.** 13 **For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.**

So, once again, we can see that the idea of priestly sacrifices as a means of redemption from slavery was well-engrained into Jewish thinking since the time of Exodus 12-13. It is in this very time period that the Jews received the book of Genesis from Moses, which in the first four chapters, depicted Adam and Eve as being banned from God's presence due to sin, their close kin and offspring presenting sacrifices and offerings in God's presence around the same time of year as the Jewish feast of atonement, and one child's sacrifice being rejected similar to the rejection of Aaron's own priestly sons who brought an incorrect offering.

This well-engrained association makes it likely that the Jews would have associated passages like Leviticus 25 with the Cain and Abel account.

Leviticus 25:47 And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: 48 **After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him:** 49 Either his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or **any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him;** or if he be able, he may redeem

himself. 50 And he shall reckon with him that bought him from the year that he was sold to him unto the year of jubile: **and the price of his sale** shall be according unto the number of years, according to the time of an hired servant shall it be with him. 51 If there be yet many years behind, according unto them he shall give again **the price of his redemption out of the money that he was bought for.**

The Israelites of Moses' day may very well have understood the sacrifices of Cain and Abel as corresponding to the price offered to redeem an enslaved relative, just as a lamb was used to redeem the firstborn of Israel when God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. It is not difficult to connect the redemption of Adam with the redemption of the firstborn on a conceptual level. It is easy to see how the Israelites would have read the account of Cain and Abel as paralleling the sacrificial and priestly duties bestowed on them by Moses.

The Sojourner, the Cherubim of Eden, and the Devil

Still, there are a few other aspects to discuss. When it comes to Leviticus 25, we can take note of the “sojourner” and “foreigner” who becomes the master of the poor Israelite brother. Would the Israelites have seen a corresponding character in the accounts of Genesis 3-4?

Here again we have a wealth of information. Under our “Eschatology” section, we have an article entitled, “Angels in the End Times.” Parts 3 and 4 of this series in particular address the identity of the two horsemen identified in Revelation 6:8 as “Death and Hell.” As we demonstrate, these are actual beings, not just abstract concepts metaphorically personified.

Support for this conclusion is found throughout the bible. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 lists Death among principalities and other rulers, stating that Death is the last enemy defeated by Christ. Revelation 20:14 depicts that after Christ's millennial reign, the rest of the dead are resurrected and then Death and Hell are cast into the Lake of Fire along with wicked men, which is a punishment for persons, not abstract concepts. Hebrews 2:14 states that the Devil has the authority of death, which he wields over men. And as we saw earlier in section one of our study Romans 5:14 and 17 plainly declare that death reigned over men even as we, ourselves will reign (through Christ).

Revelation 9:1-3 describes an angel figuratively as a star, who unlocks the abyss and unleashes an army. Verse 11 states that this army has a king and that this king is the angel over the abyss. His name, according to Revelation, is Hebrew is Abaddon in Hebrew, Apollyon in Greek, and Destroyer in English. The Hebrew word “abaddown” (Strong's No. 011) means “place of destruction.” It appears in several Old Testament passages, including Job 26:6, Proverbs 15:11, and Proverbs 27:20, where it is directly associated with Hell, the Hebrew word “Sheol” (Strong's No. 07585), which refers to a subterranean region that is the

“abode of the dead.” The word for “Hell” in Revelation 6:8 is the comparable Greek name “Hades,” the primary definition of which is the god of the “realm of the dead.”

So, the bible clear identifies that the devil wields the authority of death over men and that, once dead, men were to be kept in a subterranean place that is ruled by another angel who is identified by various titles for Hell. (Since the resurrection of Christ, only the wicked dead are kept here, but previously the righteous were kept in a separate area that was separated by a gulf and absent of fire. For reference, see Luke 16:20-25.) Both the Old and the New Testament associate these two angels with each other frequently, as seen throughout Revelation 6:8 and 20:14, but also passages in Job 28:22, Isaiah 28:15-18, and even Hosea 13:14 in which God declares, “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.” As Hosea 13 hints, Jesus took this authority from these two angels through his death and resurrection, as stated in Revelation 1:18.

Revelation 1:18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

Certain Old Testament passages even speak of the greedy desire of these two, in a passage which speaks of a human ruler who has conquered many people and nations.

Habakkuk 2:5 Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, **who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people...** **8** Because **thou hast spoiled many nations**, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; **because of men's blood**, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

This comparison to the greed of these two angels potentially bears some resemblance to a peculiar phrase in Genesis 3 and 4. But first, it is necessary to understand the relationship of the two cherubim on the ark of the covenant and the two large statues of cherubim that Solomon placed at the entrance to the Most Holy Place in the Temple.

The placement of these two cherubim would have been cemented into the understanding of the people of Israel in Moses' day. And the placement of these cherubim would not have been an arbitrary thing to them, especially because the expulsion of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 resulted in cherubim being placed at the entrance to the garden to prevent Adam and Eve from going back in. No Israelite who knew about the two cherubim on the ark in the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle or the two statue cherubim in the Most Holy Place of the Temple (both of which were entered from the east) would have read the story of Adam and Eve and missed the clear parallel of the cherubim placed at the entrance on the east side of the garden of Eden.

Exodus 25:17 “Make an atonement cover of pure gold—two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide. 18 And make two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover. 19 Make one cherub on one end and the second cherub on the other; make the cherubim of one piece with the cover, at the two ends. 20 The cherubim are to have their wings spread upward, overshadowing the cover with them. The cherubim are to face each other, looking toward the cover. 21 Place the cover on top of the ark and put in the ark the tablets of the covenant law that I will give you. 22 There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the covenant law, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.

1 Samuel 4:4 So the people sent men to Shiloh, and they brought back the ark of the covenant of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim. And Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

2 Samuel 6:2 He and all his men went to Baalah in Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim on the ark.

1 Kings 6:23 For the inner sanctuary he made a pair of cherubim out of olive wood, each ten cubits high. 24 One wing of the first cherub was five cubits long, and the other wing five cubits—ten cubits from wing tip to wing tip. 25 The second cherub also measured ten cubits, for the two cherubim were identical in size and shape. 26 The height of each cherub was ten cubits. 27 He placed the cherubim inside the innermost room of the temple, with their wings spread out. The wing of one cherub touched one wall, while the wing of the other touched the other wall, and their wings touched each other in the middle of the room. 28 He overlaid the cherubim with gold. 29 On the walls all around the temple, in both the inner and outer rooms, he carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers.

Ezekiel also provides several connections concerning these cherubim. First, consider some key vocabulary terms from Genesis 3:24. Notice that the word for “cherubim” (Strong’s No. 3742) is the Hebrew “Keruwb.” Also notice the Hebrew verb “shamar” (Strong’s No. 8104), which means, “to keep, guard, observe, give heed, preserve, protect.” And, of course, Genesis 3 refers to the garden of Eden by name.

Genesis 3:24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim (3742) at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard (8104) the way to the tree of life.

In Ezekiel 28, Ezekiel is told to take up a lament for the king of Tyre and throughout the prophecy he associates the king of Tyre with a cherub. First, the same Hebrew word for cherub is used twice, once in verses 14 and again in verse 16. Second, in verse 13 this individual is described as having “been in Eden the garden of God.” Third, verses 15-18 state that this individual sinned.

Ezekiel 28:12 Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. 13 Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. 14 Thou art the anointed cherub (3742) that covereth (5526); and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. 15 Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. 16 By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering (5526) cherub (3742), from the midst of the stones of fire. 17 Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. 18 Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. 19 All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.

Lastly, notice the words “covereth” in verse 14 and “covering” in verse 16. This is the Hebrew verb “cakak” (Strong’s No. 5526) in both cases. It ranges in meaning from “to hedge, fence about, shut in, block, overshadow, stop the approach.” This phrase “stop the approach” bears direct relation to God’s commands concerning Aaron and his sons who approached his presence. Certainly all of these definitions are applicable to the cherubim described in Genesis 3:24. However, here in Ezekiel, this word appears in the Qal form as an active participle. In this form it means “protector” and is a perfect match for the Hebrew verb “shamar” (Strong’s No. 8104) in Genesis 3:24 which describes the cherubim’s purpose as “to keep, guard, observe, give heed, preserve, protect.” In verse 16, God even threatens to make a fire come forth from the midst of this cherub to destroy him, which mirrors the flaming sword in Genesis 3 that was used to keep men out of the garden and the fire that devoured Aaron’s sons in Leviticus 10. There can be no doubt that Ezekiel is referring to the cherubim of Genesis 3:24.

But the linguistic parallels from Ezekiel 28 continue. As we have seen, the Hebrew word “cakak” occurs twice in Ezekiel 28 where it is used refer to the cherub who was in Eden (“the covering cherub”). This is the same Hebrew word that occurs in such passages as Exodus 37 and 1 Kings 8 where it is also applied to the cherubim on the ark and the cherubim statues overshadowing it in the Most Holy Place.

Exodus 37:9 And the cherubims (3742) spread out their wings on high, and covered (5526) with their wings over the mercy seat, with their faces one to another; even to the mercy seatward were the faces of the cherubims (3742).

1 Kings 8:6 And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims (3742). **7** For the cherubims (3742) spread forth their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims (3742) covered (5526) the ark and the staves thereof above.

In Exodus 37, “cakak” is applied to the cherubim that cover the mercy seat on the ark. And in 1 Kings 8, “cakak” is applied to the cherubim statues placed in the Most Holy Place of Solomon’s Temple whose wings spread out over the ark. Consequently, Ezekiel explicitly connects the cherubim in the garden of Eden in Genesis 3 with the two cherubim on the ark of the covenant and in the Most Holy Place of Solomon’s Temple. The two cherubim on the ark and in Solomon’s Temple clearly represented the cherubim placed at the entrance to the presence of God in the garden in Genesis 3.

Yet, it is also interesting that Ezekiel recounts that this cherub was not a righteous angel. He had sinned, which firmly places him in the category of satanic angels. Of course, Ezekiel is applying this description to the king of Tyre. It is possible that Ezekiel means to refer to the angelic prince over Tyre, the chief city of the Phoenicians. After all, the bible describes angelic rulers over Greece and Persia (Daniel 10:20-21). And the New Testament is clear that the Jews understood that the nations were ruled by angels (Ephesians 2:2, 6:12). However, even if Ezekiel is referring to the human king, he is describing the king of Tyre by comparing him to events that pertain to the cherub from Eden. So, either way, Ezekiel’s description implies that these descriptions originally apply to such a cherub. These facts from Ezekiel are confirmed by the prophet Zechariah.

The prophet Zechariah certainly knew who these two cherubs were. (Incidentally, our study of the Trinity makes it clear that the Angel of YHWH here is in fact YHWH, namely the pre-incarnate Word. Verse 2 reflects this fact when the angel of YHWH speaks but instead is simply referred to interchangeably by the name “YHWH.”)

Zechariah 3:1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. **2** The LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?”

Note the parallels between Zechariah 3 and Genesis 3-4. Zechariah describes the high priest standing in God’s presence, which under the Law of Moses occurred only when he went in to present the sacrifice on the day of atonement at the beginning of each new year. Genesis 4 describes Cain and Abel in God’s presence bringing offerings at the “end of days,” which relates directly to the end of a year.

The ark of the covenant and Solomon's temple depict God meeting with men between two cherubim. Genesis 3 depicts cherubim placed at the entrance to the garden where God met with Adam and Eve. The interior of the Temple was, likewise, decorated as a garden with cherubim on the doors. Zechariah depicts an angel in this setting. However, in Zechariah's description, the angel is not just any angel, or even a righteous angel. The angel standing to the side is a satanic angel. It is clear that Zechariah's imagery corresponds to the depictions on the ark and in Solomon's Temple. And it is clear that the depictions on the ark and in Solomon's Temple correspond to the cherubim in Genesis 3.

Consequently, Zechariah reflects the ancient Jewish understanding that these cherubim were associated with Satan and confirms the plain statements of Ezekiel describing at least one of the cherubim from Eden as sinful.

In fact, Zechariah's depiction of what Satan is doing also relates to the two cherubim in Genesis 3 and 4. Notice the inherent connection between the authority of Death and Hell and the idea of keeping sinners from God's presence which is seen in both Zechariah 3 and in Genesis 3:24. God originally dwelled on earth with men and he will one day dwell on earth with men forever. Through death, these angels ensure that men will not live physically on earth forever. And by keeping men in Sheol, a subterranean location, they ensure that even disembodied spirits of men will not continue on earth forever. Rather, before Christ's death and resurrection, the departed spirits of all men (whether righteous or wicked) were kept in Sheol. (The New Testament teaches that this is no longer the case for the righteous after Christ's resurrection.) But, the story of Adam and Eve demonstrates that the authority of two satanic angels (Death and Hell, who prevent men from living forever and from entering God's presence) is implemented when men sin. (As we have seen in section one of this study, we also find corroboration of this idea from Paul in Romans 5.)

A man without sin is free to be in God's presence, just as Adam and Eve were before they sinned. This fits perfectly with Zechariah 3, in which Satan is depicted as accusing the High Priest Joshua who is standing in God's presence. If Satan can convict Joshua of some sin, then Joshua will be subject to expulsion from God's presence. Consequently, Zechariah 3 also reflects Satan's desire to remove priestly service and end mediation on men's behalf. Incidentally, this is in perfect alignment with Satan's actions throughout the life of Jesus. He is depicted as tempting and trying Jesus all the way till death on a cross. Satan could not allow a righteous offspring of Adam and Eve, fit to enter God's presence and inherit the earth and capable of offering priestly sacrifice as intercession for the rest of the human family.

This brings us back to Cain and Abel. Satan's role as the one who brings death was established early in the time of Moses.

Exodus 12:23 For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD

will pass over the door, and **will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.**

Exodus 13:14 In days to come, when your son asks you, ‘**What does this mean?**’ say to him, ‘**With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.** 15 When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed the firstborn of both people and animals in Egypt. **This is why I sacrifice to the LORD the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons.**’

Psalms 78:43 ...the day **he displayed his signs in Egypt**, his wonders in the region of Zoan...49 He unleashed against them his hot anger, his wrath, indignation and hostility— **a band of destroying angels.** 50 He prepared a path for his anger; **he did not spare them from death but gave them over to the plague.** 51 **He struck down all the firstborn of Egypt, the firstfruits of manhood in the tents of Ham.**

As Exodus 12 and 13 along with Psalms 78 make clear, it was the destroying angel and his cohorts that killed the firstborn in Egypt. And it was this destruction from such angels that God says he “redeemed” the Israelites from death and from bondage in the land of Egypt by the blood of the lamb on their doorposts, an event which ties closely to Leviticus 25’s depiction of redemption from bondage by a kinsman.

Several factors correspond in these passages concerning the destructive role of the two cherubim placed outside the garden in Genesis 3. First, these cherubim are only placed at the entrance to the garden after Adam and Eve sin. Second, the cherubim are placed as guards to keep Adam and Eve from God’s presence and also to specifically ensure that after sin, Adam and Eve would not live forever. Third, the Temple mirrors the garden and Zechariah depicts a scene that mirrors the Temple, in which Satan is placed in the location of the cherubim standing to the side between whom God met with the high priest. According to Zechariah, Satan is accusing Joshua, no doubt trying to get him disqualified from standing before God. Fourth, the bible identifies two satanic angels who have authority over death and hell and physical death and hell just so happen to be integrally connected with keeping men from living on earth forever with God and being in God’s presence.

These facts confirm the destructive role of the two angels presented at the entrance to the garden, on the top of the ark, and at the entrance to the Most Holy Place in the Temple. Moreover, this destructive role makes it most likely that it was these same two satanic cherubim that that wielded the devouring fire, both in Genesis 3 and Leviticus 10 (in which Aaron’s sons were killed they disobeyed and approached the presence of God). But it also indicates, just as Hosea 13:14 declares, that Christ’s work was to redeem mankind from these angels who held the authority of death and hell over sinful men. In the next section below we will further discuss indications from early in Genesis that redemption from sin involved redeeming sinners from their bondage under the authority of the devil.