

On the Beginning

9. From Bad to Worse

NOTE ESPECIALLY Genesis 4:13-26

The first man born into the world, Cain, murdered his brother Abel basically for religious reasons! His punishment was that he became “*a fugitive and a vagabond . . . in the earth.*” Then Cain became the forefather of an important family and the founder of the earliest “civilization.” The influence of his descendants was not good, and the way the Bible traces his line indicates the spiritual and moral decline of mankind in the centuries between the Fall and the Flood. The New Testament warns us against going “*the way of Cain*” (Jude 11), the way that the majority of men went as the sons of Adam populated the earth. II Peter 3 says that there was a “*world*” that existed before the Flood of Noah that was “*overflowed with water*” and “*perished*” because of its sin (vs. 3–6). Scholars think that the population of the earth between Adam and Noah’s day grew to about the size it is now, since men lived to tremendous ages (See Genesis 5) and begat many children. Genesis 6 shows us that as they grew in number, men grew in iniquity, which finally had to be judged (Read vs. 1-13). The Cainite race had a lot to do with this corruption!

1. What Happened to Cain.

Genesis 4:13-17 shows us that Cain was not killed for the murder he committed, but actually protected. The mark of Cain was his protection. After “*the earth was filled with violence*” (Genesis 6:11) and then judged through the Flood, God instituted the death penalty for murder (Genesis 9:5-6). But for Cain the punishment was a life of wandering. When his son was born (Cain had married a sister or maybe a niece; obviously some sons of Adam married their sisters), “*he builded a city*” to keep his descendants from wandering (v. 17).

2. The Family of Lamech.

Genesis 4 traces Cain’s descendants five generations to Lamech. Comparing the lists in Chapters 4 and 5, we find that Lamech was in the same generation of Cain’s line that a godly man name Enoch came in the line from Adam through Seth to Noah. In verses 19 through 24 of Genesis 4 we learn about Lamech’s family:

- a. His two wives, Adah and Zillah.
- b. His son Jabal, the originator of tent-dwelling.
- c. His son Jubal, the originator of musical instruments.
- d. His son Tubal-cain, the originator of the manufacture of metal instruments.
- e. His daughter Naamah.

Also we read a verse from the poem or song Lamech wrote for his wives to hear (vs. 23-24).

3. What Was Happening?

Reading “between the lines,” we can see the direction Cainite culture was taking.

- a. The agricultural life given to Adam (Genesis 3:23) and Cain (Genesis 4:2) was abandoned for urban life or nomadic herding (Genesis 4:17 and 20). Was this a form of rebellion against God’s will?

- b. Monogamy (God's plan) was abandoned for polygamy (Genesis 4:19). Again God's way was rejected.
- c. Music was developed possibly as a way to deal with the sorrow of the sinful life (Genesis 4:21).
- d. Metal instruments were invented to give men power over other men (Genesis 4:22).
- e. God was defied and mocked in Lamech's song (Genesis 4:23-24).

4. The Meaning of the Song.

In verses 23 and 24 we find the first poetry in the Bible. It is a part of the song Lamech wrote for his wives.

"Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold."

Good men have disagreed about just what was meant by these words. Dr. John R. Rice thought it simply flaunted the absence of a severe penalty for killing somebody before the Flood. The German scholars Keil and Delitzsch thought that Lamech was threatening to inflict ten times the vengeance on a man who would *hurt* him as God had said He would inflict on anybody who *killed* Cain. Dr. Henry Morris agrees with Keil and Delitzsch. In any case, the song represents an attitude of arrogance even toward God that must have characterized the Cainite civilization! Polygamy, violence, carnal entertainment, and selfish arrogance marked the morally-corrupt world before the Flood. Man's sin-nature was showing its great potential for evil. The words "*corrupt*" and "*corrupted*" in Genesis 6:11-12 give the idea of decay. Civilization was decaying, probably according to the pattern we find in Romans 1:16-32 (Read this revealing examination of how men go down morally as they reject the truth).

5. The Sethite Line.

Chapter 4 concludes with an introduction to the son of Adam whose family line would produce Christ, the Savior. In the Old Testament, the line of Christ is followed. Sometimes another line of descendants is examined (as Cain's is in this chapter), but soon the narrative gets back to the line of Christ. Find this phenomenon again in Genesis 10 and 11. Of all the children of Adam and Eve, Seth was special. His name means "appointed," and his mother said, "*For God . . . hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew*" (v. 25), probably referring to the promise of God in Genesis 3:15 and her initial expectation that Abel would be the Conquering Seed. Notice that Seth's son was named Enos and that prayer began to be practiced in his day (v. 26). Enos means "mortal" and often is used to mean "man" as weak and frail—"mortal man" as we say. As good men began to realize how weak they were in sin-cursed, mortal bodies, they began "*to call upon the name of the LORD.*"