

PART 3: The Beginning of Families and Relationships

The third part of our Genesis Bible study will cover 4:1—5:32 and deal the beginning of families and relationships within families and between people of different families. We will deal with the question of how all humanity could come from one couple, Adam and Eve. We will also address the question of where the wives of the sons of Adam and Eve came from. We will see how the nature of sin progresses and deepens. We will also see how from the beginning there have been those who chose the path of sin, which causes separation from God, and those who chose obedience to God, maintaining a relationship with God.

Beginning of Children:

Soon after being cast out of the Garden of Eden scripture informs us that *“man had relations with his wife Eve”* and two sons were born to them. We should not connect the fall of mankind and the beginning of sin with sexual relations. God always intended for us to have children for when God created man He commanded him (male and female), saying, *“Be fruitful and multiply”* (Genesis 1:28). God makes clear in (2:24-25) that men and women are intended for each other, to become “one flesh” through marriage and that there be no shame in sexual relations between them. God further makes it clear in his punishments to Adam and Eve for their disobedience that man’s work will be providing for his family and woman’s work shall be bearing and mothering children.

Verses 1 & 2a: *“Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, ‘I have gotten a manchild with the help of the Lord.’ And again, she gave birth to his brother Abel.”* The Hebrew word translated as “had relations” literally means “to know” which infers to know intimately such as in sexual relations. The Hebrew name “Cain” literally means “acquired one” or “gotten one,” but is also the word for the weapon “spear” which may infer he will be an instrument that sheds blood or kills. The Hebrew name “Abel” literally means “vapor or breath” which infer that the Spirit of God was in him. While we are told that Eve conceived and then had two sons, this does not necessarily imply they were twins. What we can assume is that they were the first two children born. What is interesting is that these two sons, like their parents, will have a choice between doing good or evil.

Beginning of Occupations:

Farming and shepherding are the two oldest occupations on earth, and in the Middle East today their jobs have changed little over the centuries.

Verse-2b: *“And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.”* From the beginning God gave mankind dominion over all life on earth, both the plants of the earth and all living, breathing animals. Everything was created for mankind’s benefit. Therefore, the first obvious occupations of man would be farming and shepherding. The “flocks” are likely sheep being raised for the making of clothing. Man will not be allowed to eat meat until after the Great Flood in the time Noah.

Beginning of Offerings:

Recognizing that God is the source of all that gives one life, and honoring God through a thanksgiving offering begins with the first children born of man. Both sons give offerings from the fruit of their labor but God is only pleased by Abel’s offering. Why?

Verses 3, 4 & 5a: *“So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. And Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard.”* While both sons of Adam and Eve gave an offering of the fruit of their labor the Lord only had regard for Abel’s offering. The Hebrew word translated as “offering” has uncertain root and meaning, but generally is seen to represent “an apportioned gift, tribute or sacrifice.” Cain has given “fruit” of the land, or a portion of his crop. Abel gives the “firstlings” of his flock and of their “fat portions.” The Hebrew word translated as “firstlings” actually means “firstborn.” The inference is that Abel has given from the “first” and the “best” of the fruit of his labor, while Cain has simply given a portion, perhaps even not from the best but from the least. God evaluates both our motives and the quality of what we offer him. God deserves our best and not our least. What we give, how we value the gift we give and how great a sacrifice it is for us to give it, indicates how much we value God for what He has given us. It can be presumed that God “had regard” for Abel’s offering because he gave his first and best, but “had no regard” for Cain’s offering because it was not a meaningful sacrifice of any significant value to Cain.

Verses 5a, 6 & 7: *“So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.’”* The Hebrew word translated as “countenance” means “front, face or surface” and infers that Cain’s anger and disappointment were outwardly visible in his face. God then raises the obvious question of why the anger and disappointment, clearly inferring that Cain has control of what he does and how it makes him feel. If Cain will do better he will feel better. But if Cain continues down the road of anger he will open the door to sin. This is not God’s desire for Cain and warns him that he must master his anger.

How do we react when someone suggests we have done something wrong? Do we move to correct our mistake or deny that we need to correct and become angry that our mistake has been pointed out to us? God gave Cain the opportunity to do better and encouraged him to do so. God also warned him that being angry would not help but open the door to sin and an even bigger mistake. God would have us learn from our mistakes and move forward, both repentant of our wrong and committed to do better. God knows we will make mistakes and is always ready to forgive us and help us not to repeat them.

The First Murder:

Truly, when anger is not dealt with and we fail to accept and learn from our mistakes, choosing to blame others for our failures, the door is open to sin and greater error usually follows. In this case, it seems obvious that Cain blamed Abel for his own misfortune. Often we resent the fortune of others when suffering from our own misfortune.

Verse-8: *“And Cain told Abel his brother [‘Let us go out into the field.']. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.”* The Hebrew phrase “Let us go out into the field” is not found in all Bibles because it is missing from some of the oldest Hebrew manuscripts. It would be a distraction to enter into a discussion of why it should or shouldn’t be included, because it is obvious that Cain “told” Abel something in order to get him into the “field,” his turf, in order to kill him. The Hebrew word translated as “killed” literally means “to murder,” making it clear that this was not an accidental but deliberate taking of Abel’s life.

Verse-9: *“Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Where is Abel your brother?’ And he said, ‘I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?’”* The Hebrew word translated as “keeper” literally means “to build a hedge around” or “to guard.” It is the same word God used in telling Adam to “keep” the Garden of Eden. Cain is essentially saying to God, “Am I my brother’s guardian, am I responsible for him?” Cain’s answer to God’s inquiry reveals the depth of his sinful nature. His answer is both a lie and is filled with disrespect. It reflects a self-centered nature, in which others are expendable and of less value than oneself.

Verse-10: *“And He said, ‘What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to Me from the ground.’”* As has been said previously, the Hebrew word for “blood” is of the same root as that of “man.” The word for “blood” in this context case means “bloodshed, slaughter, and guilt of murder.” Later, God will make it clear that life is in the blood of the living. God has already said that we come from the earth and will return to the earth. Abel’s blood—life—cries out from the earth where Cain has sent spilled.

Adam and Eve’s disobedience brought sin into the human race. We may have thought their sin wasn’t very bad, simply eating a piece of forbidden fruit, but look how quickly their sinful nature has developed in the lives of their children. Simple disobedience suddenly degenerated into outright murder. Adam and Eve acted only against God, but Cain acted against both God and man—his brother. Sin has a way of growing out of control if not checked and dealt with.

Verses 11 & 12: *“‘And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you cultivate the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you; you shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth.’”* The Hebrew word translated as “cursed” literally means “to bind, to hem with obstacles and/or to render powerless.” Cain is a farmer and receives his life through the crops he grows from the ground. God is declaring that the ground will no longer yield crops for him, and that he will no longer have ground that is his. Cain is cursed to wander the earth without home or shelter. Can you imagine how severe a punishment losing your land and the ability to farm would be to a farmer? A farmer’s roots are in the land, but Cain will have no roots anywhere.

Verses 13 & 14: *“And Cain said to the Lord, ‘My punishment is too great to bear! Behold, Thou hast driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Thy face I shall be hidden, and I shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and it will come about that whoever finds me will kill me.’* The Hebrew word translated as “punishment” literally means “a depraved action or perversity.” Cain sees God’s punishment for his crime as “perverse” and too severe. His response is that of those who chose to sin and then curse God for the punishment they justly deserve for their actions. Cain acknowledges or perhaps declares in defiance that he will be “hidden from God’s face,” which means he will no longer have a relationship with God. He will now be separated from God because of his sin. Cain is filled with remorse but not repentance. Cain is filled with fear and anticipates being killed by whoever finds him. This may seem a perplexing statement for Cain because we are only aware of Adam, Eve and Cain being alive on the earth at this time. Who would then kill him? We will deal with this question shortly but for now set it aside.

Verse-15: *“So the Lord said to him, ‘Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold.’ And the Lord appointed a sign for Cain, lest anyone finding him should slay him.”* The Hebrew phrase “appointed a sign” literally means “set a mark” upon him. He has in some way been “branded” so that others will know to leave him alone and not to hurt him. God is punishing him and it is not for anyone else to exact their own punishment. We understand that we are not judge, for the right to judge and assign punishment is for God and God alone to do. God declares that if anyone else should kill Cain, God will take vengeance against them sevenfold. This is a warning we best hear when considering passing judgment on another.

The Descendants of Cain: (An Evil Branch grows more Evil)

Just as the two brothers, Cain and Abel, each made different choices in their relationship with God, we will see two branches in the descendants of Adam. One branch, that which comes through Cain and is separated from God, will continue to grow more evil. The other branch, which will come through another son of Adam, Seth who replaces Abel, will continue in a relationship with God and ultimately become the people of God.

Verse-16: *“Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.”* The Hebrew word translated as “settled” literally means

“to dwell” but not necessarily as in a “dwelling” such as a house. The Hebrew place name translated as “Nod” literally means “wandering” and infers “aimless.” Therefore the name refers to a land of aimless wandering, and Cain’s dwelling is likely the tent of a nomad who is constantly moving from one place to another. Note that Cain “went out from the presence of the Lord.” He is leaving God’s presence and becoming more separated from God.

Verse-17: *“And Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son.”* As previously noted, where are these other people coming from that might harm Cain, who would become his wife, and will inhabit a city? Scripture clearly indicates that all humankind has descended from one set of parents—Adam and Eve. This fact seems clearly affirmed in the New Testament (Romans 5:2). So where did these people come from? Genesis does not directly answer the question, but Genesis 5:4 asserts that Adam had “other sons and daughters” beside the three which are named—Cain, Abel and Seth (4:25). Given the longevity of people at that time, Cain could have married one of his sisters or even a more distant relative. We will be told in chapter 5 that Adam and his descendants will all live hundreds of years and have many sons and daughters. If one does the math, assuming the first six generations each had only ten children who each married and had ten children, a population of 10,000,000 people would be possible before the death of Adam at age 930 (5:5). This seem foreign to us with our relatively short live span, but if we too lived for hundreds of years and could continue having children until we were hundreds of years old, can you imagine how many descendants you might have?

Another significant question that arises is the problem of “inbreeding.” How could one human couple create all of humankind? We know scientifically that inbreeding in a family over time causes imperfections, weakness and defects that can ultimately lead to sickness and early deaths. The process is a slow degeneration from one generation to the next. In the case of Adam and Eve, we are starting with human “perfection” without any of the genetic flaws or weaknesses all of humanity now suffers. Is it possible that by the time genetic mutations could accumulate in adequate number to pose a problem that humankind was already of vast numbers and very diverse? Is this

why early humans, according to the Bible lived often more than 900 years? On the other hand, is it not possible that God could suspend the degenerative result of inbreeding for a period of time by design in order to establish humanity in large numbers on the earth? This is an issue for which we cannot have a concise answer and must rely upon our faith.

In verses 18 through 22 we will learn of six generations that will be born as direct descendants of Cain. We are given no dates or years lived and very little detail except for the fifth and sixth generations. In verses 20-22, we learn that the two wives of Lamech, fifth generation descendant of Cain, will give birth to three sons through two wives. The sons born through Adah are named Jabal and Jubal. The son born through Zillah is named Tubal-cain. Jabal is said to be “the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock” (4:20). Jubal is said to be the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe” (4:21). And Tubal-cane is said to be “the forger of all implements of bronze and iron” (4:22). Take note that Jabal is raising “livestock,” which literally refers to “cattle.” Man is not yet permitted to take the life of an animal and eat meat, but there is no reason to raise cattle except for their meat and hides. This is a defiance of God’s will at that time. Likewise, Tubal-cain is the “forger” of bronze and iron implements. In this case the Hebrew word translated as “forger” literally means “one who hammers and sharpens.” Hammering and sharpening are the means for making weapons such as swords and spears. Weapons are used for fighting and killing. Further evidence that the descendants of Cain are becoming more violent and depraved is found in a poem in 4:23-24.

Verses 23 & 24: ***“And Lamech said to his wives, ‘Adah and Zillah, listen to my voice, you wives of Lamech, give heed to my speech, for I have killed a man for wounding me; and a boy for striking me; if Cain is avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.’”*** This particular outburst showed a proud and presumptuous self-confidence. This was the boast of a bold, bad man who was elated with the possession of arms which his son Tubal-cain had invented. He felt he could take a human life at will. In the descendants of Cain we see a blatant indifference to sin and evil.

The Beginning of God’s People:

God will now replace the loss of Adam and Eve’s good son, Abel, with another good son. He will become a good branch that will carry forward the seed that will grow to become God’s chosen people. These descendants will seek a relationship with the Lord.

Verse-25: *“And Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for, she said, ‘God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel; for Cain killed him.’”* The Hebrew name “Seth” means “compensation” and Seth is clearly a gift from God to compensate for the loss of Abel. The Hebrew word translated as “offspring” literally means “seed,” indicating that he will be the one who will carry the seed of God’s people forward. Seth begins the line of named descendants that will lead to Noah, a faithful servant of God through which God will preserve a remnant of mankind when He destroys the world through the Great Flood. And ultimately, this line of descendants will lead to Abraham; Father of God’s chosen people.

Verse-26: *“And to Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord.”* The Hebrew name “Enosh” is another word meaning “man or mankind.” The Hebrew word translated as “call” literally means “to cry out, to proclaim or to preach.” The inference here is a beginning of some form of worship when men “call upon the name of the Lord.” Men are beginning to address God formally in prayer and thanksgiving in the time of Enosh.

Chapter-5: Descendants of Adam:

The fifth chapter provides a ten-person genealogy of pre-flood figures. We are told both how old each of these persons was when they gave birth to the son who continues the genealogical record, and we are told how long each of them lived. Their longevity is like nothing we know today. For example: Methuselah has a son when he is already 187 years old and goes on to live to an age of 969 years. Each man in the genealogy is said to have “other sons and daughters” but we are not told how many or given their names with the exception of Adam. In the genealogy only Adam’s son Seth is mentioned but we know that he previously had two other sons named Cain and Abel. It would seem that the only names listed in the genealogy are those sons who pass the good “seed” of blessing from generation to generation. The first two verses of chapter five make it clear that this is a deliberate record of the origins and lineage of Man. They are reminiscent of the account provided in Genesis 1:26-27.

Verses 1 & 2: *“This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when there were*

created.” Again we are reminded that we have been created in the image of God as both male and female. This image language is important because the image is clearly passed from generation to generation as is evident in verse 3.

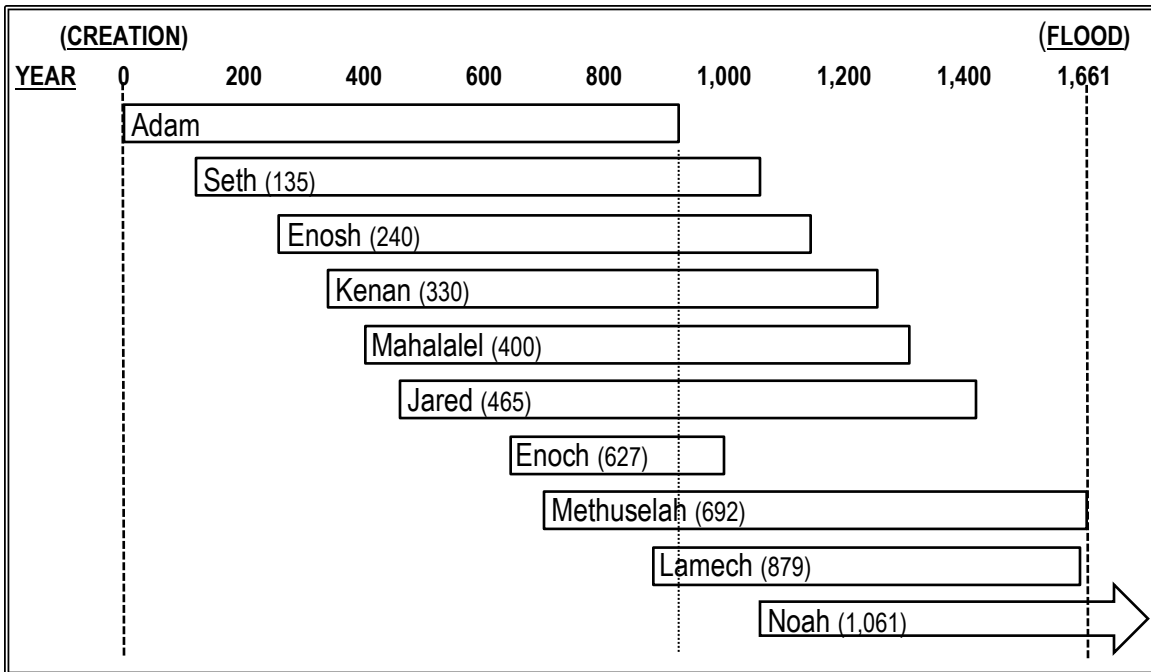
Verse-3: ***“When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own image, and named him Seth.”*** Were Cain and Abel not in Adam’s image? Perhaps “image” is less about outside appearance and more about the nature or spirit of a person. This may even be a reflection of the choices we make. We “chose” to be like God, to live a life of righteousness in a right relationship with Him, as opposed to living a life of evil in a broken relationship separated from God.

Verses 4 & 5: ***“Then the days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years, and he had other sons and daughters. So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.”*** These verses inform us that Adam has many additional sons and daughters that are not named. We do not know when these children were born. We can assume they were all born after Cain and Abel, but some of them could have come before Seth and/or after Seth. We don’t know how long Adam was able to continue to father children, but we do know that he lived a very long time to a final age of 930 years.

Verses 6 through 32 provide the names of all the descendants through Noah and his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth. For the majority of these descendants little information is provided other than their names, and dates relating to how old their fathers were when they were born, how old they were when their named son who would bear the seed was born, and how long they lived. There are two notable exceptions which include Enoch and Noah. Two things make Enoch uniquely special among the descendants. First, as we are told in verse 22 and again in verse 24, “Enoch walked with God.” This indicates that he had a very close relationship with God and lived in strict compliance to the will of God. Second, Enoch did not die. At the end of his fairly short life span as compared to the other descendants, we are not told that he died but instead “and he was not, for God took him” (5:24). Evidently Enoch’s relationship with God was so close that God chose for him not to taste death but took him directly to heaven. The only other example in the Bible of someone being taken alive to heaven would be Elijah in a chariot of fire and a whirlwind in 2 Kings 2:11.

The other exception which we are provided special information about is Noah. In Noah’s case, his father Lamech testifies regarding Noah, saying, **“This one shall give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the Lord has cursed”** (5:29). The Hebrew name “Noah” literally means “rest” and it would seem that Lamech somehow knows that the suffering of mankind due to the curse upon the ground will be lessened through his son. Perhaps this is a prophetic utterance that the rising evil and corresponding sorrow in the world will be washed away by the Great Flood when only Noah and his sons and wives will be saved. The other peculiar thing about Noah is that we are not given his definitive age when his three sons are born. Instead we are simply told that **“Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth”** (5:32). Perhaps this means that when he was five hundred years old he had triplets, but more likely it means that when he was around five hundred years old he had three sons. This is more likely because the meaning of the Hebrew name “Shem” contains an understanding of “oldest.”

The chart below indicates the relationship of the births, lifespan and death of each of the ten descendants included in the genealogy. Note that all of Adam’s descendants were alive at the time of his death except for Noah. Perhaps this is why Noah brings “rest” and a relief to the curse that began due to Adam’s sin. Methuselah apparently dies in the Great Flood because his death directly corresponds to the date of the flood.



(This Concludes Part-3)