

Beginnings: Study and Discussion Questions

Lesson Six: The Beginning of Two Lines of Humanity – Genesis 4:1-5:32

Overview of Chapters 4 and 5

- 1) Read Genesis 4:1-5:32 carefully. Can you think of reasons why retaining and recording genealogies would have been important, particularly in that time? First, each generation surely awaited the fulfillment of God's promise in Genesis 3:15 (that the woman's "seed" [a human descendant] would crush the head of the enemy). This promise was the basis of forward-looking faith for God's people, who were watching and waiting for the birth of the "Messiah" (as He came to be called). A second reason may have to do with the fact that apart from God, man hungers for significance. A preserved genealogy shows that each life has had a place in human history. Third, genealogies are a practical way of preserving knowledge. As the population on earth grew, it became increasingly difficult to keep a mental record of all of one's ancestors. There were simply too many names to memorize. Genealogies not only supplemented memory but also offered proof (when needed) of one's heritage.
- 2) Discuss the general impressions Scripture gives about Cain's descendants and about Seth's descendants (see especially Genesis 4:17, 19, 24, 4:26b, and 5:22-24). Then summarize the two spiritual lines (types) of humanity that began with these early fathers and continue to this very day. Cain built a city for himself as an act of defiance (4:17). Cain's descendant Lamech viewed himself as irreproachable, despite his murderous ways, thus scorning the Lord (4:24). Additionally, he was the first to scorn the marriage relationship by taking two wives, not one (4:19). *By contrast*, this statement follows Seth's birth: "at that time men began to call on the name of the Lord" (4:26). Some scholars suggest that "calling on the name of the Lord" implies corporate worship (something that, previously, had only occurred privately). The act of presenting individual offerings was already a practice (recall Genesis 2, where Cain and Abel each made offerings to the Lord). Genesis 5 shows godly men among Seth's descendants (i.e., Enoch "walked with God"). Two lines of humanity exist to this day: one that is faithless, godless, and fallen, and another that is faith-filled, regenerated, redeemed.
- 3) Using what you know about your *spiritual* heritage, list the names of those who led you to faith in Christ, and the names of those who led them to faith. If you don't know and it's possible to find out, you might want to make inquiries this week in order to chart your spiritual genealogy. Although spiritual birth is a work of God alone, believers in Jesus Christ are called to be His witnesses and make disciples in His name. With this in mind, add a few names that you are actively seeking (by prayer, witnessing, and example) to lead into the family of the redeemed. **Personal log and sharing**

From Genesis 4:1-7 (read also 1 John 3:12 and Jude 11):

- 4) According to Genesis 4:4, "The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering." How does one receive the Lord's favor? See Genesis 6:8-9, Exodus 33:12-13, Leviticus 26:3-9, Psalm 5:12, Luke 4:14-21, John 3:16 and 3:36, and Hebrews 11:4, 6. **Leviticus 26:3-9 speaks of the Lord's favor as a result of obedience. Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord because he was righteous and blameless, walked with God, and obediently represented Him in a wicked generation. Moses also sought to know God and keep His ways. Their obedience to God inevitably resulted from their faith in Him. Luke 4:14-21 says that Jesus declared His coming to be the fulfillment of the "year of the Lord's favor." Paul echoed this in 2 Corinthians 6:1-2, saying *now* is the time of the Lord's favor, the day of salvation. The Church Age is the period of the Lord's favor because God's work in Christ is now complete. Christ's righteousness is imputed to any sinner who places their faith in Him. According to Hebrews 11:4, it was Abel's faith that made his sacrifice pleasing to God. Hebrews 11:6 says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." John 3:16 and 36 indicate that belief (faith) in Christ leads to eternal life (favor), while rejecting Him leaves one under God's wrath (disfavor). One finds favor with God by faith. Righteous, obedient deeds are the inevitable result of true, saving faith.**

- 5) How would you summarize Cain's response to God's rejection of his offering? **Cain was sullen and rebellious.**
- 6) Contrast God's warning to Cain (4:7) with Christ's offer in Revelation 3:20. What choice (implied by this contrast) did Cain have and do you have when faced with temptation (see also 1 Corinthians 10:13)? **The Lord is eager to assist us in our time of need. Sin stands at the door of our hearts, waiting to devour us, but Christ also stands at the door of our hearts, waiting to deliver us. God faithfully instructs us so that we need not be victims of temptation.**
- 7) How can we "master" or "rule over" (4:7) temptation? See Matthew 4:1-11, Ephesians 6:13-18, 1 Thessalonians 4:11, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13, and James 4:7. **Jesus has given His followers "spiritual armor" to help us stand firm in "the day of evil" (Ephesians 6:13), including prayer, the word of God (as Jesus quoted when tempted), knowledge of His truth, establishing habits of righteous living, and faith in Him and His promises. Paul told his readers that idleness leads to temptation. Hard work and driving one's thoughts into positive, productive channels are important steps in overcoming temptation. James wrote, "Resist the devil" and "submit yourself to God." Sometimes, resisting the devil means physically removing a source of temptation from our lives or when that's not possible, physically avoiding the temptation. We submit to God when tempted by allowing Him to unveil our motives and asking for His help.**

From Genesis 4:8-12:

- 8) Compare God's questions in Genesis 4:9 and 3:9. On both occasions, what kind of a response was God looking for and what does this tell us about Him? **God is holy and therefore, cannot ignore sin. But because He is also gracious, He confronts us, giving opportunity for confession. Because God is good and loving, and knows that our sin separates us from Him (the Source of Life), He has reached out to us, wanting us to be spiritually, emotionally, and physically healthy.**
- 9) Read verse 10, together with Hebrews 12:24.
 - a) For what was Abel's blood crying out (Genesis 4:10)? **Abel's blood cried out for God's condemnation of Cain.**
 - b) How does Jesus' blood, shed on the cross for us, "speak a better word"? See Romans 5:9, Ephesians 1:7, and Colossians 1:20. **Jesus' blood cries out that sin has been paid for. By His blood we are redeemed from sin and reconciled to God (at peace with Him).**
 - c) Read Hebrews 12:28-29. In light of your answers to Questions 9a and 9b, for what can you "be thankful" and "worship God acceptably"? **Personal sharing is likely to include thanksgiving and worship that, by faith in Jesus' death on our behalf, we can have forgiveness of sins and no longer live under condemnation. Jesus bought us peace with God and a kingdom that is unshakable!**

From Genesis 4:13-26:

- 10) The only living people that have been mentioned, until the middle of Genesis 4, are Adam, Eve, Cain, and Abel. However, 4:14-15 hints at a growing human population and 4:17 unexpectedly reveals that Cain had a wife. From where might Cain's wife and these others have come? **While some have suggested that God created other people, whom the Scriptures do not name, after He created Adam and Eve, most commentators agree that Adam and Eve were the sole originating parents of all humanity. At Seth's birth, Eve declared that the Lord had given him to her *in place* of Abel. Since Adam was 130 years old when Seth was born, if Cain and Abel had happened to be born as early as Adam's first and second year of life, he and Eve could have lived as many as 128 years before Cain murdered Abel. If many unnamed children had been born and produced their own offspring during this 128-year period, the population on earth could possibly have numbered in the tens of thousands by the time God cursed Cain. If so, this would not only explain how Cain could find a wife, it would also explain the existence of people that Cain feared might kill him.**

- 11)** The first mention of a city in the Bible is in Genesis 4:17 (Cain built a city). Re-examine God's curse upon Cain in Genesis 4:10-12. How was Cain's city evidence of his ongoing defiance? **Matthew Henry** says Cain built a city because he no longer sought the heavenly city.¹ Cain's city is the first biblical evidence of the perverse longing in fallen human beings to establish one's own name through building our own empires. It is a desperate but futile attempt to establish one's significance. Cain's curse involved the failure to successfully grow crops and an existence of restless wandering. Cain was told he would wander, but his city was an attempt to settle.
- 12)** Compare Lamech's evil boast to his wives in 4:23-24 with Jesus' words to Peter in Matthew 18:21-22. According to those who live and work closely with you, which of these two spirits characterizes you? Lamech arrogantly boasted about murdering a man. Jesus told Peter that a God-follower should forgive others time and again. Lamech and Jesus used the number "seventy-seven" as a symbol of endlessness. Lamech represents pride at its worst. Jesus demanded humility at its fullest from His disciples. **Personal sharing**

From Genesis 5:1-31:

- 13)** Genesis 1:26 says that God made Adam in His likeness. In 5:3, we are told that Adam's son Seth was born in Adam's likeness. Based on what we have learned in Genesis thus far, in what ways would Adam's son Seth have been like him? **God's image and Adam's fallen nature were both passed to successive generations.**
- 14)** List the repeated words and phrases in 5:6-27. **The repeated phrases are "became the father," "after he became the father," "lived," "had other sons and daughters," and "and then he died."**
- a) Whose life interrupts the pattern (see also Hebrews 11:5 and Jude 14-15)? **Enoch's life interrupted this pattern.**
 - b) How does God feel about the departure from this world of those who walk with Him? See Psalm 116:15. **God welcomes those who walk with Him into His presence. "Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of the saints" (Psalm 116:15).**
- 15)** Genesis 5 gives a sad commentary: God's originally "good" creation was now in a cycle of death. Nevertheless, Lamech expressed hope at the birth of his son Noah (see 5:29). Read Romans 15:13. Do you have a seemingly hopeless situation for which you need to trust the "God of hope" today? If so, what is it? **Personal sharing**

¹ Henry, M. (1994). *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Ge 4:16–18). Peabody: Hendrickson.