

GENESIS 4:17-26 (THE LINE OF CAIN)

Introduction: Today, we'll look over the line of Cain which encompasses almost the entire second half of Chapter 4 of Genesis. While we're here, we should probably answer the age old question "Where did Cain get his wife?" If you ever saw the movie Inherit the Wind with Spencer Tracey, you know this question was brought up there. The movie is a take on the Scopes Monkey Trial. If you've never seen it, don't bother.

It's a pathetic attempt to make Christians looked stupid, bigoted, and close-minded. From the very first frames of the movie where the people are signing "Give me that old time religion – it's good enough for me..." all the way through to the end, it's an all out attack on Christianity.

During the trial, the defense attorney, played by Spencer Tracey, gets the prosecutor – a guy named Brady – on the stand. One commentary on the movie says, "Brady's confidence in his biblical knowledge is so great that he welcomes this challenge, but he becomes flustered under Drummond's cross-examination, unable to explain certain apparent contradictions, until Drummond hammers home his point -- that Cates, like any other man, demands the right to think for himself."

The questions that "fluster" Brady include the question, "Where did Cain get his wife." When he's asked this, he incompetently gasps and sweats at the immense difficulty of what he's been presented – as if it's too deep for the human mind to comprehend. The guy is portrayed as a completely bumbling, arrogant, close-minded, and self-deluded person.

And people ever since then have tried to appear smart by asking a this same question of Bible teachers – as if the movie set a precedent and that no one has been able to answer to since then.

In fact, whether you believe in evolution or creation, you come up with exactly the same problem. The only difference is that evolution can't properly identify the solution. Any evolutionary answer would lead to devolution, not further evolution.

The biblical answer is found in chapter 5 of Genesis – “And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot *a son* in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. ⁴ After he begot Seth, the days of Adam were eight hundred years; and he had sons and daughters. ⁵ So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died.”

We have no idea if Cain was the firstborn child of Adam or not and in fact some scholars believe the terminology at Cain’s birth indicates girls were born first.

Here’s what Albert Barnes says about it –

“If she had daughters before, and saw them growing up to maturity, this would explain her expectation, and at the same time give a new significance and emphasis to her exclamation, “I have gained a man (heretofore only women) from Yahweh.”

So girls could have been born first. No problem there...

And we have no idea if there were girls between Cain and Abel too. One thing we are sure of though is that Adam “had sons and daughters” besides them. In 930 years, he could have had a bunch. If there were twins, triplets, or quadruplets, there could have been a heap of them. Poor Eve!

And each of these children could have lots of children during those 930 years. By the time Adam died, there potentially could have been an immense population on the earth. There is no restriction levied on marrying brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins, or anything else until the time of the Law of Moses.

In fact, Abraham, who was only 430 years before the law and about 1950 years after creation, married his own half sister. No negative comment is made on that and it was accepted as normal. The gene pool back then would have been whoppingly strong and intermarrying like this wouldn’t be any problem at all.

The great unanswerable question of “Where did Cain get his wife?” isn’t unanswerable at all. He got her from the daughters of Adam his father. Take that Spencer Tracey.

Text Verse: Blessed be the name of the LORD
From this time forth and forevermore!
From the rising of the sun to its going down
The LORD’s name *is* to be praised. Psalm 113:2, 3

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Descent into Wickedness

¹⁷And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. And he built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son—Enoch. ¹⁸To Enoch was born Irad; and Irad begot Mehujael, and Mehujael begot Methushael, and Methushael begot Lamech.

Although we don’t see it yet, the genealogy we just read will lead to a division between the godly line of Seth and the wicked line of Cain. The godly line remains in the presence of the Lord and his plans and purposes are centered on the Creator, but eventually even this godly line corrupts to the point where only one man and his family would be saved in order to repopulate the world.

The line of wickedness, even from the beginning, is removed from the presence of the Lord – just as Cain was, and it is centered on worldly things and the love of those things. These things aren’t explicitly stated, but they are to be inferred by the structure of the verses and their placement in the overall Genesis account, along with comments made later in the Bible.

In the last sermon we read – “Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.” Believe it or not, this same area of the world, even 6000 years later is where the main opposition to God is and where the forces of evil are lined up against what is right and godly.

After Cain found his supposedly unfindable wife, she “conceived and bore Enoch. And he built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son – Enoch.”

The word used for “city” here is the word *Ir*. This is specifically a city with walls constructed as a defense or a barricade. The walls themselves are the city. Everything inside the walls was secondary to the protection they provided.

Cain had separated himself from anyone who could harm him and he had likewise separated himself from anything that could help him as well. In effect, he had shut himself off from the very presence of the Lord in his effort to secure himself. We can see a parallel in what occurred when the Chinese built their great wall.

The name of Cain’s son *Enoch* means “dedicated,” but it also can have the meaning of “teaching.” In the context though, it’s probable that Cain was thinking of dedication. His son was born sometime around when he built his fortress city and he named or “dedicated” the city with the same name as his son.

He did this instead of naming it after himself. The cursed name of Cain wouldn’t have been an ideal name for starting out on a new life and so he deferred to the dedication of his son and his home. After Cain and Enoch the Bible records 4 more in this line –

¹⁸To Enoch was born Irad; and Irad begot Mehujael, and Mehujael begot Methushael, and Methushael begot Lamech.

We should note that 2 of the names of Cain’s descendants are the same names as the descendants of Seth, the son who replaced Abel. These are Enoch and Lamech. But just as there are good people and bad people with the same names now, it was also the case then.

Just as there is a good Judas (or Jude) who wrote the 65th book of the Bible, there is also a corrupt and wicked Judas who was, as the Bible describes

him the “son of perdition” – a term applied only one other time – to the anti-Christ.

When we get to chapter five, we’ll read the genealogy of Adam through Seth and down to Noah. But unlike that genealogy, this one is strikingly short. It lacks any commentary and it lacks any other ancestral information. Yes, these people existed, but their lives are unimportant to the greater plan of redemption. Instead, they are souls remembered without delight.

One thing we should ask about our own selves is, “How will we be remembered?” The Bible is written and there isn’t any room for details concerning us there, but even the Old Testament tells us that our lives won’t go unrecorded. In the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi relates to us what it is to be remembered by God for a faithful life –

“Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard *them*; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name. ¹⁷“They shall be Mine,” says the LORD of hosts, “On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them As a man spares his own son who serves him.” ¹⁸ Then you shall again discern Between the righteous and the wicked, Between one who serves God And one who does not serve Him.”

While we’re pondering the life of Cain and his generations that were swept away in the flood, we should take to heart that God remembers those who meditate on His name.

The only thing else that I can give you of any substance from the names of Cain’s descendants is that two of them include the suffix “El” – Mehujael and Methushael. There was, even in the line of Cain, a remembrance or knowledge of God and it was denoted in these two names. *Mehujael* means “smitten by God” and *Methushael* means “who is of God.”

For whatever its worth, man – even man who lives apart from God – has a sense and a knowledge of Him. Eventually though, even this disappears from thought as we move toward a humanistic or idol-centered approach to life.

In modern society, we're moving in that same direction as they did, paying lip service to the name of God but denying His character and His sovereign authority.

II. The Worldly Man

The Bible contrasts groups of people in various ways. Often what is commented on as notable, such as Abraham and the patriarchs living in tents is notable for the ideals they held in that context. There is nothing inherently wrong with living in cities.

In other words, here's what it says about them from Hebrews 11 –

“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; ¹⁰ for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.”

These men were told that they would live as strangers in the land and that only later their descendants would inherit that land. In obedience to this, they continued living in tents. If they were never to possess the land and yet they hoped for a city with foundations, then it's obvious that what they hoped for was something eternal, not to be grasped in this life.

These verses are descriptive in nature. In other words they only describe what a situation was and why it was notable. They don't prescribe anything for us, such as living in tents.

Instead, they provide a moral lesson that what's important is not where we live, but how we conduct our lives. So please don't go selling your houses to buy a tent. Paul himself was a tentmaker, but that doesn't mean anything beyond the fact that he made tents.

It's important to know this and so I'm going to divert for just a minute and give a few rules for you to follow when you study your Bible. In fact, I'll give you five things to remember.

First, "does this merely describe something – is it descriptive." Second, "does this actually prescribe something – is it prescriptive." And lastly, "**what is the context?**"

If you can remember those five things, your understanding of whatever you're reading will be greatly enhanced. "But Charlie, you only gave us three things to think about. Have you been drinking too much mango juice again?"

The answer is that I gave you five things to think about and you didn't pay attention.

Is it descriptive, is it prescriptive, and what is the context? See, five things. I just didn't elaborate on the five points – descriptive, prescriptive and context, context, context. Never take a verse or a passage out of context.

Under these five main points are some great things to ask yourself as you're reading –

***How does this point to Jesus?

***How does this relate to the overall picture of redemption? And,

***If the passage isn't prescriptive or descriptive, then what is it telling me? For example, how do I view the following passage –

⁹ Two *are* better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. ¹⁰ For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him *who is* alone when he falls, For *he has* no one to help him up. ¹¹ Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm *alone*? ¹² Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.
-Ecc 4:9-12

This isn't especially descriptive and this isn't especially prescriptive. How do I term what I just read? In this passage from Ecclesiastes, it is giving me wisdom. It's a general guide for living and it has a point for me to think on, and it includes a metaphor.

There are thousands of other things to know, and studying the Bible is a lifelong adventure. In addition to wisdom, some other types of formats used in the Bible are narratives, poetry, legal renderings, historical records, genealogies, prophetic utterances, apocalyptic writings, biographical entries, personal letters, drama, and so on. We have to understand all of these and properly apply them in context or we are going to get off on useless tangents. So pay attention as you read your Bible.

One more thing though – you can't apply these interpretation methods for reading your Bible unless you... unless you... unless you actually read your Bible.

So let's go on with the line of Cain and from what read in the next verse, you'll probably understand why I just gave you the previous lesson in Bible interpretation –

¹⁹ Then Lamech took for himself two wives: the name of one *was* Adah, and the name of the second *was* Zillah.

This is the first recorded case of polygamy in the Bible and every Bible commentary that I've read denounces it as unnatural and wicked. But the Bible doesn't make any such commentary, **ever**, and therefore every thing beyond the account is the personal opinion of the scholar and is left without biblical support.

The only thing we have thus far in the Bible to set the pattern for physical relationships is what it says in chapter 2 verse 24 – “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

I cannot tell you how many times I've heard people say, the Bible says marriage is between a man and a woman... "one man and one woman." Do you know it never says that? Never.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul quotes the same verse, "the two shall become one flesh" to say that a man who lies with a prostitute is one with her. If he sleeps with fifty, they would still be "one flesh."

Again, if we were to take that he shall "be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" as prescriptive, then we would have to say that the Bible **mandates** marriage for every person. But it doesn't. In the same way, just because it says "joined to his wife" in no way negates more than one wife.

In the Law of Moses allowances are made for men with multiple wives and how they are to be handled. Throughout the Old Testament men had numerous wives. King Solomon had 700 and 300 concubines. David, the beloved of the Lord had lots of wives and, the Lord gave him many of them. In 2 Samuel 12:8, it says –

"I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if *that had been* too little, I also would have given you much more!"

And in the New Testament, Paul restricts only elders and deacons of a church to a single-wife relationship. In other words, he makes no other commentary on the matter for others which, by default, implicitly allows it.

Don't get me wrong here, I'm only making a point about how to interpret the Bible, I'm not condoning polygamy, but remember our short lesson on Bible study. Is it prescriptive, is it descriptive, and context, context, context. When taken as a whole, in the context of the Bible, what Lamech has done by taking two wives is not biblically unacceptable.

One more thing we need to do when evaluating the Bible may be the most important rule after evaluating the context, and it very well may be as important – We need to set aside our biases, likes, and dislikes, and our

presuppositions. We need to come to the text as a blank slate and determine what the Lord is trying to tell us.

In the case of Lamech, it isn't telling us at all about the unsoundness of polygamy. In fact, we have no idea who else had more than one wife at that time. The Bible is completely silent on the matter. What it does tell is that his eyes were set on pleasure and worldly things.

Anyone looking to have two wives is looking at physical pleasure more than reasonable living. I have one and that is far, far more than reasonable.

The importance of mentioning the wives is based on their names, not specifically on them both being his wives. How do we know this? Because their names are mentioned – Adah and Zillah.

Throughout the Bible, when a name is mentioned, it's because it's relevant to the story. Only one daughter of Israel is mentioned by name and yet Genesis 45 twice mentions his "daughters," meaning he had more than one. His daughter Dinah is mentioned by name because she is relevant to the story.

The importance of these two women surrounds the meaning of their names as well as who their sons are and what they did. Their sons brought about the beginnings of a stable civilization that became a complete culture, even as we know one today.

²⁰ And Adah bore Jabal. He was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock.

²¹ His brother's name was Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the harp and flute.

²² And as for Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron. And the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah.

In the birth of sons to these two women, both wives of Lamech, we have every aspect of a material civilization. We have both the pastoral life for feeding people, we have music and culture, and we have industrialization.

Our modern thinking says the Iron Age occurred after the Bronze Age. The Early Iron Age began, according to archeologists, about 1200BC, but the Bible says that man was working with iron even before the flood. I'd never even considered this until a Bible study when Janice Alley pointed it out to me.

Early man wasn't the Neolithic Neanderthal that modern science makes them out to be. Instead, they were a highly civilized society which had formed a noteworthy culture.

Adah had a son named Jabal who is the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. His brother was Jubal who was the first of those who play the harp and the flute. The other wife of Lamech was named Zillah and she had a son named Tubal-Cain who was an instructor in bronze and iron. Finally in these verses it says that Tubal-Cain had a sister named Naamah.

Out of the many people who surely came from Cain, these are the only ones given by name – and of them all, the one that may seem most puzzling is Naamah who is mentioned by name, but who isn't recorded as having done anything else; her name means *loveliness*.

What we can determine is that the people mentioned in the line of Cain after Enoch – Irad, Mehujael, and Methushael – each of these is intended to lead us to these names in these few verses – Lamech, Adah, Zillah, Jabal, Jubal, Tubal-Cain, and Naamah.

As I said, Mehujael and Methushael maintain the name of God even if it is only the unknown God, El, and not the specific LORD. After them the names go down a different path. Here are the translations: *Adah* means "pleasure;" *Zillah* means to "shadow" or "hide;" *Lamech* means "captive;" *Jabal* means "stream of water;" *Jubal* means "river;" *Tubal-Cain* means "you will be brought of Cain;" and *Naamah* means "loveliness."

These names are innocuous by themselves, but taken together, they show a worldly outlook. The name Naamah in particular will only come to full meaning when we get to Genesis 6 and God's intent to destroy the world by flood.

The Scofield reference notes say: This “...civilization may have been as splendid as that of Greece or Rome, but the divine judgment is according to the moral state, not the material.”

The line of Cain and their names reflect people in love with the world rather than God. This is the lesson that we need to take away from these verses and I can't think of anything more appropriate for us to consider in the world today.

We have music at our fingertips, every convenience we could ever desire, and our eyes can gaze on the physical attractiveness of the opposite sex in ways that weren't even imagined just a few short years ago. All of these things follow the pattern of the line of Cain.

The Jewish historian Josephus wrote about the line of Cain and tells us that they were exceedingly wicked, intolerable in war, and vehement in robberies. He says that they acted unjustly and were quick to murder.

We'll see in Chapter 6 how these things brought the world to judgment and unless things turn around soon, which doesn't seem likely, we're going to be heading into the time of tribulation prophesied throughout the Bible. The Day of the Lord is at hand.

III. The Sins of the Father

²³ Then Lamech said to his wives: “Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; Wives of Lamech, listen to my speech! For I have killed a man for wounding me, Even a young man for hurting me

²⁴ If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.”

Cain was a murderer and it's easy to see that children normally follow the pattern of life they see in their parents. There are always exceptions, but the line of Cain isn't one of them.

These two verses which make up Lamech's ode form what is considered perfect Hebrew styled poetry. It is broken up into pairs of lines and each contains parallelism, or the repetition of a thought. Nothing else is

recorded like it earlier in the Bible and therefore it is certainly the oldest poem ever recorded.

Now we can add poetry to the magnificent list of achievements of Cain's descendents. However, unlike much of the poetry recorded elsewhere in the Bible which talk about a relationship with God, internal struggles of sin, and other higher thoughts, this poem shows us the worldly outlook of Lamech.

He addresses his two wives. He demands their attention. He took the life of someone who had only wounded him. He implicitly boasts of his strength because he was older than the person he killed. And he justifies himself by claiming he would be avenged.

True to the Bible's symmetry, there's a pattern between this murder and the destruction of Babylon in Revelation 19 – "For true and righteous *are* His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants *shed* by her."

Vengeance is marked out for Cain and Lamech claims the right to it for shedding blood in the 4th chapter of the Bible. This was in the land east of Eden. And in the 4th chapter from the end of the Bible, God avenges the blood of the saints shed by Babylon, the land east of God's land, Israel. What the devil and his seed work in iniquity, God judges and triumphs over in righteousness.

IV. The Name of the LORD

In our text verse today, I read from the psalms –

Blessed be the name of the LORD From this time forth and forevermore!
From the rising of the sun to its going down The LORD's name *is* to be
praised.

Quoting this seems to have little to do with the line of Cain. However, the last verses of Chapter 4 return to the godly line of Adam through Seth and

the notion that there is still hope in the world and that the Lord is still in control of the ages –

²⁵ And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, “For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.”

After the diversion into the line of Cain, the Bible returns in this verse to the hope of the woman and for all godly people since her. Some time after the death of Abel, Eve has another son. Instead of boastfully claiming that she had acquired a man with the help of the LORD (or Jehovah), she calmly acknowledges that God (or Elohim) has appointed another son for her.

His name Seth means “appointed” and his selection was necessitated because of the death of Abel. As the Bible notes though, Seth was appointed not by Eve, but by God. God is the one who did the selection and chose the person.

She said, he is “instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.” If you see what’s going on, Eve is saying that God – the Creator, has replaced what human wickedness took away. It is a veiled reference to the work of Christ who would overrule the wickedness of the devil.

And she uses the term *zera* or “seed” for the child. Unlike Cain, she knew that the promised seed of the woman that would crush the serpent’s head would come through Seth.

Even in this early chapter of Genesis, we can see the concept of divine election being hinted at. The work is from God, the work is of God, and the work is at God’s prerogative. Man’s choices and works are left out of the equation. Seth is God’s son by election.

Seth’s selection by God and that fact that he is God’s son by election needs to be remembered because it will clear up some very difficult and misunderstood issues in Chapter 6.

²⁶ And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then *men* began to call on the name of the LORD.

Here we are at the last verse of chapter 4. A son of the godly line of the Messiah has been born and the line continues on through one of his own sons, Enosh, which means “man” in the mortal sense; someone who can die, or a miserable man. I’m telling you this in hopes that you’ll pay attention to these names as they have an amazing significance in the sermon ahead...You may be surprised.

At the time of Enosh’s birth it says that men “began to call on the name of the LORD.” This then is given in direct contrast to the preceding verses of Cain’s line which was following worldly pursuit – The name of the LORD is never mentioned in that account.

Everything about them is centered on what they did and shows their worldly outlook, but the line of Seth is contrasted. To call on the name of the LORD is to invoke His name in worship, praise, thanksgiving, and prayer.

And who is this veiled Lord, or Jehovah, of the Old Testament? Paul tells us in the book of Philippians –

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The Line of Cain

Cain wandered off and built a fortified town
He named it Enoch after his own son
After Enoch, came more men of worldly renown
They knew how to work and also how to have fun

Lamech, the seventh man down that wicked line
Had two wives to keep him happy all the time

For Mr. Lamech they bore three sons and a girl
Who became a settled culture in the eastern land
Jabal had livestock and Jubal gave music a whirl
Tubal-Cain worked in metals and his sister's looks were grand

Lamech wrote a poem to comfort his two wives
After he killed a young man for merely wounding him
This is the first poem ever written in human's lives
And it shows the wicked effects of the ungodly's sin

"If Cain is avenged sevenfold then me even more"
But what about the poor guy lying dead at your door

If this were the way things would always be
Then let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die
But God had something else going on, you see
He had another line of godly men, so don't you cry

God replaced Abel, whom Cain slew in the field
With another son, by the name of Seth
Through this son the Holy Seed would yield
The One to conquer evil and triumph over death

Again this godly line brought a son named Enosh
And more would follow until would come the King
By His precious blood all men could wash
And be cleansed from sin and every wicked thing

When men called on the name Jehovah the eternal Lord
They were only looking forward to that great King
And now we call on Jesus the bearer of the sword
The fullness of time has come and to His name we do sing

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus – the great and awesome Rock
The One who reveals to us the Father we cannot see
And now we wait as the moments tick and tock
Until He returns for His church and blissful eternity

Until that time of renewal we earnestly wait
Yes until the time we pass through heaven's pearly gate

When we behold the glory of the King
And to the praise of Jesus we shall ever sing

Hallelujah and Amen...

For next week please read Genesis 5:1-32 (The Generations of Adam)