

Two Lines

Genesis 4:16-26

Sometimes people ask strange questions in order to avoid the reality of biblical truth. So when the biblical doctrine of creation is presented, that God created Adam and Eve and everything else in the world, out of nothing, they think up questions which they hope will stump the teacher. Or trick questions they hope will discredit what is being taught. One common example is this, “Who was Cain’s wife?” Or more accurately, Where did she come from?

That is a very easy question to answer, and to answer confidently. God made Adam from the dust of the ground. From Adam’s rib, he fashioned the woman, Eve, and together they lived in sinless glory and communion with God before the fall. Then, before having any children, they fell. They sinned. And the curse of death was pronounced upon them, and through them, to all their descendants after them, beginning with their own children.

We are told of two children in Genesis 4, two boys, Cain and Abel, and as we studied last week, Cain killed his brother in an act of wicked evil. God spoke a definitive and personal curse upon Cain,

v.10 And He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground. 11 So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. 12 When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.”

Nonetheless, God in his grace allowed Cain to live, setting a mark upon him such that no one else would kill him. And so we read,

v.16-18

So, who was Cain’s wife? The answer, obviously, inescapably, is that it was his sister, an unnamed daughter of Adam and Eve. There is no avoiding the logic of that answer, and it is worthy noting that at this earliest stage of human history, the genetic aberrations accompanying incest had not yet developed and the particular moral law prohibiting incest had not yet been established. In that first generation, there would not yet have been any genetic mutations so no genetic harm could come from what would later be identified as incestuous marriages and thus prohibited by law.

So in that first generation of mankind, Cain’s marriage was with his sister, yet without any sense that such a relationship would remain as a lawful option as the generations passed. In due time, the law prohibiting incestuous marriages would come. But here in Genesis 4, there was no problem. No trick question to cause embarrassment or defensiveness. “Cain knew his wife,” words intentionally designed even after the fall to speak of the intimacy of the marital relationship with all appropriate gentleness and honor. As we told in the New Testament book of Hebrews,

Heb. 13:4 “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled.”

So Cain and his wife would have a son. His name was Enoch. And his line continued with five more generations named beginning in verse 18 of Genesis 4, Irad, Mehujael, Methushael, Lamech, then children from both of his two wives.

So what do we learn from all that? Hopefully a lot more than merely the realization that Cain married his sister. Actually, I can identify what you should note right off the bat, the main point of this text that stands out above all the details of who begot whom. The main point is that God is identifying the two lines of all mankind. One line will be the line of those who serve him and

love him, those who would be redeemed by the blood of the lamb. As noted last week, that was the line of Abel, with whose sacrifice the Lord was well pleased.

v.4 “Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, 5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering.”

Cain, of course, represented the other line. The line of the wicked, those who would rebel against the Lord. Cain and his descendants, including those identified here in chapter 4. The other line of man would be the faithful, those who would come to be called “my people,” and, in the New Testament, believers, or Christians. That was the line of Abel, but Abel was killed, so God would provide a replacement, a substitute. His line, the line of the faithful, would continue.

v.25-26

So just as Abel was faithful to bring an acceptable sacrifice of worship to the Lord his creator, so did Seth, followed by his son, Enosh. And then come the glorious words we have longed to read ever since the arrival of Satan’s temptation to Adam and Eve, words of faithfulness to God which more than implies the reality of repentance and faith.

v.26 “Then men began to call on the name of the LORD.”

So that’s what this chapter is all about, those two lines which were defined among all mankind. It is a theme that will be present until the very end of the Bible, the very end of time, when God will permanently separate these two lines. Of that day we read,

Rev. 21:22 “But I saw no temple in [the holy city], for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. 24 And the nations of those

who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. 25 Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). 26 And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. 27 But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.”

The line of Cain are those who defile, and shall not enter that eternal city. The line of Abel, carried on by Seth, are one and the same as “those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.” That’s what is before us here in our text this morning. Beginning with the line of Cain.

I. The line of Cain represents all who rebel against God.

In verses 17-24 there are a series of examples of rebellion, of wickedness. We see described for the first time a taste of human self-sufficiency, living without immediate reference to God. The New Testament would call that “the world.”

Yet some of the things mentioned seem good, and so they are. Particularly things like music and metal working. But as we’ll see, even those good things can become occasions for evil, and I put all of them into a negative context here, because that overall context is negative. This is the line of Cain, the line of those who represent non-Christians.

There is biblical ground for using the line of Cain to symbolize unbelievers. The whole book of Jude, all 25 verses, is based on identifying those.

Jude 4 “...ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul describes them as those “who long ago were marked out

for this condemnation.” He goes on to declare that “these speak evil of whatever they do not know.” As a climax, Paul writes of those wicked unbelievers,

Jude 11 “Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.”

So today, first hand, from Cain himself and the first generation of his descendants, we can see what is meant by going “the way of Cain.” It is the way of rebellion against God.

First, we read that Cain attempted to build a city.

v.17b “And he built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son—Enoch.”

Now, there is no indication that Cain was successful in completing that city. In fact, the grammar seems to indicate that he failed to finish it. The emphasis seems to be that we was “building” a city. Not that he “built” one. To be sure, this attempt to build a city, by the son of Adam and Eve, surely demonstrates that theories of evolution are totally contradictory to the Biblical account. Evolutionists tell us that man existed millions of years before any attempt was made at urbanization. The so-called stone age was one of several long periods before the civilized society inherent in a city, so we are told. But God’s word says it only took one generation.

Yet, for all it’s advancement in civilization, the city represented something else for Cain. Remember God’s curse upon him?

Gen. 4:12 “When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.”

Cain complained about that judgment, claiming it would be

more than he could bear. And with his complaint, he attempted to resist that punishment of unending homelessness. So he attempted to build a city to live in. And in this case,

A. The city is an attempt to thwart God’s prophecy of judgment.

I’m not trying to make a social statement for today, that everyone ought to abandon the city in order to live in rural communities, but in this case, Cain was trying to resist God’s decree, futile as that would be.

Cain was, by nature, insecure. He was fearful, to the point of whining, even to God. This from a man who killed his brother, a convicted killer. In his fear, he obviously felt that a city might afford him a feeling of safety and protection. Surely, in his pathetic self-pity, in his selfish and unrepentant complaint against God’s discipline, he seeks to escape the judgment put upon him. He was doomed to failure, but that was not his own sense at this point. We read of the continuation of his line in verse 18.

In the seventh generation of mankind, we meet one of the most notorious examples of those who would “go the way of Cain.” We meet Lamech. And what is Lamech known for? Polygamy.

v.19

Lamech apparently was the man who led the Cainites into open rebellion against God, beginning by defying God’s ordained principle of monogamy--life-long marriage between one woman and one man. It is a horrible example we see often repeated through OT. Yet,

B. Polygamy expresses a rejection of God’s order for marriage.

Apparently, this rebellion against God’s order was the result of

sinful lust, for presumably these were attractive women, for the name Adah means “ornament” and the name Zillah means “shade.”

You can’t defend polygamy from God’s law. It’s presence, and even its tolerance throughout the OT, doesn’t make it right. It came from the line of Cain. It is the way of the world, not the way of the Lord.

Then we read of Lamech’s sons. First Jabal, a name meaning wanderer. Jabal invented tents, enabling him to have a mobile home, a home that would be easily transported place to place. Further, he also developed formal systems for domesticating and commercially producing other animals besides Abel’s sheep. The term ‘livestock’ here includes camels and donkeys, as well as cows, goats and perhaps others.

Very possibly this means that he and his contemporaries were were in the habit of eating meat as well as fruits and herbs, thus disobeying another one of God’s original commands. Perhaps it simply means that he was producing these animals commercially for other purposes--beasts of burden, milk, skins for clothing, and similar things.

But the point is, Lamach was commanded to work the ground and produce crops, not commercialize the animal trade. Such,

C. Commercialization leads to distrust in the sufficiency of God’s provisions.

I don’t want to read anything into this that isn’t here, but surely this describes a family not content to accept their lot from the Lord! When their material aspirations conflict with divine regulations, they abandoned the Lord’s commands. When the lust for power and self-sufficient pride governs them, they distrusted what God promised to provide.

And remember, even with Cain and his line, God had promised to provide. God promised to provide protection from human vengeance and though he would have no home his harvest would be meager, he would not starve. But Lamech and his children had greater ambitions. They would rebel against God. They would not trust in the sufficiency of his provisions, but instead work for their own profit.

Then we see two things that seem to indicate good and praiseworthy accomplishments. The presence of these two things is further contradicted by evolution, a system that believes man was undeveloped and uncivilized for millions of years.

But not so, according to Scripture. Man had music and man had the ability to work with metals. First music.

v.21

Jubal is a name which means ‘sound,’ and he obviously had an ear for music and favorite aesthetic pleasures rather than the commercial achievements of his brother. He was the artist in the family, not the businessman. He appears to be an inventive genius, originating both stringed and wind musical instruments. The harp and the flute. Such instrument no doubt appealed to the sensual Cainites and likely brought Jubal a good profit, too.

Much can be said about the benefits of music, for it is the means ordained by God for the expression of worship. Music has unique ability to express the thoughts and impressions of the soul, profoundly combining rational thought with emotional feeling.

But music was also, no doubt, an attempt to reduce the sense of sorrow and punishment brought upon Lamech and all the descendants of Cain. So this great cultural achievement, one

which we can credit to the universal common grace of God working in the lives of those who have rebelled against him, still becomes a stumbling block. For this whole family seems bent on making their lives pleasant and comfortable, not focused on glorifying their creator as we will see with Seth's line. Notice at the end of verse 22 the name of Tubal-Cain's sister, Naamah. That name itself means 'pleasant.'

And so, in the context of the line of Cain, music no doubt became a means of personal pleasure not an element of worship. It is true now as it was then, that music, with its profound ability to express glory to God, can also harm the soul.

D. Music may be utilized to distract the soul from God's glory.

It's not hard to see people today who have "gone the way of Cain," when it comes to the use of music. Music is one of the greatest tools Satan uses to indoctrinate and motivate his children. Music is one of the most effective agents in bringing about a spirit of deceit, immorality, despair, and anger. Music incites people, and music produced by an evil mind brings about evil fruit. You don't have to look any farther than the evil fruit borne in the lives and in the followers of much of modern music. In the world of today, the words put to music are often filthy, if not blasphemous. And the music itself is an expression of strife and turmoil, not beauty and peace. And I don't say that just because I like one type of music more than another.

Yet, by God's common grace, the father of music came in the line of Cain, the symbol of the non-elect. Likewise, metal working.

v.22

Like music, metal working was a great cultural advancement,

capable of bringing about godly achievements by those faithful to God. But oh, the dangers. The greatest danger is probably the most obvious.

E. Metals are quickly shaped into weapons of harm.

Indeed, the context here is of military weapons, for Lamach's boastful song in verse 23 overflows with the sense of a man armed for battle, armed to kill.

And so the same metal-worker who could forge all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron to assist the workers in the field, could also forge all kinds of weapons to enable the killers to succeed in their evil schemes. And to be sure, the line of Cain is a line of murderers! Like father, like son.

The family of Tubal-Cain, successful in metal working, would have been profitable in warfare. How true it was then, and continues to be today, that technological advancement often produces moral failure--at least in those who "go the way of Cain."

Our technology today certainly hasn't produced greater righteousness. Our scientific advances haven't produced a deeper desire for holiness. In fact, too often, just the opposite is true. And some of the most wretched examples of unrighteousness and ungodliness come from those most educated or most intimately associated with technological advance and cultural achievement.

Then finally, as the clearest and most blatant example of those who rebel against God, we return to Lamach.

v.23-24

It can be said from his example, that,

F. Boastful and self-sufficient vindictiveness rests in the heart of unbelievers.

Look more closely at this boastful song, so proudly sung for his two wives. We see a pitiful and fearful man trying his best to show off for his wives, trying to make himself look good.

v.23

He's boasting of what is evil! "I've killed a man for wounding me." "I got even, he got what he deserved."

He's boasting of his own strength and ability to defend himself. In fact, he will go far beyond defending himself. Anyone who dares confront him in any way would be killed!

In the words of today, "he was all talk." Boasting this way before his wives is one thing, but what about actual circumstances? It's doubtful that he would have lived up to his own boasting. The bravado and macho image was likely just that--an image. Yet surely even his expression of vindictiveness is evil. "I'll get even," he brags to his wives. "I'll get my revenge."

Self-sufficient vindictiveness. A song of personal revenge, and glorification of the sword. Have you ever met anybody like that? I bet that you have. Notice how boastful he actually gets, to the point of being blasphemous.

v.24

The idea is this--Lamach says to himself, "If God will avenge seven times anyone who killed Cain (which he said he would), then I will pay back someone who just injures me seventy-seven times."

Lamach is boasting that he will accomplish retribution far more adequately than even God would, even avenging those who

merely hurt him. The arrogance and presumption are unbelievable. The spirit of self-sufficiency here expressing itself overleaps all bounds. This is one of the most ungodly songs ever written. Such is the achievement of a culture separated from God.

The way of the world is the way of Cain, the way of the wicked, the way of the godless. And that is the road which we must avoid at all cost. Thus Jesus declares to us,

Matt. 7:13 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."

There are two gates, and two roads. One is wide, and leads to destruction. One is narrow, and leads to life. The line of Cain travels the first road. The line of Seth travels the second.

II. THE LINE OF SETH REPRESENTS ALL WHO ARE FAITHFUL TO GOD.

Having just read and studied all of that regarding Cain and his descendants, look at the great contrast with Seth. Now there is no boasting, no arrogance, no vindictiveness, no self-pity, no self-sufficiency. Nothing. What do we have instead? Expressions of faith.

v.25

"God has appointed another seed for me..." Words evidently from a woman who had repented of her previous sin. They appear as words of faith and trust. "God has granted me another child." Her faith was rewarded. She believed God's promise, that she would be the mother of the living. She believed that God would provide another child in place of the one who was killed, Abel. She believed what God had said. And she acknowledged

that God was faithful to fulfill what he promised. Those two go together, of course.

A. The faithful believe God's promises and acknowledge his faithfulness.

The faithful believe that what God promises he will do. Sometimes, that requires great faith, since God often waits before fulfilling his promise. And from a strictly human perspective, it's a common experience to go through something in which it appears that outwardly, God has not been faithful. Things happen to us that shake our confidence in God's faithfulness.

But with Adam and Eve, demonstrated through the line of Seth, there was no such lack of confidence.

Secondly, we see from this brief description that,

B. The faithful recognize their weakness and dependence upon God.

v.25 "God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel."

God has done it. Eve wasn't looking for any human explanation. What happened to her, with the birth of Seth, was a gift from God. Eve understood that, with obvious genuine faith. Such a faith is built upon the overwhelming sense of weakness and dependence.

Those who feel themselves as self-sufficient rarely call upon the Lord nor depend upon him at all. The faithful, on the other hand, believe his promises and recognize their dependence.

Seth even names his son with a name meaning "mortal" or "frail one." The name Enosh itself bears those meanings. And then there is one more thing about the line of Seth. One more outstanding characteristic of those who are faithful to God.

C. The faithful are characterized by public worship.

Look at,

v.26b "Then men began to call on the name of the LORD."

That phrase almost certainly refers to the beginning of public worship of the Lord, probably replacing the previous practice of individually meeting with him as Cain and Abel did. No doubt it refers to what was done by the church, as a church. Corporate worship. No doubt the phrase specifically refers to prayer and even singing, the things that we do in worship.

This is so important, because it is so easy today to fail to take seriously the priority of public worship. Yet from the third generation of Adam, God's people gathered together to "call on the name of the Lord." From the third generation on, God's people met for corporate worship.

To this day, to the end of this age, we are to follow their example, for the clear NT exhortation to us is this,

Hebr. 10:24 "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."

That's what the line of Seth does! That's what we must continue to do, to come together to call on the name of the Lord, faithfully.

So do so, week by week, sabbath day by sabbath day. Morning and afternoon, in our schedule as a church, an afternoon service giving us a second opportunity each Lord's day to do this very thing. Let me urge you not to go home unnecessarily, but to stay to enjoy this great privilege demonstrated by the children of Seth, the privilege and delight of calling on the name of the Lord

in worship.

As we do just that together right now, as the descendants of Seth, let me end with the great words of invitation found in,

Ps. 100:1 “Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands! 2 Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before His presence with singing. 3 Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. 4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. 5 For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.”