

Week 6

SPIRITUAL SEEDS

Genesis 4:1-5:32

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*And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son
and called his name Seth, for she said, "God has ap-
pointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for
Cain killed him."*

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(Genesis 4:25, ESV)
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Introduction

It's not uncommon for people to begin reading the Bible and end up discouraged, saying something like, "I don't think I really understand all of this stuff. There are all these stories that don't really make sense. And geesh—what's the deal with all those genealogies?" At first glance, some of the Bible is difficult to understand, and the numerous genealogies do seem quite irrelevant. But, upon further study and exploration, we see that even these seemingly pointless parts of scripture actually are packed with significance.

That is definitely the case in Genesis 4-5. The author (Moses) is working hard to paint a picture of the world that will shape the people he is writing to. Don't forget that Moses is writing to a scared and wavering people who are leaving Egypt and working their way towards a Promised Land. Their identity as the people of God is shaky at best, and they need a firm foundation that will embolden them for the task at hand, namely, wiping out the Canaanites and entering the land God was giving them. Therefore, Moses is writing with the goal of helping them see themselves not as a defeated group of ex-slaves, but as they actually are—the people of God who will shine as a light to the nations and produce an ultimate Deliverer, the "offspring" promised in Genesis 3:15.

Keep this background in mind as you study these chapters. This is more than just a random family tree; rather, it is a detailed description of the enemy's continued battle against the offspring of the woman and a story of God's faithfulness in preserving his people and keeping his promise.

May your heart be filled with joy and thanksgiving as you consider the faithfulness of God to his word and his promises.

Investigation

Read Genesis 4:1-5:32.

1. In what ways does this passage describe humanity plunging deeper into sin?
2. Why did the Lord have regard for Abel's offering but not Cain's?
3. After being confronted about killing his brother, did Cain respond with worldly sorrow or godly sorrow? How can you tell?
4. In Genesis 3:15, God described the battle that would emerge between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman. With that in mind, what is being communicated through the genealogy of Adam and Seth in chapter 5?

Implication

1. Like Cain, many people—even Christians—are saddened by the consequences of sin, more than saddened by the way sin breaks God's heart. Why do you think that is?
2. In what ways can you see the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman in today's world? How do you see the bad getting worse and the good getting better at the same time?
3. Adam and Eve took great hope in God's promise in a future offspring. What promises of God are you currently trying to believe and hope in?
4. Are you the offspring of the serpent or of the woman? How can you tell?

Other Issues

Why was Cain's sacrifice rejected by God?

We can't explain the rejection by saying that Cain 'didn't follow the rules for sacrifices'. There were no 'rules' at the time like we have in Leviticus through Deuteronomy. And when we go to those Mosaic rules we see that both grain offerings and animal offerings were acceptable. What seems pretty clear from v.7, where God says "do what is right" — is that Cain's life and heart did not match his worship-acts. The Bible is filled with warnings about people who come to worship and give their offerings, but their hearts are far from God. (Read Isaiah 1:11ff. for a famous and vivid example.) Psalm 51:15-17 is another classic statement of the principle. An offering poured out is to be a visible token of a heart "poured out" in humble love and surrender. (In the very same way, a financial offering to the church would be of no value to God if it is not an expression of humble, loving gratitude for grace.)³⁰

So many Old Testament men had multiple wives. Does this mean that the Bible condones polygamy?

The Bible nowhere explicitly forbids polygamy, and Lamech is the first of many polygamists in the OT, including favored patriarchs and kings (e.g., 29:21–30; 1 Sm 27:3). We must not assume, however, that the absence of explicit prohibition entails divine approval. First, God's mind and will may also be expressed implicitly through story and description. Here Lamech's arrogant vengefulness is clear, showing him to be a true descendant of the murderer Cain. His practice of polygamy, then, is to be understood as typical of the wicked whose willful pride seeks to be satisfied by the multiplication of wives or other symbols of status and acts of self-indulgence (Gn 26:34; 28:9; 36:2; Dt 17:17). Second, God's mind and will can be gauged from positive statements like Gn 2:21–25, which mandates the divine pattern of monogamous marriage (see Mal 2:14, 16; Mt 19:4–6). Plural marriage is not, and never has been, biblical marriage. When polygamy occurred, it had predictably disastrous results for the family (e.g., 2 Sm 13:4–37). We may not fully understand why God did not denounce Abraham, Jacob, David and others when they corrupted true marriage in this way, but we should not take His silence as indicating His lack of interest in the matter.

Mormons cite this passage in Genesis 4 and their own scriptures (*Doctrines and Covenants*, section 132) in order to justify polygamy. Polygamy, however, came into existence only after the fall in the garden. The creation mandate directs that a man shall be joined to one wife (Gen 2:24). Other verses that teach monogamy include Pr 5:18–19; Mal 2:14–15; Mk 10:2–8; 1 Co 7:2, 10; 1 Tm 3:2, 12; and Ti 1:6. While there are examples of polygamy in the

³⁰ Keller, 57.

OT (2 Sm 5:13; 1 Kg 11:3), they did not receive God's approval. Instead God, in His mercy, issued laws to protect the many wives and children of polygamists.³¹

How could the people listed in Genesis 5 have lived for hundreds of years?

These are literal years marking unusual length of life which are accounted for by the pre-Flood environment provided by the earth being under a canopy of water, filtering out the ultraviolet rays of the sun and producing a much more moderate and healthful condition.³²

³¹ Ted Cabal, Chad Owen Brand, E. Ray Clendenen, Paul Copan, J.P. Moreland and Doug Powell, *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007). 12–13.

³² John Jr MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Word Pub., 1997, c1997). Ge 5:5.

Sermon Notes