

Early family history

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. Good to see you this morning as we continue in our journey through Genesis, this great book of beginnings, the origin stories of our world and us as a race, the human race.

Really, if we don't understand Genesis, we don't really understand anything. Okay, so this passage in front of us, what it does now, after Cain and Abel, the Cain and Abel story is the first half of chapter 4.

What it does now from the second half of chapter 4 onwards is it moves on to trace Cain's family, the line that came from Cain. But then it also, what it does in chapter 5 and the end of chapter 4, it traces another family line, which is Cain's younger brother, Seth.

And what happens in these two different family lines is really the point of this whole section of scripture. These genealogies, which we normally, when we're reading, especially at home, you know, you come to the genealogy and you go, okay, skip, get to the good part.

But actually the genealogies in scripture are there for a reason and they're really important. And they give us an understanding of what's really going on in this passage. So that's what we're going to look at this morning.

[1 : 12] We're going to look at each of these lines, Cain's line and Seth's line, and then compare them in turn to understand what's going on here. So firstly, Cain's line, chapter 4, verse 17 to 24, traces these sons of Cain with the weird names, Enoch, Erad, Mehujael, Methuselah, and Lamech.

Now, not all of Cain's descendants are mentioned because they had other children, of course. Just the ones that God wants to show us for his purposes in this passage. And then, interestingly, when it gets to Lamech's generation, I wonder if you noticed, not one, but three of his sons are mentioned.

In verse 20 to 22, Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal. It's not the most original naming convention they had back then. You know, like, what should we name our new child?

Oh, well, why don't we name the last one? Just change a few letters. But I suppose if you consider that people lived hundreds of years back then, and so after a few centuries you would have hundreds of grandchildren and great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren running around.

You need some kind of system to know which ones come from which parents. So maybe naming them similar was a good idea. But anyway, what's important is what these sons did, these sons of Lamech.

[2 : 24] So look at verse 20 to 22. Ada gave birth to Jabal. He was the father of all those who live in tents and raise livestock. His brother's name was Jubal. He was the father of all who played stringed instruments and pipes.

Zillah also had a son, Tubal-Cain, who forged all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron. Okay, so this is surprising. We're reading Cain's line. Now we know Cain was the bad guy in the last story, right?

So what we didn't expect is that his sons would turn out pretty well and actually contribute to the growth of civilization, which is what is happening here. Civilization is growing and developing.

Humans are improving themselves and subduing the earth just like God intended. The development of agriculture. The development of the arts in music. The development of technology.

Tools of bronze and iron. These things are all coming out as humans are expanding and growing. And so the surprising first point here is that mankind is developing and growing and improving just like God wanted them to.

[3 : 26] But then there's something else that happens at the same time that God didn't want. And that is summarized in Lamech, these guys' dad, and his example.

So look at verse 23. So just as civilization is growing and it seems to be going well, we read this. Lamech said to his wives, Ada and Zillah, listen to me. Wives of Lamech, hear my words.

I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me. If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech, 77 times. So Lamech, you can imagine Lamech coming home from work.

Zillah, hey love, how was work? Lamech, yeah, it was okay. Killed someone. That's just, yeah, he's quite proud of it. He's boasting about it. And he boasts not only about how he killed someone for just affronting him, but he boasts about how much worse than Cain he is.

And how he thinks that God is protecting him even more than Cain, because he can get away with so much more. So Lamech's little poem here to his wives is a proud boast of how evil he is, and how much more evil than his great-great-grandfather Cain.

[4 : 40] And it makes the point, this poem is here because it makes the point, that sin has developed worse than it ever was with Cain. And you see, where Cain succumbed to sin, Lamech now exalts in sin.

And so what we discover, just from reading these verses in Cain's line, is that while mankind was advancing and expanding, so was sin advancing and expanding at the same time and at the same rate.

It was as if sin was using humanity's good growth as a vehicle to develop in worse and more sophisticated ways, like a virus, you know, one of those killer mutating viruses that you get in medicine.

Well, sin is like that, it seems. We see in Cain's line it's mutating and growing, personified in Lamech, and it's attaching itself to the growth of civilization and mankind as its host.

And so basically what's happening here foreshadows the pattern of the rest of human history. If you're a student of history, ever since these times to today, you'll notice that the same pattern repeats itself.

[5 : 49] Because while God designed us and wants us to be, as humans, wants us to be inventors and builders and discover things and advance, sin in us also means that we will inevitably use those skills that God intended for the good, and we will use them to advance, you know, Lamech-like destruction at the same time.

Doesn't history show us that? So take chemistry, for example, as one of the things that God has given us for our good. Our advances of chemistry have meant that we can have wonderful new medicines to heal us.

But those same advances in chemistry have enabled us to invent gunpowder and bombs and chemical warfare. Or take nuclear physics, for example.

Understanding of how atoms work has allowed us to build sustainable sources of energy in nuclear power stations. But that same understanding has allowed us to create weapons that have wiped out entire cities.

So the point is, do you see that this pattern in Genesis 4 is just repeating itself over and over again? While we grow as the human race, ever since Cain, sin grows and develops and mutates as well.

[7 : 11] Like a virus. Or more accurately, actually, like a cancer. One cell gets cancerous, and then this is how cancer works in the body. And you may know people who have died of cancer or who are struggling with cancer now.

And it's a terrible disease. Because what it does is it uses the good mechanism of cellular growth in the body. So healthy cells are supposed to grow and multiply.

But it uses that good mechanism to actually be a bad mechanism that ends up killing us. That's what cancer uses to spread.

The thing that was meant for the good. And so sin is the same in the history of humanity. It uses the good stuff about us to make things worse. And then this all comes to a head later on in the story in chapter 6.

So while we get this intermission of Seth's line, which we'll get to later. But then at the end, while sin has been continuing to multiply and latch on to human growth and development, this is the situation that it arrives at in chapter 6.

[8 : 21] And things are totally out of control by now. Have a look. When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful and they married.

Literally, they took any of them they chose. And verse 4, the Nephilim were on the earth in those days. And also afterwards, when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them, they were the heroes of old men of Renav.

Okay, so these sons of God, let's just talk about them quick. There are two main views as to who these sons of God refer to. Who married women and apparently spawned giants.

I'm not joking. That's what Nephilim means in the Hebrew. Fearsome giants. And we saw Goliath as an example that these people, those kind of people existed back in Bible times.

But back then, these Nephilim were really bad, scary guys. And so, who were the sons of God? Well, the first view is that they were great kings.

[9 : 31] Kings of city-states who just started taking whatever women they wanted to add to their harem. Why they had giant children is unknown. Possibly, some say, demonic intervention was in play there.

We don't know for sure. The second view of who these sons of God were that actually makes more sense but is even weirder is that they were beings from the heavenly realms.

Fallen angels who had taken on human form, who basically crossed the boundary between heaven and earth and started living with and breeding with humans.

And this understanding is the one that I lean towards because it's also backed up by Peter in the reading that we read earlier to Peter when he talks about angels who sinned in the time before the flood that God punished.

And as I say, we can talk about this more in our growth groups. But we don't need to get caught up in exactly who the sons of God were because the point is the same. The point is that these sons of God, whoever they were, were transgressing what God had intended.

[10 : 36] They were breaking boundaries that were placed there by God. And the way it's written tells us that they were actually doing the very same thing Eve did in Eden. Remember when she saw with her eyes and she took the fruit that she wasn't supposed to?

The same words are used here. They saw, these sons of God saw the woman were beautiful and they took the woman they weren't supposed to take. So the same thing is happening.

They were breaking a barrier that God had placed. And the result of this breaking of this barrier, this boundary that God had placed was an intensification of sin, a race of terrifying bullies, which was just going to make the sin problem even worse.

So you can imagine how bad society is at this time. You've got a bunch of giants with Cain's attitude running around with two-ball Cain's iron and bronze weapons that he had made.

It's not a good situation to be in. And so this is really just a horrific state of the world. And what God does is he calls time out. Look at verse 5.

[11 : 48] When God saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time, the Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth and his heart was deeply troubled.

So the Lord said, I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created. That is pretty scary, isn't it? When God changes his attitude towards the humans.

And he said, nope, I'm going to wipe them out. And so humanity had got out of control and God decides to clean house. Dylan and I, in fact, on Tuesday were working on this text and saying that what's going on here is kind of like a dad coming home after being away for the weekend, having left his teenage kids in charge of the house to find his house trashed.

Right? I don't know if you've ever witnessed a situation like that or been in a situation like that. Maybe parents go away for the weekend and they leave their teenagers at home and entrust them with the care of the house.

And the teenagers, as the parents are going, the teenagers ask, mom and dad, do you mind if we have one or two friends over for the weekend just to chill, play some games, board games, you know?

[13 : 08] Sounds all very innocent. The parents say, yeah, that's fine. But then, of course, word gets out that there's no parents at home and there's a party and all kinds of people start rocking up uninvited, including the whole first rugby team who end up getting drunk and start some passing practice with mom's collection of rare vases.

And then they throw the bribe to the swimming pool and they set the lounge on fire. Well, that's kind of what's going on in Genesis 6 here. God leaves the world in the care of humans, but soon it gets out of control.

Word gets out that it's open season. Even the sons of God jump into the chaos, Nephilim running around causing havoc. But then, in the middle of the party, when things are just totally wild, what no one expects is that dad arrives home and he's not in a good mood.

The party is about to have a rude awakening. Now, we're going to see just what kind of rude awakening it has next week. But for now, that's the picture we have in this passage.

Humanity out of control, but God is about to clean house. And it's a very scary situation. But in many respects, it's the world we live in.

[14 : 25] The world we live in is just a repeat of what happened then. The party has again got out of control, hasn't it? God's boundaries have again been crossed.

The sexual liberation movement and the undoing of God's gender construct is just the most recent of many examples of the wild party that humanity is enjoying without any repercussions, seemingly.

Pride parades. Look how we've broken through God's boundaries. Look how proud we are. Without any repercussions. It sounds a lot like Lamech, doesn't it?

Sin has become ever more powerful in our world. Look at, I mean, you look around. There's a lot of stuff we don't even want to think about. Human trafficking. Unborn trafficking.

Genocide. The drug trade. Mass shootings. Harvesting parts of unborn babies. This world is messed up, just like it was in Genesis. Once again, out of control.

[15 : 28] And it's easy for us to despair when we look around at our world and we see the mess it's in. Because let's be honest, it's in a mess. We've got to come to terms with that. Our world is in a mess.

We try to hide ourselves from the real depravity and try to pretend like everything's okay. But it's not. Our world is in a mess. And it's easy to despair when you hear of some horrible crime that has happened close to home or someone that you know.

You despair, don't you? You want to move to Australia. But then Australia is no better. Because depravity is there too. All over. Or you despair when you hear of some law that has been passed in the courts that allows even more depravity and you know it's only going to get worse.

And it's depressing, isn't it? In the middle of the wild party that's gone wrong around us, it's easy to give up hope as Christians.

And it's then, when we hear of those things and we feel that despair, that we've got to remember Dad's coming home. And he's going to clean house again.

[16 : 36] See, it's not like God did what he did in Genesis and now he's changed his ways. He's the same God. And he does the same things. Paul tells us, he told all the fancy Athenian philosophers, in fact, in Acts 17, God has set a day when he will judge the world with justice.

Have you got a calendar up on your fridge at home? Who's got a calendar up in their kitchen at home? And you circle dates of things that are coming up, birthdays or parties that you've been invited to or whatever it is.

You've got these big red circles so you don't forget. And those things are set on your calendar. God, essentially, you can consider that he's got a calendar and he's got a day circled when he's coming back to clean house.

And it's set in his calendar. And he's coming. And nothing's going to stop that. God has set a day when he will judge the world with justice. And it is coming.

And what this part of Scripture is here to show us is, yes, sin gets worse and worse and it gets out of control, but God sees it all and he won't let it carry on forever.

[17 : 49] He never has. And he won't. The question, of course, is, well, why hasn't he... I mean, surely this is bad enough? Why hasn't he come in and done something about it in our age?

Well, the question is because we're part of the party. We want God to come and wipe away the party and stop the party, but we are actually right in the middle of it. Each one of us.

None of us are innocent. We've all joined into sin in some form or another. As Alan read from Romans, there is no one righteous, not even one.

And so we'd all be under that judgment. And the reason that God has delayed is that his children are right in the middle of the wild party. And so before he brings what is coming, he wants to take his children out of danger first.

Because what this passage also teaches us is that God has a plan to save and restore his world and to show grace upon his children. He wants to save his children from what they've been caught up in.

[18 : 53] He wants to save you from what you've been caught up in, which is incidentally a note upon which this passage ends. Did you notice how it ended? The passage that was read for us?

Verse 8. After all this chaos and God saying, I'm going to wipe them away and everything's looking terrible, there's this ray of hope. But Noah found favor.

Literally, that word is grace. Undeserved favor in the eyes of the Lord. And then if you were observant, you will have seen that there are hints of this grace that God is wanting to show his children throughout this passage, even right in the middle of all this chaos.

because Cain's line is not the only line that is mentioned. We also learn about Seth's line. And these two lines, as I said, are deliberately compared and contrasted.

Both lines have similarities, but they also have important differences. So the first thing to notice in Seth's line is the story doesn't look too good because these people are living a very long time and they're doing a lot of stuff and they're having a lot of children, but they still die.

[20 : 09] And that's the point that is made in this passage over and over again, the repetition of the phrase, and he died. He lived this long, he had this many children, he did these things, and he died.

He lived this long, and he died. They all died. The first problem that we come across in Seth's line, which seems to be the only hope we have in this chaotic world, the first problem is no matter how different Seth's line is from Cain's, how good people may or may not be, everybody just ends up dead.

So what's the point? It looks like sin has already won. Except not everyone dies, do they? We have an exception in verse 24.

Strange and unexpected. Enoch walked faithfully with God, then he was no more, because God took him away. What?

You're just reading, he lived so many years and he died. He lived so many years and he died. He lived so many years and he died. And then God took Enoch away, and you go, whoa, where did that come from?

[21 : 19] Now we're not told the circumstances, or how it happened, or why it happened, but Enoch is one of the few biblical characters that never tasted death. And the point of inserting that into this passage is to show us that it is still, despite all the chaos of this world, it is still possible for the results of the fall to be undone.

The result of the fall was to be cut off from the tree of life, and therefore to have to taste death. But it is possible, God is giving us a hint here in Seth's line, that it is possible for the results of the fall to be reversed.

It's a glimmer of hope that death is not inevitable, despite the fallenness of our world. And that's one glimmer of hope. There's another one, I wonder if you spotted it, in verse 29.

Lamech. It's funny, isn't it? There's two Lamechs. There's one in Seth's line, one in Cain's line. They're two different people. And they're both the only ones who say little poems. And that's deliberate.

Because the second Lamech's poem, in verse 29, is this. Lamech named his son Noah, and said, He will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands, that our hands caused by the ground the Lord has cursed.

[22 : 37] So it's just a few lines said by Noah's dad. But it's another glimmer of hope that God intends to undo the results of the curse.

in the future, somehow. We don't know how yet. This is only Genesis chapter 5. That's what the rest of the Bible is there to show us, how God fulfills His plan to take His children out of the wild, chaotic party that's doomed, and to undo the results of the fall.

But in other words, what's happening is that in the same section of Scripture that we read about the mess human civilization gets itself into, we also are given little reasons to hope that God has a plan to fix it no matter how bad things get.

And that's the encouragement we need to take from this passage this morning. And it is exactly what the Apostle Peter concludes in light of Jesus coming to earth. And when he's referring to all the stuff that happened in Genesis, he says this in 2 Peter 2 from verse 4.

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment. If He did not spare the ancient world when He brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others.

[23 : 59] If He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly. See, these are things that we read later in Genesis.

It just keeps on happening. Sin keeps on getting out of control and God brings judgment again. And Peter concludes from verse 7, And if He rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless.

And then down to verse 9, If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and how to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment.

This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh and despise authority. That's just like what was happening before the flood, what Peter says here.

And of course, again, after the flood, up until today, people following the desires of the flesh, being driven by fleshly impulses, and people ignoring God's boundaries, despising authority.

[25 : 02] It's exactly what's happening in the world today. And Peter's saying, all these examples in Scripture and the way that God has always, every time, worked, show us that while sin can get really bad, God always brings judgment on evil eventually, and He always preserves and saves His children in the middle of it, out of it, out of the chaos and out of the judgment.

And so that is what we've got to take home from this passage when we walk out there and we go into a week and we're exposed to this depraved world again. That God sees it and He's got a plan to undo and reverse all of it through the line that He has chosen, the line of Seth.

Now, that's what we learn in Genesis 5. But then if you carry on in the story and you trace Seth's line and you see, now it goes, sort of, Seth's line grows and then it gets shrunk and then it grows some more and then it gets shrunk and then you follow, if you follow that line, write down the biblical story, you eventually come to one of Seth's descendants, Jesus Christ.

The King that God has anointed to bring judgment on the wild party of sin in this world. But before He does, Jesus came the first time to rescue God's children out of it through His death on the cross for them to take their sins, to take God's punishment for their sins, to take them out of the penalty and the power of sin, to give them His Spirit, to enable them to step out of sin's clutches and to get out of the party before it's too late.

So that we can stand in the judgment when it comes. That's why Jesus came. Jesus has come to take you out of the party, to sanctify you and to make you holy, to rescue you from sin so that you can escape what's coming.

[27 : 14] And so, if that is what this passage is about, then in closing, what does it mean for us? Well, firstly, for those who have trusted in Christ, for those who are under Christ's rule, I want you to take heart, take encouragement from this passage because you might despair when you look around at this world, at the growing pride and the strength of sin, seemingly without any repercussions, without anything to curb it.

It is just getting worse and worse and the results of the fallen world and the curse might get you down. But take heart because know that God has a plan to undo all of that and he has been hinting throughout Genesis and throughout Scripture and he has fulfilled that plan in Christ and he is going to undo the curse.

And so, take heart that he sees and he knows and he's busy doing something about it right now through his people, the church, through salvation, through rescuing people out of the party and that is what we are to be involved in until the day set in God's calendar when Christ returns.

But then, I also have something to say for those who have not trusted in Christ yet, for those who have not come under his rule, for those who are enjoying the freedom, so called, that this world gives to you to sin as you want without consequence like Lamech first enjoyed, for those who are actually enjoying the wild party in the house that doesn't belong to you.

Don't get too confident because the owner is coming back and he's going to clean house and you need to make sure you're on his side when he does. And so, take Jesus' own words to heart.

[29 : 03] Listen to what Jesus says. Concerning that day and hour no one knows, for as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and given in marriage until the day when Noah entered the ark and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Therefore, you also must be ready for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for this assurance that you are going to deal with all of the sin and the depravity of our age in this world as you have always done.

We thank you also for your grace which you showed in Seth's line that you want to bring your children out of it, that you want to rescue your children and thank you for sending the Lord Jesus Christ to die on the cross for our sins and then to be raised for our justification so that we can know that despite death, life is possible, that you have made a way to undo the results of the curse on us through Jesus Christ.

Help us, Lord, to take that seriously, to respond to it rightly. Help us, Lord, to look forward to the day when Jesus returns. But I also pray for those who are not on the right side of you who have not submitted to the rule of Christ, that you would help them to take this as a warning and to respond to Christ before it's too late.

[30 : 47] Amen.