

The Decline of God's Design for the Family (Family Foundations, Part 8 – Gen. 4:15-26)

Last week we talked a little about the most famous wife in Scripture whose name we don't know: Cain's wife. Ken Ham, who heads up the Answers in Genesis ministry has said he ends up spending more time answering questions about Cain's wife than he gets to talk about his own wife! Far more important subjects often get missed.

Maybe you've heard the story told by Carl F. H. Henry, one of the more famous Christian theologians and thinkers of the 20th century. He speaks of a time doing outdoor preaching / evangelism

Henry: "In one of my last street meetings, during my college years, a heckler kept shouting, 'Where did Cain get his wife?'

"When I could ignore the disturber no longer. I replied, 'When I get to heaven, I'll ask him!'

"'Suppose he isn't in heaven?' parried the disrupter.

"I retorted. 'Then you can ask him!'"¹

I am not recommending you follow that example necessarily in that way, but the point we saw is that people get hung up sometimes on various questions and they miss the far more important and bigger subjects in this chapter.

One of the points we didn't have time to develop last week I want to pick up: notice how merciful God is to murderous Cain. In v. 13-14 Cain who deserved to die complains against God that He is unjust in His judgment (Cain ironically ignores his cold-blooded callous crime to his blood-brother who died *undeservedly unjustly*)

¹⁵ So the LORD said to [Cain], "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain [NKJV "set a mark on Cain"], so that no one finding him would slay him.

Cain is as far as we can tell still utterly unrepentant for his hatred or his homicide, deserving of Divine judgment and execution, but instead he receives Divine protection. God could have put Cain to death on the spot or at least allowed Abel's blood relatives to do the job, but instead God makes sure no one will do to Cain what he did to his brother. It is obvious and clear to me that this is amazing undeserved mercy! Yet many writers gloss over this clear and major point and argue about a much more minor question that's not as clear – what the mark on Cain was in v. 15 (suggestions include a tattoo, a bright-colored coat, a dog, a horn on his forehead, etc.).

Major Point #1: Gods Grace is Available Despite our Greatest Sins

In the text of Genesis 4, one of the great lessons is that the Lord's grace is still there for Cain despite his greatest sins. 2 weeks ago I ended with another story of two sons told by our Lord: A father of two sons, one who was a prodigal sinner but came back humbly repentant, the other son resentful and proud. It illustrates God's love which also was available to Cain if he would have repented and come humbly to the Father for mercy. The original readers of the Torah, Genesis-Deuteronomy, would have been well-familiar with another story of false worship, another story of two sons.

Leviticus 10:1-3 (NASB95) ¹ Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. ² And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. ³ Then Moses said to Aaron, "It is what the LORD spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored.'" So Aaron, therefore, kept silent.

God instantly consumed these men for worshipping in a way not commanded (again many argue much about exact nature of man's "strange fire" when the focus should be on God's fire consuming sinners). So in reading Gen 4, when God didn't consume **Cain** for his displeasing offering, it's amazing grace! Perhaps that should shock us more than Cain killing Abel. What should shock us more than Cain killing is that Cain *was not killed by God Himself for his false worship*, for Cain's response and rejection of God's grace, for Cain's premeditated first-degree murder of his own brother! Really anytime we don't die upon our sin is truly amazing grace by God who alone has the sovereign right to delay justice if and when He so pleases.

And God who in Genesis 9 makes clear that murder in particular deserves the death penalty, and as Jesus made clear, hatred in our heart is as serious as murder, when Cain does both in this chapter, God is amazingly gracious! In Gen. 3 Adam and Eve deserved to die instantly when they ate the forbidden fruit, but God was amazingly gracious to them. And God is amazingly gracious to us.

We don't deserve it. We can't presume upon it or assume it will always be there. Genesis 6 shows when God's gracious patience on humanity came to an end and He destroyed the whole world except for Noah's family in the ark. And God's longsuffering patience will come to an end again, as 2 Peter 3 says, when he destroys the entire universe in the future, which that chapter compares to Genesis 6.

R. C. Sproul writes: 'It was the God who destroyed the world by a flood who pours the waters of His grace out to us ... [Yet] the most brutal act of divine vengeance ever recorded in Scripture ... is not found in the Old Testament but in the New Testament. The most violent expression of God's wrath and justice is seen in the cross. If ever a person had room to complain of injustice it was [not Cain in Genesis 4 but] Jesus. He was the only innocent man ever to be punished by God. If we stagger at the wrath of God, let us stagger at the cross. Here is where our astonishment should be focused. If we have cause for moral outrage, let it be directed at Golgotha.'²

It would be fair, it would be just, for God to destroy the entire world and save none – that would be justice. But amazingly we are all alive here this evening! *Is that fair? No. Is it grace? Yes!!*

Hebrews 12 gives a God-inspired application to the story of Cain and Abel. It speaks of the death of "righteous Abel" as Jesus called him, the first relatively innocent man slain by his unrepentant hateful brother who 1 John 3 says killed him ultimately because Abel was righteous and Cain was evil. Heb. 12 compares that with the death of the only truly innocent Man ever, also put to death wrongly by His unrepentant brethren who hate Jesus for being righteous. Christ's blood speaks, too, but not from the ground or the grave, which He rose from; Jesus Mediates from heaven itself:

Hebrews 12:24 (NASB95) ²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to **the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than *the blood of Abel***.

Abel's blood rightly called out for vengeance and punishment. But the blood of Jesus shed for sinners shouts forgiveness to all who come humbly to Christ. Remember the man on the cross next to Jesus receiving the due penalty for his crime, death, all the while insulting the Lord. Luke 23 says he later repented and said "we're getting what we deserve, not Him. Lord, please remember me."

In Genesis 4 we see the original criminal in Genesis leaves paradise and the presence of the Lord because of unrepentant sin, but the criminal on the cross is promised Paradise in the presence of the Lord. And all sinners like him who trust in the cross work of Christ alone and plead for His grace can receive the grace of Jesus if we repent, grace that is greater than all our sin.

But Cain didn't come in repentance. He went away:

¹⁶ Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Point #2: Common Grace Extends Even to the Most Ungodly

In Genesis 2, 3, and 4, we see the covenant name *LORD* 30x. It appears roughly every other verse or so except for in two notable places:

Genesis 3:2-7 (Satan and Eve's conversation)

Genesis 4:17-24 (Cain's history after leaving the LORD)

Notice "LORD" in chapter 4, verse 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 13, 15 (2x), 16

If you add in pronouns referring to the LORD, my English translation has 20 references to the LORD in the other 18 verses of this chapter, but none in verses 17-24. The life and line of Cain from here on out is a godless story of the ungodly who as Jude 11 says went "the way of Cain." Cain was the one who could first sing "I did it my way." Cain goes his own way away from the Lord, not repentant, not remorseful, not bowing before God's sovereignty or even thanking His mercy. He is his own man. He is Captain Cain, and he was also the first to embody the poem lines:

It matters not ... how charged with punishments the scroll

I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul

Cain and his descendants are the perpetual epitome of the ungodly, even in NT writings, but I want you to notice that God's common grace extends even to them doing their own thing apart from God.

¹⁷ Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son. ¹⁸ Now to Enoch was born Irad, and Irad became the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael became the father of Methushael, and Methushael became the father of Lamech. ¹⁹ Lamech took to himself two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah. ²⁰ Adah gave birth to 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 lyre and pipe. ²² As for Zillah, she also gave birth to Tubal-cain, the forger of all implements of bronze and iron; and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

God's common grace is defined as His grace that is common to everyone, to all humanity despite their sinfulness and rebellion. It is seen in creation, as Jesus said, even the sun rising and the rain falling on both just and unjust people. God's common grace is seen in the conscience of man, in God restraining evil from its fullest measure by instituting government in society and through circumstances. Common grace is seen in physical blessings experienced by many of the ungodly. In OT times, God allowed nations and peoples besides His elect nation Israel to prosper and advance in many ways (Egyptians, Romans, Greeks made great progress in ways that still benefit the world to this day).

Outside of God's elect people in OT times and in church history man has seen and continues to see outworking of God's common grace, which is different than His special grace, His saving grace, His sovereign grace reserved for those God has initiated a covenant salvation relationship with. God's common grace is the true source of human advancements that come through the unredeemed. For example, medical and other technological advancements that improve the lives of both the redeemed and unredeemed, and all things that benefit common man are initiated by common grace.

God's common grace is what we see in verse 17. Cain is able to enjoy the blessings of family, and the joy of children, even one son in particular who was successful in building the first city (that word can refer to any permanent settlement or civilization). God is by nature gracious from the beginning to the end of the Bible even though He is very displeased with sin and will deal with sin.

God's common grace allows early man to build cities and develop civilization, but man accomplishes achievements in man's own name and for his own glory rather than acknowledging God as Romans 1 says (notice who the city is named after and dedicated to in v. 17b, certainly no recognition of God or giving glory to God). Psalm 127 says "Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it" – we'll see that theme reiterated in another godless building project later in Genesis at a place called Babel.

We'll come back to the family tree in v. 18-19, but for now look also at v. 20. It says Jabal was the father of those who live in tents and domesticate livestock. Abel had already been a shepherd, but this term refers to more sophisticated raising of animals for use, which developed to include human control of breeding, food supply, and territory. The phrase "father of" in these verses and context refers to the pioneer or founder of, like we use in the sciences to speak of "the father of modern pharmacology," etc. In this passage we have the father or founder of the science of agriculture, and the pioneers of culture even. Verse 21 has the first musician, the pioneer of instrumental musicology. In v. 22 we meet Tubal-cain who pioneered the metal industries.

The earliest man was not some caveman hominid or uneducated Neanderthal if we believe the Bible – the earliest families quickly became civilized and socialized and urbanized, and even galvanized by their metallurgy in verse 20 (both bronze and iron). Creationist Paul Taylor writes:

'Along with early urbanization, we have an early industrial revolution. Three sons of Lamech start ... important activities: husbandry, livestock, instrumental music, and ironwork. Notice there is no difference between bronze and ironwork. There is no bronze age followed by an iron age. Tubal-Cain was responsible for starting work in all metals.'³

Henry Morris adds:

‘It is interesting that one of the identifying marks which evolutionary anthropologists use to denote the emergence of a “stone age” culture into a civilized society is the development of urbanization. According to the Bible, the first such “city” (no doubt small and simple to begin with) is the city built by Cain, in the very first generation after Adam. No long, million-year development here!’ ... it is significant to note that the elements which modern evolutionary archaeologists and anthropologists identify as the attributes of the emergence of evolving men from the stone age into true civilization – namely, urbanization, agriculture, animal domestication, and metallurgy – all were accomplished by the early descendents of Adam and did not take hundreds of thousands of years.’⁴

These few verses show the fallacy and false assumptions of most secular reconstructions of ancient history (none of which take a worldwide flood into account or take the Bible’s history seriously).

Stone age (100,000 B.C. – 4000 B.C.)

Chalcolithic Age (4000 B.C. – 3200 B.C.)

Bronze Age (3200 B.C. – 1200 B.C.)

Iron Age (1200 B.C. – 330 B.C.)

Some writers suggest certain types of iron or iron work developed later than others, but the Bible certainly seems to show more advancement than public school textbooks will portray of history.

The OT also destroys evolutionary notions that earliest men were half-man brutes who could only grunt animal-like noises. Original man in Genesis is actually quite intelligent, and in some ways much more so than modern man, who can’t come close to Adam in the garden. In some cases, modern man still can’t figure out some of the amazing things ancient man did thousands of years ago.

Also, mankind did not evolve in sexual relationships from a half-animal mating-sort-of-way of pairing-up to an eventual invention of marriage as a convention after mankind evolved to the level of wanting to have a deeper 1-on-1 relationship than animals have. No, no - mankind did not evolve into monogamy – they *deevolved from monogamy!*

Point #3: Sinners Who Don’t Acknowledge Grace Will Degenerate Further

I believe in total depravity but I also believe God’s common grace prevents man’s sin from its fullest expression by the restraining influences God has put in place. And there is a progression that I think Romans 1 refers to, as society turns farther away from God, a time comes when God pulls back some of the common grace. In the language of Romans 1 he “gives them over” to more deviant behavior that goes from bad to worse. It’s devil-ution not evolution

In the midst of mankind ascending in its discoveries and accomplishments and advancements, we see him descending morally. Cain and his wife left God’s presence in verse 17, but by verse 19, we see Lamech and his wives (note the plural) have left God’s design as given to their great great great grandparents. Even in the immediate family and parents who produced 3 sons who brought so much to society in the next couple verses, we’ll see civilization’s glorious rise and grim demise at the same time.

The declining of marriage and family values is not a new thing. In Bible times, marriage had quickly degenerated from God's standard of one man, one woman, one flesh, in a fulfilling lifelong relationship. I think it's easy to see that the family has been under attack since day one.

Genesis 2:24 -> God's plan for marriage

Genesis 3 -> Satan incites first sin, role reversal

Genesis 4 -> Polygamy

Genesis 16 -> Sex and conceiving children outside of God's plan

Genesis 16:1-2 (NIV) ¹ Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; ² so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her." Abram agreed to what Sarai said.

Genesis 19 -> homosexuality and incest

⁴ Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. ⁵ They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them." ...

³⁰ Lot and his two daughters left Zoar and settled in the mountains, for he was afraid to stay in Zoar. He and his two daughters lived in a cave. ³¹ One day the older daughter said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is no man around here to lie with us, as is the custom all over the earth. ³² Let's get our father to drink wine and then lie with him and preserve our family line through our father." ³³ That night they got their father to drink wine, and the older daughter went in and lay with him. He was not aware of it when she lay down or when she got up.

Genesis 34 -> fornication and rape

Genesis 38 -> prostitution and incest all in one

The downward spiral, degradation, and degeneration continues. Since Satan came down to this planet, he has always been attacking the institution of the family and you see how successful he was in the history of even God's chosen people and their constant violation of God's design for marriage.

Divorce was not uncommon, even among devout Jews, and the causes for its justification were a matter of lively rabbinic debate during NT times. The conservative rabbi scholar Shammai believed Deuteronomy 24 only allowed divorce for adultery, and that adultery *required* divorce (in theocratic Israel, an adulterer got the death penalty in OT law). The more liberal rabbi Hillel and the followers of his school of thought interpreted Deuteronomy 24's reference to indecency as a broad umbrella for anything that displeased a man which virtually gave him the ability to legally divorce for just about any reason in their culture (ex: spinning in the street, talking with a stranger, a spoiled dinner, finding another woman who was more attractive, etc.).

Jesus corrects them by saying Moses didn't *prescribe* divorce, he was *protecting* women wrongly divorced and *prohibiting* defiling remarriages. Jesus said Moses was *permitting* or a better word would be *regulating* divorce that only existed because of the hardness of hearts. Deut. 24 can be interpreted as saying "you can't divorce your wife for some indecent or displeasing thing, marry someone else, and then have your first wife back later if or when you want, when you have already defiled the one flesh union God put together." Beyond that, Jesus goes back to Genesis, before the time of Moses and the sin of Israel, to affirm and reaffirm God's original and continual design for man and woman in the covenant of marriage to be one flesh for one lifetime. That's still the ideal. We are not to put asunder what God joins together.

The fact that divorce took place in Bible times does not mean God likes it, and the same is true of polygamy and other departures.

Genesis does not have God speak audibly from heaven about every sin, but God does speak clearly – most commonly Genesis does so through God’s inspiration by recording the consequences of those who departed from God’s design for marriage and the family.

- Read Genesis and notice all the problems men had who had more than one wife.
- Notice the problems and conflicts that came when Sarah had Abraham conceive a child with Hagar instead of Sarah, even resulting conflicts that still show up on the news to this day with the descendants of Ishmael vs. the descendants of Isaac.
- Notice in Genesis the problems brought into the family when parents show favoritism and pit family members against each other.
- Notice the long-term problems as a result of deception, etc.

God *shows* the destructive consequences of sin (cf. 2:24) far more often than He *states* them in the Old Testament. Polygamy is one such form of sin. In Genesis 4, Lamech not only has multiple wives, but a multitude of sins, multiple manifestations of depravity

¹⁹ **Lamech took to himself two wives:** the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah ...

This is the first recorded bigamist, the first guy to take two wives. It’s hard to imagine living in a house with more than one spouse, but here is polygamy early in OT history. Lamech took to himself two wives, it says, Adah and Zillah. He had wives from A to Z!

Their names mean something like pretty and sweet sounding. They weren’t named virtuous and godly. The fact that this ungodly man married two wives should get more of our attention than Cain’s wife; the text draws much more attention to ungodly Lamech and the degeneration of God’s good design for marriage and life.

²³ Lamech said to his wives, “Adah and Zillah, Listen to my voice, You wives of Lamech, Give heed to my speech, For I have killed a man for wounding me; And a boy for striking me; ²⁴ If Cain is avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.”

In contrast to Lamech’s avenging seventy-sevenfold, Jesus said we are to forgive 70 x 7.

Lamech is the first gangster. There’s really nothing new under the sun, is there? The arrogance you see by professional athletes and others in our culture is not unique to our times. The way men talk down to and degrade women is not unique to any one culture. The way MTV rappers brag about violence and their exploits with more than one woman is just another warmed over Lamech today. The text is not only barbaric, it’s actually poetic in the Hebrew, and has been called a song. There is parallelism and even unusually prominent rhyme. Listen as I read it for the many words ending in the sound *î*, (my, me) in this song in the Hebrew

Shema-an kohl-ee, nush-ee

Lemekh ha-uhz-na imrah-tee

Hah-rag-tee liph-tuh-ee

Wu-ye-lekh lith-buh-rah-tee [each “ee” sound is “I / me”]

How Lamech might have said it today?

Listen to me you wives of me

Listen to me speech and the voice of me

I kill any man who tries to toy with me

You hit me, you're dead, little boy to me

(Add a little beat to it, and he could sell some serious albums today!)

The me-me-me generation is not new under the sun. Not everyone sings out loud “It’s all about me” or “How great I art” but many do so in their heart. The sin of pride may have unique flavors today but it goes all the way back to Lucifer’s “I – I – I” desires in Isaiah 14.

Isaiah 14:12-15 (NKJV) ¹²“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *How* you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! ¹³ For you have said in your heart: ‘**I will** ascend into heaven, **I will** exalt my throne above the stars of God; **I will** also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; ¹⁴ **I will** ascend above the heights of the clouds, **I will** be like the Most High.’ ¹⁵ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.

All spiritual children of his will meet the same fate unless they repent humbly and say to the Lord *not my will but Thy will be done*

The beauty of music that was pioneered by one of Lamech’s kids is now being put to an evil and ugly end. The original language also suggests he uses a weapon to kill, taking another son’s work with metal, and also using that for sinful ends. Sinful men corrupt even the good things from God’s common grace when they don’t acknowledge Him. Lamech fathers virulence and violence while de-valuing human life and departing from God’s plan for marriage.

‘Lamech’s gloating over a reputation more ruthless than infamous Cain’s shows the disparagement of human life among Cain’s seed that was fostered by his murder of Abel. God’s promise to avenge Cain’s life “seven times” (v. 15) is interpreted by Lamech as a badge of honor for Cain rather than as a merciful provision by God for a shameful criminal (v. 24). Lamech contends that if Cain’s value is reprisal seven times, then his acclaimed deeds merit much more [i.e., he is 10x more important than Cain?] ... Here Lamech in his twisted logic may presume upon divine protection, or he may imply in a sarcastic tone his lack of need for it. This is the first recorded incident in the Bible where crime is venerated [and celebrated] by the culprit.’⁵

Romans 1 is a commentary on Genesis 4 and every culture ever since who suppresses the truth of general revelation and do not respond to God’s common grace but go the way of Cain’s family.

²¹ even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks ... ²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity ...

²⁶ For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions [homosexuality] ... ²⁸ And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, ²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; ³² and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them. [they celebrate evil and wrath is coming – cf. Genesis 6]

Point #4: Special Grace is There for all who call upon the name of the LORD

Romans 10:13 says everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved. Acts 2:21 says the same thing, but that's not new or unique to the NT gospel. It's a quote from the OT prophet, and the calling upon the name of the LORD is rooted in another family.

Genesis 4:25-26: 'Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for, *she said*, "God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel, for Cain killed him." To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then *men* began to call upon the name of the LORD.

Lamech and his 3 sons and family disappear from history as God brings a worldwide flood that wipes out all except another family in the line of Seth, as we'll see in the next couple weeks. The godly line of Seth produces Noah and his 3 sons receive special grace.

Kent Hughes writes:

'Seth means "granted." So the sense of verse 25 is that she named him, "Granted," saying, "God has granted me another child ..." Thus Eve attributed the birth of her child to the grace of God ... [v. 26 says] They worshipped. And they did more than what the rendering "call upon the LORD" suggests, because in Moses' writings "call upon" regularly means *proclaimed*. The idea is that the people began to make proclamation about the *nature* of the Lord. So in earth's earliest ages, a special people began to develop, and they proclaimed the name of the Lord. When Cainite civilization began to rise and worship at the shrines of abundance and art and technology – when abuse and violence and the devaluation of life became commonplace – when vengeance became exponential – when men fancied that they were captains of their souls – Sethite civilization began to proclaim the name of the Lord, the Captain of their salvation! ... Our text provides us a paradigm, an outline to understand civilization and culture today and its ostensible rise with the increase in abundance, music, arts, and technology. It rises impressively, but in its rise there is demise because of sin. The only hope is to call upon the name of the Lord. This is the only hope for culture. This is the only hope for your soul. This is the only hope for the church – to call upon the name of the Lord, who is Jesus Christ.⁶

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12)

¹ A. Bryant, *Sermon outlines for evangelistic services*. Grand Rapids, Mich., 1992: Kregel Publications, p. 22.

² R. C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God*, p. 121

³ Paul F. Taylor, *The Six Days of Genesis: A Scientific Appreciation of Genesis 1-11*, p. 123.

⁴ Henry Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary*, p. 145-57.

⁵ Kenneth Matthews, *New American Commentary*, Broadman & Holman, Volume 1, p. 289.

⁶ Kent Hughes, *Genesis*, p. 115-116.