

Genesis 4:16 – 26

^{4:16} Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. 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. 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.’

²⁵ 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.’ ²⁶ 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.

Historical and Cultural Background

- Recall that Cain killed Abel, and cursed the ground even further for himself because Abel's blood cried out to God from the ground. So Cain would not be able to make the land fruitful.
- *Hebrew Names:* Names are often significant as characterizations of people/places, or people's relation to God

Cain: ‘gotten/acquired’	Irada: ‘witness’	Lamech: ‘despair’	Naamah: ‘pleasant’
Abel: ‘breath’	Mehujael: ‘smitten of God’	Adah: ‘ornament’	Seth: ‘appointed’
Nod: ‘wandering’	Methushael: ‘death of God’	Zillah: ‘shade’	Enosh: ‘mortal’
Enoch: ‘consecrated’			

- *Human Slavery?* Jabal might have been ‘the father of those who dwell in tents and have *human slaves*’ (v.21). The translation is difficult but that is one possibility.
- *Parent-Child Relations:* God had said in Genesis 2:24 that a man would leave his father and mother. ‘In Genesis 2 a profound, even revolutionary autonomy and dignity is afforded the married couple...Here is a departure from any social arrangement that would violate the integrity of this one-flesh union in the name of filial piety or honor.’¹
 - Ancient Assyria: ‘And if my daughter K. dies, then A. my adopted son shall under no circumstances leave my house, because he has to care for my gods and my dead ancestors.’²

¹ Erwin Fahlbusch, editor, ‘Family’, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, Volume Two, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001) p.284

² K.R. Veenhof, ‘Old Assyrian and Anatolian Evidence’, Marten Stol and Sven Vleeming, editors, *The Care of the Elderly in the Ancient Near East* (Leiden, The Netherlands, 1998), p.133. Beyond Assyria, in the Ancient Near East generally, ‘The head of household or paterfamilias, whether the father (the eldest male) or the eldest son, had complete charge of the household’s

- Confucian China, Japan, Korea: ‘The Master said, ‘Observe what a man has in mind to do when his father is living, and then observe what he does when his father is dead. If, for three years, he makes no changes to his father’s ways, he can be said to be a good son.’³ ‘Meng Yi Tzu asked about being filial. The Master answered, ‘Never fail to comply.’⁴

property, represented the household in court, and was responsible for maintaining its prosperity and credibility within the community...marriages served not only to produce children and a new generation to inherit property, but they also established social ties, economic connections and a network of association that was designed to benefit both parties [families].’ Victor H. Matthews, ‘Marriage and Family in the Ancient Near East’, Ken M. Campbell, editor, *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003) p.2 and 7

³ Confucius, *Analects* I, 11

⁴ Confucius, *Analects* II, 5. ‘In serving his parents, a filial son reveres them in daily life; he makes them happy while he nourishes them; he takes anxious care of them in sickness; he shows great sorrow over their death; and he sacrifices to them with solemnity.’ Confucius, *Classic of Filial Piety*, discussed by Charlotte Ikels, *Filial piety: Practice and discourse in contemporary East Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 2–3. ‘...The three real obstacles to the spread of Christianity in China...are, first of all, the Confucian dogma that man is born good; secondly, the practice of ancestral worship, which, as has already been shown, is incompatible with Christian doctrine; and thirdly, the rules and practice of filial piety, due directly to the patriarchal system which still obtains in China. It has indeed been seriously urged that the unparalleled continuity of the Chinese nation is a reward for their faithful observance of the fifth commandment. In the face of this deeply implanted sentiment of reverence for parents, it is easy to see what a shock it must give to be told, as in Mark x. 7, 29, 30, that a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife; also, that if a man leaves his father and mother for Christ’s sake and the gospel’s, he will receive an hundredfold now in this time, and in the world to come eternal life.’ <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cfu/cair/cair10.htm>.

Questions

1. Why do you think Cain builds a city? Why does he name it after his son?
 - a. To trap his son in the city. To capture his son's affection and obligate Enoch to farm for him, protect him, and serve him.
 - b. What is Enoch consecrated to? His father, Cain.
 - c. What happens to Parent-Child relations in Cain's line?
 - i. God had said in Genesis 2:24 that a man would leave his father and mother. Can Cain leave his father? Not really. The issue here is that we need to understand how all ancient societies worked, as far as we can tell. So the son was made to serve the father for the rest of his life. That is the origin of human civilization. But would it be in the interest of a patriarchal society to promote Genesis 2? And to maintain it in your culture? No way. No one would invent this. It destroys all the power dynamics of one generation over the other.
 - ii. Illus: Most traditional societies still do not treat a married couple as their own family. Usually the wife comes into the husband's family. For example, I am ethnically Japanese, and when my mom married my dad, she came to live in the house my dad grew up in. His mom – my grandmother – treated my mom like a slave. And my mom was frustrated that my dad didn't stick up for her. She hated it, and when I got older, my mom said, 'Mako, don't grow up to be a mama's boy – a man who listens to his mother over his wife.' She learned the hard way. That's why it's so radical that God said from the beginning that a man would leave his father and mother to be joined to his wife. It was taken for granted that a woman would leave her father and mother. But it wasn't the case that a man would leave his family. Instead, the new wife would become part of the husband's family, and be another 'daughter' to the family. Who had the power in the family? The oldest person alive, or the oldest male. That is true patriarchy. But God said that that must not happen. It's only in the family of Cain, the murderer, that this reverses. Cain makes it hard for his son Enoch to leave him. Cain was cursed to wander, but he said, 'Forget that. I'm going to settle anyway, and make my son work the land, defend me, justify me.'
 - d. The fact that the Bible places a marriage ahead of your family of origin is REVOLUTIONARY. This is an argument for the Bible having a superhuman intelligence behind it. What ancient culture would have produced this???
2. What kind of culture do we see take root in this city?
 - a. The names of the sons indicate increasing hatred of God, and despair.
 - i. 'Death of God' is not a new idea! It didn't start with Nietzsche.
 - b. Polygamy. This is a clear departure from the monogamy intended by the creation order of Adam and Eve in Genesis 1 and 2.
 - i. Notice that when the Bible is describing something, it is illustrating the descent into sin. It is not prescribing behavior, but showing how fall people are falling from God's original vision for relationships.
 - c. The names of the women indicate that women are treated as objects of beauty.
 - d. The perversion of justice indicates that people twist something good God gave – a word of protection – and take it into their own hands and twist it into something perverted – some weird principle of injustice.
 - i. Notice that biblical poetry rhymes concepts, not sounds per se like English poems. So the lines are coupled.
 - ii. That means that the phrase, 'For I have killed a man for wounding me; and a boy for striking me' express one idea, not two. There was a young man who lightly wounded Tubal-cain and he really lashed out in vengeance against him.
 - e. Notice that the city represents the place in Scripture where human sin accumulates and is expressed in its most concentrated form: Babel (Gen.11); Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen.19); Egypt's cities (Ex.1); even Jerusalem becomes corrupted; and lastly Babylon the Great (Rev.17 – 18).
3. What is the significance of the third line of Adam and Eve, through Seth?
 - a. This is the family of faith. Seth is 'appointed' to be the one through whom faith and hope continues. Worship of God and hope in God continue through Seth. Seth names his son 'mortal'

which might signify something about their recognition that they are frail and dependent on God for life, and need God to restore true, everlasting life to them.

- b. The faithful start to call on the 'name' of the LORD. As opposed to develop strategies for naming their monuments and cities for themselves. We will see this at Babel, when they try to name themselves.
- c. Humanity is thus divided into two camps: Cain's line and Seth's line.