

Genesis Chapters 4-5 Summary - John Karmelich

The longest period of recorded history, with little surviving information about it, was prior to the flood. If memory's correct there were 1,656 years from Adam to the flood. The first three Genesis chapters do focus on creation and how sin got started! There's just two chapters from Adam and Eve's descendants to the story of Noah. The question I'm pondering is what does God want us to know about those people who lived before the flood? It's interesting to consider what people did (invented) before the flood and that those things still exist today! I'm fascinated over the details about those people who all died in the flood (that's pretty much Chapter 4). Chapter 5's strictly a "godly" line that lists one of Adam and Eve's sons all the way to Noah and his sons.

Yes, I'm well aware of the lack of female names. A lot of people wonder where did these men get their wives? In Chapter 4 we read that Adam and Eve lived hundreds of years and had sons and daughters. I just want to make it clear, by the time the flood came there may have been millions of people. We don't know the population at that time, just that God decided only eight people deserved to be saved from all of the people we read about in these chapters. The big question of course, is why should we care about all these people who died thousands of years ago? What does God want us to learn from this? First, it's necessary to remind us that sin was introduced in Chapter 3. Because sin is now within the "gene pool" it means that all people die. The classic line is people aren't sent to hell for sinning too much, it is only because they refuse to accept the free gift of God's forgiveness! I know that's classic Christianity and I am well aware I'm "preaching to the choir" here. Still the big question of the moment is why does God want us to study these chapters? Part of it is to see the Gospel message was around even from the start of humanity and part of it is to see that even people who reject God can do tremendous things in life, it is a reminder that no matter what we accomplish now, eternity is based on our relationship with God as we'll see through in these chapters. With that said, let me begin:

Chapter 4 opens with, "Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, 'I've have gotten[a] a man with the help of the Lord.'" (ESV translation.) I read a comment about Adam & Eve that I never considered: They must have been great evangelists! They probably told their story a thousand times to their children about being in the Garden of Eden, to how they messed up, and of His mercy still shown as they got animal skins (an innocent blood sacrifice for sin). Adam and Eve had no idea how to have sex, but I'm sure they figured it out and God said to be fruitful and multiply! I am just saying we don't read about Eve complaining about childbirth pain! The text only mentions her praising God for her baby! The next line says she then bore Abel. Some argue it was twins, but we don't know! The rest of Chapter 4 pretty much focuses on Cain and the fact he killed his brother Abel. We also get a few lines about what happened to Cain's descendants after that!

We read that both Cain and Abel (the two brothers) both made an offering to God. Cain was a farmer, and he gave some things that he grew. Abel was a shepherd and offered an animal and "the fat thereof" which to me implies that God gave them or their parents instructions on how God is to be worshipped! When we get to the story of Noah, he brought on the ark 2 of each kind of animal and 7 of the "clean"! It leads to the question how did Noah know, as Moses didn't get the law 'till roughly 2,000 years later? I'm just speculating that God gave them instructions on how He is to be worshipped! The point is God accepted Abel's offering and not Cain's. One gets the impression Cain didn't offer his best to God as if he was just thinking, "let me get this ritual over with so I can go back to my life!"

We then read of God talking to Cain about that. It's as if God was saying if you give in to your anger it will dominate you! As I was taught many years ago, "Don't go down the sin road, it's "greased" and it's hard to turn back!" As most of us know, Cain then killed his brother in anger! We don't know why but it stems from the jealousy that his brother's offering pleased God! That is a good reminder of when we must deal with our unsaved relatives: We shouldn't hate them, but as Jesus warned, believing in Him is a danger to our lives around unsaved people including family members! (See Luke 12:51-53). We don't know why Cain was so angry, all we know is he killed his brother!

That leads to the classic question, why didn't God take revenge there on the spot? We don't know, the classic argument is God is establishing that we don't take justice in our own hands. Some argue God is showing what happens when we "let it go". When God confronted Cain, the punishment is he could no longer farm but he'd wander on earth the rest of his life! God put some sort of mark on Cain that states in effect if anyone should kill Cain, they'd be punished seven times worse! Then we read Cain started a city. (It gives us a clue how much the population grew!) Since Cain couldn't be a farmer, he wanted to be a city dweller and a real estate developer! From there we get a list of his descendants which is not a complete list.

What's fascinating about the descendants is we discover things they did. Some of it good, some bad. It included founders of musical instruments, founders of metal workers, shepherding making and the first man that had two wives. What's fascinating is we read these people lived hundreds of years. There was a water-covering above the earth that kept out harmful rays that cause us to age! My point is they must have gotten good at what they did with hundreds of years to perfect their craft! All these people died in the flood, but their skills and talents survived! The section ends with a descendant of Cain bragging of how he killed two people and since God allowed Cain to live, his descendant survived as well. There's no mention of God in this section which is a clue it's not a time that God was sought.

The last verse of the chapter ties well to Chapter 5. It's about the Godly line of another son of Adam & Eve that will lead to Noah. Chapter 5 said Adam and Eve had lots of children, so we have no idea if the son named Seth fit into that, but somehow Eve knew this one was special. The last line of Chapter 4 is a statement how people turned back to God after Seth was born. Somehow this sparked a revival when he came into the world.

Chapter 5 in comparison seems rather boring. All it says in effect is this guy was born after "x" number of years the next key person in this Godly line was born then the first person lived "y" more years after that and died. That pattern pretty much repeats through the whole chapter. Realize the time span from Adam to Noah covers a span of 1,656 years. The text says Adam lived 930 years, which means he had lots of sons and daughters. I'm not going to go name by name through this chapter. Notice the one who lived the longest was named Methuselah (969 years!) If you do the math he lived 'till the flood started. There are references elsewhere that predicted when he died, it would come. It makes one wonder if the neighbors got nervous anytime he caught a cold! Methuselah's father is said in the text he walked with God and was raptured (for the lack of a better word).

One final thing that's fascinating to me. I'll end on this: In our English translation we have the names as transliterated from the Hebrew, not the names meanings! Some are easier to figure out than others. To summarize what I wrote below, requires a little knowledge of ancient Hebrew. Here is the names listed in this chapter and what they mean in the order that they're given:

Adam means "Man"

Seth means "Appointed"

Enosh means "Mortal"
Kenan means "Sorrow"
Mahalalel means "The Blessed God"
Jared means "Shall come down"
Enoch means "Teaching"
Methuselah means "His Death shall bring"
Lamech means "The Despairing"
Noah means "Rest"

If you say the meaning of all those names in a sentence, in order and you have the Gospel message! It's "Man (has been) appointed mortal sorrow. The Blessed God shall down teaching His death shall bring the despairing rest! That is why Chapter 5 is in the Bible! (<https://khouse.org/articles/2000/284/>) You can't convince me a bunch of Jewish rabbis conspired to put that in Genesis!

On the same page as this study is a more detailed study I wrote many years back. You are welcome to email me if you want or join my list to the get the latest lesson. Thanks for reading. John