

Prayers

To God

Weekly theme: Pray for the Lord's protection

Pray and rest under the Lord's protection. Believe in what you pray for, and trust Him for what is to come ...

For myself

Pray in earnest that you will have the humility to deal with your most difficult fears and troubles. Pray that you will trust God for what you fear; pray that you will stand tall in circumstances you dislike, pray that you will speak out at times when you would like to stay quiet.

For others

Praise You Lord God. Your ways are more remarkable than human ways. Just when we think that others have won the battle against Christianity, Your church rises from the grave and the church is reborn! Just when Scriptures are challenged and pilloried in the press, it speaks to the hearts of the poor and suffering! Just when the world decided that all religions are equal, the Word of God is proved by amazing deeds of power in people's lives. Praise You Lord God, for You are the way forward, for all humanity! AMEN

Meditation

You call me ever onwards Lord Jesus Christ, my Saviour!

If I must change, may I do so but remain firm in my faith:

If I have sinned, may I repent and return to Your side:

If I need to act, may I do so with wisdom that is Yours:

If I must speak, may I declare Your prophetic Word boldly:

If I have been silent, may I feel free to open up my heart:

If I need to listen, may I truly hear Your Word of Life:

If I must challenge, may I speak Your truth rather than mine:

If I have to show courage, may I be humbled by Your grace

If I need to wait, may I be patient with all around me:

You call me ever onwards, Lord Jesus Christ.

Bible Passage

Genesis 4:17-26

¹⁷ Cain made love with his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. He built a city, and named it after his son Enoch. ¹⁸ To Enoch was born Irad; and Irad was the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael the father of Methushael, and Methushael the father of Lamech.

¹⁹ Lamech took two wives; the name of the first was Adah, and the name of the second, Zillah. ²⁰ Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the ancestor of tent-dwelling herdsmen. ²¹ His brother's name was Jubal; he was the ancestor of all those who play the lyre and pipe. ²² Zillah bore Tubal-cain, who made all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

²³ Lamech said to his wives:

'Adah and Zillah, listen to me; you wives of Lamech, hear my words: I have killed a man for wounding me, a young boy for striking me. ²⁴ If Cain is avenged sevenfold, then Lamech, seventy-sevenfold.'

²⁵ Now, Adam made love with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth. She said,

'God has allowed me another child instead of Abel, because Cain killed him.'

²⁶ A son was also born to Seth, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to call on the name of the LORD.

Review

The fascinating stories of the first chapters of Genesis come to an end today, and we find ourselves reading various lists of names. Most people today find these lists difficult to comprehend and somewhat boring, so why are they in scripture? Our passage begins with such a list, which make up Cain's 'family tree' (4:17-24). After this, verse 25 and 26 describe the birth of Seth, the child God decided would form a new family tree, providing an alternative descent from Adam and Eve. In the rest of scripture, we hear no more of Cain's descendants; from this point onwards this is a line of humanity that might as well not exist. However, after the new beginning provided by the birth of Seth, Genesis describes the further descendants of Adam and Eve through the line of Seth, up to the time of Noah.

If we read about Cain's descendants, we discover some fascinating things, however, once we get past our natural difficulties in reading and pronouncing the complex Hebrew names (e.g. 'Methushael' - v18). With a little care, we can dig some fascinating issues out of this text. To start with, Cain's family line contains an inheritance of sin, for after he murdered Abel, sin was passed down in his family line. We can see this in particular within the description of Lamech, whose poem praises his own callous murder of a boy for striking him; it is gruesome (4:23,24)! This poem uses an odd word-play on the number seven, '*If Cain is avenged sevenfold, then Lambeth, seventy seven ...*' (4:24), which connects with God's pronouncement on his four-times-great grandfather Cain, after his murder of Abel, '*Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance*' (4:15); and incidentally, Lamech was the seventh ancestor of Adam! It is possible that the number indicates that this lineage of Adam through Cain is in God's eyes, like the number seven, complete; and Lamech's oath is mere human boast.

Now if we look at the work and occupations of Cain and his descendants, we find that they are fascinating because they indicate the historic development of human life. Cain builds

cities (4:17), Jabal prefers the nomadic lifestyle (4:20), Jubal creates music (4:21), and Tubal-cain begins technology with the working of bronze and iron (4:22). Finally, the evil Lamech contributes his remarkably crafted poem with rhythmic patterns which almost translate into English directly from Hebrew (4:23,24)! However, these developments are tinged with the sins of Cain, and many have concluded that human endeavour along the lines of building, technology and science (the distant cousins of these trades and occupations) are tinged with Cain's sin. This may be a little prosaic, but we can all observe that the consequences of human endeavour in these fields has always been capable of being used for either good or ill, and where some use scientific and technological advance for good, others will certainly use it all for evil.

So it is that Adam and Eve begin a new dynasty with the birth of their third son Seth. Scripture enigmatically records 'at that time people began to call on the name of the Lord' (4:26); and this is a way of saying that the true worship of God began at the time of, and amongst, this new generation of Adam and Eve's descendents. The future of these generations would not prove to be easy, but as far as scripture was concerned, Seth's line was the one that God blessed for the future of humanity.

Before we finish this brief study, we must address the thorny issue of where Cain found his wife (4:17)! The issue is put simply. If Adam and Eve were the first people on earth, where did Cain find a woman to marry? This question has been put by some with the purpose of undermining people's belief in the creation stories of Genesis 1 and 2. It is a mockery, they say, to believe in the stories of Adam and Eve when it is so obviously woven into a more general story about people on earth!

We cannot avoid the conundrum! Sometimes we are faced with issues like this, and we cannot explain them. They seem to cut across the whole understanding of scripture we have developed, and force some into saying that Genesis does not tell us the 'truth', but perhaps only a 'myth'. But we do not have to respond to the challenge of 4:17 in this way, and there is an alternative explanation of all this. It cannot be explained within a brief study, but I will summarise it below. This study also contains a longer 'going deeper' section with a more substantial explanation of the theory with its fuller scientific explanation. Please follow this as best you can.

Throughout these studies in Genesis I have suggested that modern archaeology controversially suggests we can identify the Garden of Eden (see notes on 2:10-14), and much more. We must now explore what is said and see where it leads. The same archaeologists indicate the possibility that real people called Adam, Eve and Cain (etc) lived around 6,000 BC in a place called the 'Garden of Eden', but with other people who had a physical make like themselves; they were all made by God as a part of creation, but were not 'god-breathed', as described in Genesis 2:7.

The theory goes like this. If this was so, when God breathed His Spirit into Adam and Eve to create spiritual people (Gen 2:7) out of the physical people previously made and living on earth, then this explains two things. Firstly, Adam and Eve can indeed be called the first true 'people' of historical civilisation as we know it; they are the first spiritual self aware beings separate from the physical beings like men and women then in existence. Secondly, so when Cain needed a wife, there were other women around, but not those who had been 'god-breathed' in the manner of his own parents, but his 'marriage' with such a woman brought God's spirit into their offspring to continue the descendants of Adam and Eve (and the same with Seth ...).

You may have many questions about what this could mean for our understanding of Genesis and all human civilisation, and I can assure you that you are not the only one with questions! However, it is an avenue worth pursuing for those who feel that the traditional antipathy between creationism and evolutionism has become a fruitless debate that has stifled

Christians for a long time. This strange theory begins to say different things about how the Bible quite literally can give light to modern scientific methods of study in the field of archaeology and the exploration of human origins on earth.

Going Deeper

An alternative study of archaeology, with respect to Cain's wife and other issues.

What I have just said may well be intriguing to some and anathema to others, but do bear with me; for it is my intent to explore new ways of understanding Genesis exactly as it is whilst remaining true to the text of scripture. I much prefer to do this instead of going along the route of making minor changes to the text of the Bible which is a centuries old habit of scholars to try and rid us of such problems. Also, I hope you will read what I have to say with the same degree of caution that I write; I simply present what I find to be fascinating possibilities which future generations will resolve. I am not entirely sure that anyone either has or will ever have a monopoly on God's truth in Genesis, and the essential belief that God is our loving Creator and capable of all things is something that should bind His people together rather than divide them. The exact 'scientific' nature of what we think scripture says about Creation may be very significant, but it is certainly of secondary importance to this fundamental truth.

Today's study is largely about some interesting new archaeological discoveries and their interpretation, and I will conclude by summarising other details of today's passage. It is also my purpose to give you hope that despite the apparently boring reputation of genealogies and lists in the Bible, they sometimes hide things of the greatest of importance!

Ancient Sumerian King lists, Genesis and some new light ...

If you were able to get hold of David Rohl's book '*Legend, the Genesis of Civilisation*' (London, Century 1998), then you would be able to read in full what I now present to you in a highly condensed form. I cannot discuss all of his logic or the science of his archaeology, for much of it is highly technical. His work is also controversial, particularly amongst theological academics who dismiss his work out of hand, rarely addressing the issues he presents or engaging with his analysis. The reason is simple; if his science is correct, then it runs entirely contrary to modern liberal theology which largely presents Genesis as myth and legend, created by Jews in the six or fifth century BC as a means of opposing Babylonian beliefs about creation encountered by the Israelites at the time of the 'Exile' and the Prophets. David Rohl's work and that of his associates is of interest to more evangelical Christians like myself who feel that Genesis has far more of God's ancient truth in it than much modern theology allows, but do not wish to press the idea of six earthly 'days' of Creation too far as a literal scheme of things with which to fight battles with either 'science' or 'theology'.

In chapter six of his book, David Rohl describes the development of the most ancient languages we know about, which arise from civilisations within the ancient Near East including the regions within which Rohl 'discovered' the Garden of Eden. These scripts are the earliest forms of complex grammatical language we know of, and understanding them profoundly effects the study of all ancient languages including Hebrew. Rohl exposes the flaws in the way these ancient Sumerian and Akkadian cuneiform scripts have been interpreted, with errors concerning their pronunciation and indeed their literal 'spelling'. These have persisted from the earliest attempts to decipher them more than 150 years ago to the present day.

Ancient lists of kings – and Adam!

The most ancient of these texts are lists of kings going back in time, and the results of Rohl's assessment show some remarkable features. Having adjusted the ancient texts using current analysis he observes that different king lists from different parts of the ancient world all have remarkably similar structures and names. Further, the ancient king lists he reconstructs are astonishingly similar to our text today (Gen4:17-20) and also Genesis chapter 5! You will object that these two lists of names are different, and come from Cain and Seth respectively; but Rohl shows how Biblical scholars are too literal in their assumptions about the spelling of ancient names, and, for example, the names Irad (4:18) and Jared (5:15-18) are equivalent, also Methushael (4:18) and Methuselah (5:25-27). He also explains how the order of the names comes to be different, due to misunderstandings about the way in which ancient texts were read (up, down, sideways etc!). The main feature of all this research is that one name appears at the head of them all; Biblical and non-Biblical king lists alike; the name of Adam!

His theory, backed by far more research on Sumerian texts than I can quote is that Adam was a real person living in the region of Eden (near the borders of modern Armenia, Turkey and Iran) who led a tribe living in the beautiful 'Garden' region to the East of Lake Urmia around the Adji Chay river. There was a tribal allegiance cemented by a marriage between Adam and someone called 'Hawwah' (Hebrew for Eve) which led to the movement of people eastwards towards the Caspian Sea (the land of Nod) and from which discoveries were made which started what we call the 'Bronze Age' due to the mineral wealth of the region (mentioned in Genesis 2:11,12). He regards Adam as the first 'man' of what we call 'civilisation'.

This seems almost too good to be true! If you believe as I do, that God's creation of people was due to the infilling of physical humanity with God's Spirit (Gen 1:26,27; Gen 2:7), then we now appear to have a real candidate for Adam, and his wife, Eve! These theories of Rohl do also explain why Cain and other relatives find wives, and go on to explain other details of the scriptural text, but they do not help those who wish to take a more literal view of Genesis¹.

I will add to the interesting possibilities by telling you that I believe there are realistic reasons to tie together the physical and spiritual ancestry of all people alive today to the ancient people we have been talking about; but that is a discussion for another day, and involves other sciences; those of statistics and genetics.

Discipleship

Application

Some strange theories

You may well say that this study has wandered far from the text. It has. I cannot emphasise enough, however, the importance of pursuing these matters as far as possible. Many Christians are as unhappy with each side of the Creationism verses Evolutionism debate as they are of the debate itself. They are also unhappy with much modern theology which, by describing Genesis as myth and legend, removes the creative power of God almost completely from the text. Surely the Creative power and majesty of God lies in a deeper truth than this religious and intellectual entrenchment? God works in the real world now, both in it and sometimes miraculously beyond it, and I do not think it unwise to believe we have the evidence of His Creation within the real history of humanity. We must therefore follow this lead about 'Adam' which has arisen from secular archaeology and affirms considerable swathes of the Bible which traditional scholars struggle to explain to us.

Out text today, with its brief comments about the growth of civilisation is one of these obscure texts. The names of the people mentioned clearly meant something important to those who wrote this down, and they had little time or space to waste in their writing. What they wished to convey has been lost. Instead of accepting this and being satisfied with an abstract understanding of the text, perhaps we should be concerned to explore what has happened to these names; what they meant and who they were; if there are clues, we must follow them.

Ideas for what to do

- *It should not be too difficult to explore the subjects raised in this study further by use of the internet or by getting hold of some of the relevant books (by D Rohl). Pursue what you find and see if God will lead you to a new and consistent understanding of His Word.*
- *Pray for those who find it hard to deal with the intellectual side of Christian things, such as searching for the meaning of Adam and Eve, and Cain's wife! Pray that these things will be taught by pastors and preachers in ways that people can understand and not feel patronised.*

Questions (for use in groups)

1. As you read this text today, what do you find that makes clear sense to you, if at all?
2. What problems can you see within the alternative suggestion about creation, which explains the existence of Cain's wife?
3. Is science and technology a good thing or a bad thing, and can we always know the difference?

Final Prayer

Bring this day to its proper end, Father of all Grace, by forgiving my sins, releasing me from worry, assuring me of Your presence and removing all evil from my heart. May I find rest at its end in the knowledge that I have placed myself in the hands of the One who truly cares for my soul. AMEN