

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 7/30/95 PM
Genesis 4:13-26 "When A Society Crumbles"

An interesting cartoon caught my attention in this week's newspaper. A mother is talking to her children, who are plopped in front of the TV, about their TV watching options: The OJ murder trial, the Susan Smith trial, the Whitewater controversy, and the Timothy McVeigh bombing trial. The cartoon obviously is intended to be a commentary on our society. Perhaps it's overly sensational, yet few would deny the basic truth. Right before our very eyes, we are watching society deteriorate.

How does that happen? Sociologists would verify that many civilizations have come and gone. What causes a society to crumble? The Bible addresses that very issue by taking us back to the very first civilization. Let's return to Genesis 4 tonight.

Proposition: As we survey Genesis 4, we see three movements which which affected the crumbling of the first society. What happened then, can help us now.

Review: From last week...

- A. Cain had privileges (1-2).
 - 1. He was raised in the same home with Abel.
 - 2. He received the same privileges Abel did.
- B. Cain had a severe problem (3-12).

Cain went on a downward spiral in sin...

 - 1. He disobeyed God (3-5).

Result: God rejected his offering.
 - 2. He got angry and depressed (5b).

Result: God gave him the opportunity to change (6-7).
 - 3. He killed his brother and lied about it (8).

Result: God judged him (9-12).
 - 4. He became suicidal (13-14).
- I. Cain goes downhill (1-16).
 - A. Cain complains about his punishment (13-14).
 - 1. "It's more than I can bear." (13)
 - 2. "I'll be hidden from Your presence." (14)
 - 3. "Someone might kill me." (14)
 - B. God shows him mercy (15).
 - 1. God forbids anyone to harm Cain.
 - 2. God places a mark on Cain.
 - C. Cain responds (16).
 - 1. He leaves the Lord's presence.
 - 2. He settles in Nod.
- II. Civilization goes downhill (17-24).
 - A. People forget God (Example: Cain, 17-18).
 - 1. Cain had a family.
 - 2. Cain built a city.
 - 3. Cain ignored God.
 - B. People mock God (Example: Lamech, 19-24).

1. Lamech had a flippant attitude of God's will (19).
2. Lamech had a flippant attitude of the sanctity of life (23).
3. Lamech had a flippant attitude of God's Word (24).

III. God's plan does not go downhill (25-26).

- A. God preserved a godly line.
- B. God has a remnant that seeks Him.

Review: From last week...

Adam and Eve fell into sin in Gen 3. In Gen 4:1-2, God blessed them with two sons, Cain and Abel. Don't miss the fact that these two sons represent two lines, two types of people in the world. Abel represents the godly line, for he was a man of God. Cain represents the ungodly line, for he was a man who had enough religion to be dangerous (see last week's study). What went wrong with Cain? As we saw in vv 1-13...

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This week: We continue the story beginning at v 13. Remember, Moses recorded Genesis in about the 15 century B.C. Genesis is not a scientific textbook, though when it speaks on matters of science, it's totally accurate. Why did Moses write Genesis? Why did he include the material he included (11 chapters to survey all that happened from Adam to Abraham, and 39 chapters to focus on four family members--Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and his 12 sons), and leave other information out?

Key: Moses, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, is writing with this aim--to prepare the Israelites to enter the pagan, controlled Promised Land. He is telling them what they will need to know so they can live pure and distinct lives in their new homeland.

Genesis 4 is more than a story about Cain. It's a story about what people are like when they turn from God. The Cananites they would encounter had a heritage--their paganism went all the way back to Genesis 4.

Notice the first movement.

I. Cain goes downhill (1-16).

In v 11, God's words pierced the air, "And now thou art cursed from the earth." How did Cain respond to his punishment?

A. Cain complains about his punishment (13-14).

Notice three statements of complaint made by Cain.

1. *"It's more than I can bear." (13)*

That's the heart of what he said in v 13, "And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is more than I can bear." Cain shares his fears in his second and third complaints.

2. *"I'll be hidden from Your presence." (14)*

V 14 "Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth (NIV "from the land"); and from Thy face shall I be hidden." His third complaint is rather ironic.

3. *"Someone might kill me." (14)*

V 14 "It shall come to pass, that any one that finds me shall slay me." Did you catch what Cain is saying? He is complaining about the fear of murder after he just murdered his own brother! Cain was operating by a double standard--like we are prone to do.

Who were the people of which Cain was afraid? Where did they originate? The details are scant. The answer certainly is not that there was a race of human beings in existence before Adam. Apparently, Adam and Eve had other children.

We need to realize a mighty civilization flourished on the earth before Noah's flood. Prior to the flood, there was a vapor canopy that surrounded the earth, shielding the inhabitants from the sun's harmful radiation. Perhaps, that explains why before the flood, people lived much longer lives--Adam was 930 years old when he died (5:5), Seth was 912, and Methuselah 969.

Henry Morris, in his book The Beginning of the World, writes this (79-80): "Although we have no exact figures, it is possible to make a more or less reasonable guess as to how the population may have developed. Assuming that each family had only six children, and assuming that each generation (the time required for one cycle of birth, growth, marriage, and childbearing) took 100 years, and also that the average lifespan was five generations, the the population at the end of Adam's 930 years of life would have been approximately 80,000. At the time of the Flood (1656 years after Adam's creation), the population would have been about 235,000,000 people. If a generation were 90 years instead of 100 years, the two numbers would be about 250,000 and 1,750,000,000 respectively."

It's very conceivable that there were over a billion people alive when the flood came. By the time Adam died, the world had some 80,000 people (if each family averaged 8 children instead of 6, there would have been a million people).

How did God respond to Cain's complaints?

B. God shows him mercy (15).

Notice Gen 4:15, "And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him." God demonstrated mercy in two ways.

1. *God forbids anyone to harm Cain.*

2. *God places a mark on Cain.*

The question comes up, "What about capital punishment? Since God spared Cain, doesn't that mean capital punishment is wrong?" No, there are other factors involved in settling this critical issue.

First, what God did with Cain was a demonstration of His mercy. Second, Cain's natural sense of justice told him that since he shed a man's blood, his own blood might well be shed. He knew that as a murderer, his own life could be taken. Third, under the Mosaic Law, God commanded the practice of capital punishment for certain crimes. And fourth, in our day, in the day of grace, God's Word says God has ordained government to represent Him in carrying out justice. Rom 13:4 reveals, "For he is the minister of God...for he bears not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil."

How did Cain respond to God's mercy?

C. Cain responds (16).

The text reveals two responsive activities.

1. He leaves the Lord's presence.

V 16 says he went out from the presence of the Lord. I agree with commentator Derek Kidner (77) that Cain's departure was both his sentence and his choice.

2. He settles in Nod.

Cain became a self-focused fugitive, a wanderer. The course he chose became the pattern many others chose. Soon a whole bunch of "Cain-like" people came along, which brings us to the second movement.

II. Civilization goes downhill (17-24).

What happened in Cain's life spread to a whole civilization. He went downhill. He crumbled morally. So did an entire society. How does a society crumble? According to this model, it happens when people make two decisions.

A. People forget God (Example: Cain, 17-18).

Just like Cain did.

1. Cain had a family.

V 17 says that Cain knew his wife, she became pregnant, and bore a son named Enoch (not to be confused with the godly Enoch in ch 5). Then...

2. Cain built a city.

In the Hebrew, the term "city" can be applied to any human settlement, small or great (Kidner, 77). Cain named the city after the name of his son, Enoch.

V 18, in simple fashion, records events that spanned hundreds of years. Five generations of Cain's descendants are listed, from Enoch to Lamech (see chart). What's the point?

First, don't miss that Cain's decision affected an entire lineage of people. His spiritual hardness influenced six generations and beyond. Please realize his descendants weren't robots. They chose and were responsible for the choices they made. But Cain started it all when he blazed a wicked trail for them to follow (we do the same as parents when we disobey God).

Second, notice something by its absence. There's no mention of God in this section. When Eve bore a son (4:1), she attributed it to God. Not so Cain. He ignored God.

3. Cain ignored God.

What did Cain do after becoming a father? Did he thank God? Apparently not. The text says he built a city.

Think about it. What's the first step in the crumbling of a society? People make a decision, like Cain, to forget God. The issue isn't that having sons and building cities is wrong. The problem is when we forget God, and leave Him out of the picture.

Forgetting God leads to an even worse decision.

B. People mock God (Example: Lamech, 19-24).

Lamech is a classic case in point. He reflects the spirit of his age, no doubt. He mocked God in three ways.

1. Lamech had a flippant attitude of God's will (19).

How so? What did he do in v 19? He took two wives. There's a red flag! What was God's design in Gen 2:24? One man and one woman for life. That was God's revealed will. Lamech didn't care.

In vv 20-22, we're given some details about Lamech's children. One was a tent dweller, another the father of those who played the harp and flute. Another forged tools out of bronze and iron. What's the point?

Henry Morris observes that Cain's civilization tried to reverse the effects of God's curse, in several ways. One, urban life was preferred by many, instead of "tilling the ground." Two, cattle raising was inaugurated, possibly because men had become meat-eaters instead of being content with the food grown from the earth. Three, people started using metal working and tools to ease the toil of the curse. Four, musical instruments were developed to lessen the "sorrow" of the curse. And five, polygamy was introduced, instead of following God's command.

Don't get the idea that musical instruments are bad, or that metal working and cattle growing are wrong just because Cain's line did these things. Technology isn't the problem. Technology in the hands of people who forget and mock God is the problem.

In terms of technology, the civilization advanced. In terms of morality, it crumbled, to the point that by Noah's day, there were only a handful of righteous people left. It went back to Lamech's flippant attitude of God's will.

2. Lamech had a flippant attitude of the sanctity of life (23).

V 23 is amazing. Do you know what Lamech did? He made up a poem for his wives (perhaps a song). Part of it went like this (23-24), "I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me."

Did you hear that? Lamech made a song (or at least poetry) out of violence! He had a cheap view of human life. He said he would kill a man for merely wounding him-- which goes far beyond an eye for an eye. His haughty, irreverent attitude towards God led to a scornful attitude towards other people.

Do you wonder why our society is becoming increasingly violent, and why a cheap view of life is spreading rapidly? It ought not surprise us. Look at Lamech. Learn from Lamech. We may not kill somebody, but if we adopt a flippant attitude towards God's Will, it won't stop there.

3. Lamech had a flippant attitude of God's Word (24).

Listen to his brash claim in v 24, "If Cain is avenged 7 times, then Lamech 77 times." What's Lamech doing? He's mocking the Word of God.

By the way, if we assume there are no gaps between the generations listed in the geneology of v 18, did you realize that Cain might have been alive when Lamech made

this irreverent claim (see chart). In fact, Adam may well have been. Civilization went downhill right before their very eyes.

But God wasn't wringing His hands--notice the third movement.

III. God's plan does not go downhill (25-26).

V 25 is not placed chronologically, but thematically. It tells us that Adam and Eve had another son, one to take the place of Abel. His name was Seth.

What was significant about Seth's birth? It reveals two truths about God.

A. God preserved a godly line.

What does a godly line do? V 26 "Then men began to call upon the name of the LORD."

B. God has a remnant that seeks Him.

God has a remnant. Society is crumbling, but God has a remnant. His plan does not go downhill. Our society may be falling apart morally, but God's plan isn't. He is sovereign. He was in Cain's day, and in ours. Praise Him.