

Genesis 4:17–6:8 – "Resist Corruption's Spread"

Text: Genesis 4:17–6:8 (CSB)

Cain's Line and Civilization

17 Cain was intimate with his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch. Then Cain became the builder of a city, and he named the city Enoch after his son. **18** Irad was born to Enoch, Irad fathered Mehujael, Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech. **19** Lamech took two wives for himself, one named Adah and the other named Zillah. **20** Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of the nomadic herdsmen. **21** His brother was named Jubal; he was the father of all who play the lyre and the flute. **22** Zillah bore Tubal-cain, who made all kinds of bronze and iron tools. Tubal-cain's sister was Naamah.

23 Lamech said to his wives: Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; wives of Lamech, pay attention to my words. For I killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. **24** If Cain is to be avenged seven times over, then for Lamech it will be seventy-seven times!

25 Adam was intimate with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, for she said, "God has given me another offspring in place of Abel, since Cain killed him." **26** A son was born to Seth also, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to call on the name of the LORD.

Chapter 5: The Genealogy from Adam to Noah

1 This is the document containing the family records of Adam. On the day that God created man, he made him in the likeness of God; **2** he created them male and female. When they were created, he blessed them and called them mankind.

3 Adam was 130 years old when he fathered a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.

4 Adam lived 800 years after he fathered Seth, and he fathered other sons and daughters. **5** So Adam's life lasted 930 years; then he died.

6 Seth was 105 years old when he fathered Enosh. **7** Seth lived 807 years after he fathered Enosh, and he fathered other sons and daughters. **8** So Seth's life lasted 912 years; then he died.

9 Enosh was 90 years old when he fathered Kenan. **10** Enosh lived 815 years after he fathered Kenan, and he fathered other sons and daughters. **11** So Enosh's life lasted 905 years; then he died.

12 Kenan was 70 years old when he fathered Mahalalel. **13** Kenan lived 840 years after he fathered Mahalalel, and he fathered other sons and daughters. **14** So Kenan's life lasted 910 years; then he died.

15 Mahalalel was 65 years old when he fathered Jared. **16** Mahalalel lived 830 years after he fathered Jared, and he fathered other sons and daughters. **17** So Mahalalel's life lasted 895 years; then he died.

18 Jared was 162 years old when he fathered Enoch. **19** Jared lived 800 years after he fathered Enoch, and he fathered other sons and daughters. **20** So Jared's life lasted 962 years; then he died.

21 Enoch was 65 years old when he fathered Methuselah. **22** And after he fathered Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and fathered other sons and daughters. **23** So Enoch's life lasted 365 years. **24** Enoch walked with God; then he was not there because God took him.

25 Methuselah was 187 years old when he fathered Lamech. **26** Methuselah lived 782 years after he fathered Lamech, and he fathered other sons and daughters. **27** So Methuselah's life lasted 969 years; then he died.

28 Lamech was 182 years old when he fathered a son. **29** And he named him Noah, saying, "This one will bring us relief from the agonizing labor of our hands, caused by the ground the LORD has cursed." **30** Lamech lived 595 years after he fathered Noah, and he fathered other sons and daughters. **31** So Lamech's life lasted 777 years; then he died.

32 Noah was 500 years old, and he fathered Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Chapter 6: Widespread Corruption and God's Grief

1 When mankind began to multiply on the earth and daughters were born to them, **2** the sons of God saw that the daughters of mankind were beautiful, and they took any they chose as wives for themselves. **3** And the LORD said, "My Spirit will not remain with mankind forever, because they are corrupt. Their days will be 120 years." **4** The Nephilim were on the earth both in those days and afterward, when the sons of God came to the daughters of mankind, who bore children to them. They were the powerful men of old, the famous men.

5 When the LORD saw that human wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time, **6** the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and he

was deeply grieved. 7 Then the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I created, off the face of the earth, together with the animals, creatures that crawl, and birds of the sky—for I regret that I made them." 8 Noah, however, found favor with the LORD.

Key Background:

- **Two Lineages Established:** Genesis 4:17-26 presents two distinct family lines descending from Adam—Cain's line (representing civilization without God) and Seth's line (representing those who call on the LORD). This division establishes a pattern throughout Scripture: those who walk with God versus those who walk away from Him, the wheat and the tares growing together until judgment.
- **Cain Builds a City:** Cain becomes "the builder of a city" (4:17), establishing the first urban civilization. Cities in Scripture often represent human achievement, security, and organization apart from God (Babel, Babylon, Sodom). Cain's city-building shows humanity seeking safety and community through human effort rather than divine provision, foreshadowing the Tower of Babel.
- **Cultural Achievements of Cain's Line:** Cain's descendants develop remarkable cultural and technological advances: Jabal fathers nomadic herding (4:20), Jubal creates musical instruments (4:21), and Tubal-cain forges metal tools and weapons (4:22). These achievements demonstrate common grace—God allowing even the ungodly to develop culture, arts, and technology. Civilization advances, but without moral foundation.
- **Lamech's Violence and Polygamy:** Lamech represents the culmination of Cain's godless line. He practices polygamy (the first recorded instance, violating God's one-man-one-woman design), and his boastful poem (4:23-24) celebrates violence and revenge. Where God promised protection for Cain (sevenfold vengeance), Lamech arrogantly claims seventy-seven-fold vengeance for himself—complete moral corruption replacing humility before God.
- **Seth—The Replacement:** God graciously gives Adam and Eve another son, Seth, "in place of Abel, since Cain killed him" (4:25). Eve recognizes this as God's provision. Through Seth's line, the promised seed of Genesis 3:15 would eventually come—culminating in Christ. Luke 3:38 traces Jesus's genealogy back through Seth, to Adam, to God.
- **Calling on the Name of the LORD:** With Seth's son Enosh, "people began to call on the name of the LORD" (4:26). This marks the beginning of corporate worship and prayer. The Hebrew suggests this may mean they began to proclaim God's name publicly or to invoke His name in worship. While Cain's line pursued earthly achievements, Seth's line sought the LORD.
- **The Genealogical Pattern:** Genesis 5 follows a deliberate literary pattern for each patriarch: age when son was born, years lived after, total lifespan, "then he died." This drumbeat refrain "then he died... then he died... then he died" hammers home the curse of Genesis 3:19—death reigns over humanity because of sin (Romans 5:14).
- **Long Lifespans:** The pre-flood patriarchs lived extraordinarily long lives (averaging over 900 years). Possible explanations include better environmental conditions before the flood, genetic purity closer to creation, or God's patience in postponing judgment. These long lives allowed rapid population growth and the accumulation of knowledge and civilization.
- **Made in God's Likeness:** Genesis 5:1-3 bookends creation language, reminding readers that humanity was made in God's image. But now Adam fathers Seth "in his likeness, according to his image"—passing on not just God's image but also his fallen nature. Every person inherits both the dignity of being made in God's image and the corruption of Adam's sin.
- **Enoch Walked with God:** Enoch stands out in the genealogy—twice it says he "walked with God" (5:22, 24). This phrase describes intimate fellowship and obedient relationship with the LORD. Unlike every other patriarch ("then he died"), Enoch "was not there because God took him." Hebrews 11:5 explains God translated Enoch directly to heaven without experiencing death—a reward for faith and a preview of eternal life.
- **Methuselah's Name and Significance:** Methuselah lived 969 years—the longest recorded human lifespan. His name likely means "when he dies, it shall be sent" or "his death shall bring." Remarkably, Methuselah died the same year the flood came (based on the chronological data in Genesis 5), suggesting his life was God's extended mercy—judgment delayed until the last possible moment.
- **Noah's Name and Hope:** Lamech names his son Noah (meaning "rest" or "comfort"), expressing hope that "this one will bring us relief from the agonizing labor of our hands, caused by the ground the LORD has cursed"

(5:29). This longing for relief from the curse looks forward to God's ultimate rest-bringer—Jesus Christ, who delivers us from sin's curse.

- **The Sons of God:** Genesis 6:2 describes "sons of God" taking "daughters of mankind" as wives. The phrase "sons of God" in the Old Testament typically refers to angelic beings (Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7). This passage describes fallen angels cohabiting with human women in a grotesque violation of the created order. Jude 6-7 and 2 Peter 2:4 reference angels who "did not keep their own position" and "abandoned their proper dwelling," connecting this to the Genesis 6 account. The result is corruption, the blurring of divine boundaries between the spiritual and physical realms, and the production of the Nephilim.

- **The Nephilim:** These "powerful men of old, the famous men" (6:4) were the offspring produced when the sons of God (fallen angels) took human women as wives. The name *Nephilim* possibly means "fallen ones." They were likely giants of extraordinary strength and stature—hybrid beings that violated God's created order. Their presence represents the corruption of humanity reaching grotesque proportions. These Nephilim may be the origin of ancient mythology's demigods, titans, and legendary heroes—distorted echoes of this pre-flood reality preserved in cultures worldwide (Greek, Roman, Norse, Hindu mythologies). They produced a violent, corrupt culture dominated by might, fame, and power rather than righteousness and submission to God.

- **God's Spirit Limit:** God declares "My Spirit will not remain with mankind forever" (6:3). This indicates God withdrawing His restraining influence, setting a time limit (120 years, possibly the time until the flood) on His patience. When God's Spirit stops striving with humanity, moral collapse accelerates. This warns that divine patience has limits.

- **Total Corruption:** Verse 5 provides God's devastating assessment: "every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time." This is total depravity—not that every person is as evil as possible, but that sin has corrupted every part of human nature (mind, will, affections) and every person without exception. The corruption is comprehensive, continuous, and from youth (8:21).

- **God's Grief:** Verse 6 reveals God's emotional response—He "regretted" and was "deeply grieved." This anthropopathism (attributing human emotions to God) shows God's pain over sin's devastation. God doesn't take pleasure in judgment (Ezekiel 33:11) but grieves over humanity's self-destruction. His "regret" isn't acknowledging a mistake but expressing sorrow over how humanity has chosen evil.

- **Noah Found Favor:** Amid universal corruption, "Noah found favor with the LORD" (6:8). The word "favor" (*chen*) is grace—unmerited favor. This sets up the next section where Noah is described as "righteous" and "blameless" (6:9), but this righteousness came through faith (Hebrews 11:7), not sinless perfection. Noah wasn't saved because he was good; he was good because God's grace enabled him to walk faithfully amid a wicked generation.

Questions from the Story:

- What does Cain do after leaving God's presence (4:17)? What does city-building represent?
- What accomplishments are listed among Cain's descendants (4:18-22)? What do these cultural achievements show?
- What does Lamech do that violates God's design for marriage (4:19)? How many wives does he take?
- What does Lamech say to his wives (4:23-24)? How does this demonstrate moral corruption?
- How does Lamech's claim compare to God's promise about Cain? What does this reveal about pride?
- Who does God give to Adam and Eve (4:25)? Why is Seth significant?
- What begins to happen in Seth's generation (4:26)? What does "call on the name of the LORD" indicate?
- How does Genesis 5:1-2 recall the creation account? What does it emphasize about humanity?
- What phrase is repeated throughout Genesis 5 after each patriarch's life? What does this drumbeat of death emphasize?
- How long did the pre-flood patriarchs typically live? What might account for these extraordinarily long lifespans?
- What does verse 3 say about Seth's relationship to Adam? How does this differ from Adam's relationship to God?
- What is different about Enoch's account (5:21-24)? What does it mean that he "walked with God"?
- What happened to Enoch instead of dying (5:24)? What does Hebrews 11:5 tell us about why?
- Who lived the longest recorded human lifespan (5:27)? What is significant about when Methuselah died?

- What does Lamech name his son, and why (5:29)? What hope does this express?
- What problem arises in Genesis 6:1-2? Who are the "sons of God" and "daughters of mankind"?
- What does the LORD say about His Spirit's relationship with humanity (6:3)? What limit does God set?
- Who were the Nephilim (6:4)? What does their description as "powerful" and "famous" suggest?
- What is God's assessment of humanity in verse 5? How complete is the corruption described?
- What is God's emotional response to human wickedness (6:6)? What does it mean that God "regretted"?
- What does God declare He will do (6:7)? Who will be affected by the coming judgment?
- Who stands out from the rest of humanity (6:8)? What does "found favor" mean?
- What does the contrast between Cain's line (cultural achievement) and Seth's line (calling on the LORD) demonstrate about two ways of living?
- How does Lamech's violence and polygamy show the progression of sin when left unchecked?
- What does the repeated phrase "then he died" throughout Genesis 5 teach us about the universal reign of death because of sin?
- Why is Enoch's translation to heaven without dying so significant? What hope does this provide for believers?
- What can we learn from the fact that both Enoch and Noah (6:9) are described as those who "walked with God" in corrupt generations?
- How does Genesis 6:5 ("every inclination... nothing but evil all the time") describe the doctrine of total depravity?
- What does God's grief over human sin (6:6) reveal about His heart and character?
- How does Noah's finding "favor" with God (6:8) demonstrate the doctrine of grace?
- What does the contrast between widespread wickedness and Noah's righteousness teach us about the possibility of faithfulness even in corrupt cultures?
- In what ways do we see common grace operating in Cain's line—allowing cultural advancement without spiritual foundation?
- How does the intermarriage described in Genesis 6:1-2 warn against spiritual compromise and blurring boundaries between God's people and the world?
- What does this passage teach about God's patience having limits? How should this affect how we respond to His warnings today?
- How does the longing expressed in Noah's name (relief from the curse) point forward to Christ as our ultimate rest and deliverer from sin's curse?