

East of Eden

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- [0 : 00] I'm so excited to bring God's word to you this morning. It really is a privilege for me. And let me pray before we start.
- Heavenly Father, we ask that you would illuminate our minds, our hearts, so that your word would land on us with power.
- That it would accomplish its purposes in our lives. That it would remind us of your steadfast grace throughout human history and throughout our whole lives.
- In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. We skipped around a little bit in our reading. We skipped the genealogies.
- But that's not because they're unimportant. I'm going to reference them in the sermon. It's just for the sake of time we abbreviated the reading of it. So please do have your Bible open to that because I will mention them.
- [1 : 12] And in his novel, whose title is based on this passage, East of Eden, John Steinbeck writes this through the voice of the narrator.
- He says, We have only one story. All novels, all poetry, they're all built on the never-ending contest in ourselves of good and evil.
- And it occurs to me that evil must constantly respawn. While good, while virtue is immortal. Vice has always a new, fresh young face.
- While virtue is venerable as nothing else in the world is. Exiled from the Garden of Eden, East of Eden, we see this contest of good and evil within humanity.
- And overall, the picture is really grim. Other ancient Near Eastern worldviews believe in human progress. They think that humans are always improving, heading toward a goal. Old Testament does not believe in progress.
- [2 : 12] Old Testament teaches the ineluctable advance of sin. Humanity just spiraling down farther and farther and farther. That's why Christ has to come to redeem and to rescue humanity.
- And so here we see evil constantly respawning and dragging humanity down with it. But through it all, we see also God graciously preserving humanity so that we might eventually submit to him and be redeemed by the blood of his son, Jesus Christ.
- So that's the main point of this passage. We're going to talk first about God's grace toward Cain in chapter 4. And then God's grace toward Seth in chapter 5. And then finally, God's grace toward us in chapter 6.
- And recall that due to Adam and Eve's sin, God pronounced to the woman in Genesis 3, 16, I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing. In pain you shall bring forth children.
- Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you. So remember, childbearing is not a curse, but the pain in childbearing is. Right? So the husband's, it's just in the same way, husband's headship over his wife is not a curse, but the oppressive rule, his oppressive rule over her is.

[3 : 25] So with that context in mind, read verse 1. It says, Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.

Right? So you can see kind of her boast, her triumph of having conceived a man. And of course, to know someone within the biblical context is euphemism for intercourse.

That's why right after that it's followed by a description of children. Now the name Cain is a wordplay that sounds very much like the word gotten. That's why he's named that, because Eve said, I have gotten a man.

And then name Abel means breath or vanity. So it's already hinting at the fact that his life will be cut short. Now, verses 2 to 3, we see what happens.

Now, Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. In the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions.

[4 : 25] So both Cain and Abel bring an offering to God that's appropriate to their profession. Right? So there's nothing wrong with their professions themselves. They're bringing an offering that fits what they do as their job.

But God only accepts, he only takes delight in Abel's offering. Right? So verses 4 to 5, it says, And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering, he had no regard.

And the reason for this, the narrative seems to suggest, is that while Abel offered the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions, Cain did not offer the firstfruits of his ground, of the ground that he works.

And according to Old Testament law, every firstborn male belonged to the Lord. That's because of Passover. Right? God redeemed the firstborn of Israel. So he said they had to pay a redemption price for every firstborn male, and every firstborn animals for sacrifice had to be sacrificed.

And in particular, also, God commanded Israelites to offer the fat of the meat because the fat was considered the best part, the choices part of the meat. So you're supposed to offer that in sacrifice, not consume them themselves.

[5 : 38] And so notice, that's exactly what Abel does. He brings the firstborn with their fat portions. Similarly, the firstfruits of all produce was required to be offered up to the Lord.

So in Numbers 18, 12 to 14, it talks about this. In Deuteronomy 26, 2, it says, You shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground which you harvest from your land that the Lord your God is giving you.

Right? And the point of this is to recognize that all that we have comes from God. So you're harvesting from the land that the Lord your God gave you. So the first of it should come to the Lord. It belongs to the Lord.

So Exodus 23, 29, it says, The best of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God. So, of course, it makes sense if you think about it, right? You bring the cream of the crop, you know, not the crumbs to the king when you come to the king.

But you bring, you know, the firstfruits, not the leftovers to the king, right? So the question to ask when it comes to worship, when it comes to offering to God is not what can we spare, but what can we sacrifice, right?

[6 : 47] And that's the heart behind David. When he brings an offering to God in 2 Samuel 24, 24, he says, I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God that costs me nothing, right?

The costlier the offering, right, the more suitable it is for the purpose of expressing the preciousness of the one to whom we bring the offering. And in fact, that's embedded in the word sacrifice itself, right?

See, it's a sacrifice, right? It's not spare change. It's sacrifice, something that's costly to us that we bring to him. And so we see the half-heartedness of Cain's offering when it says he doesn't even, doesn't bring the firstfruits, but he just brings some of the fruit of the ground.

That's why when the author of Hebrews mentions this tale, Hebrews 11 to 4, he says, By faith, Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts.

So this is something, of course, is very applicable to us, right? And this is one of the reasons why, as a church, we don't pass the offering basket during the service.

[7 : 58] There's nothing wrong with that, per se, and it's okay that other churches do it. It's just that we think that it might prompt people to give out of guilt or out of a sense of obligation, as opposed to giving freely.

Because God's not honored by that, right? God doesn't even accept Abel's sacrifice. He brought the sacrifice, but God doesn't even accept it, right? It's not like God is hungry and he needs sacrifices to feed on.

It's not that he's poor, that he needs our money to sustain his church. He owns everything in the world. He can provide for his church if he wants to. So our desire is that our church, we can honor God by bringing our gifts to him freely.

Honor him with the sacrifices we bring because we are willing to make the sacrifice in order to make God look precious, to affirm him and to worship him. So at this point, then, Cain should have realized what he had done wrong.

And what he should have done was to acknowledge his wrong ways and then correct it. But instead, he becomes sullen and despondent. He says he hung his head. He says, Cain was very angry and his face fell, verse 5.

[9 : 05] But God graciously reaches out to him, verses 6 to 7. The Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry? And why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?

And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. His desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it. God gives Cain an opportunity to repent, and God gives him also a serious warning.

Remember, this language is almost exactly like Genesis 3.16, what God has said to Eve in his pronouncement of the curse. That your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.

So in a similar way, just as the woman, as a result of the fall, the wife, will seek to have her way with the husband to control her. But instead, the husband will oppress her and rule over her. In this case, sin desires to have its way with Cain, to possess him, to control him.

Yet he must rule over it. And the key difference, of course, is that while God's pronouncement to Eve is descriptive, that's what, in fact, is going to happen. But his pronouncement here to Cain is prescriptive.

[10 : 14] It's what he needs to do. He needs to rule over sin. He must master it. And verse 7 is a really, really helpful and insightful description of sin. Look at how graphic it is.

Read it with me. Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it. The word crouch means to lie in wait, right, about to pounce.

It means to lurk. That's the nature of sin. It's being compared, metaphorically, to a savage beast, a wild beast that's crouching, waiting to pounce at you by the door, right?

And it's at the door, he says, right? It's not far away. It's not out in the field. It's right at the door. And this is really helpful for us because sometimes I think we, as Christians, can treat sin like a little fluffy bunny in the garden, right?

It's like, you know, sometimes we'll let him in, you know, enjoy it for a little while, and then let it out before it causes too much, you know, soils the carpet too much. No, this is sin is a wild beast. How would you treat a savage beast at your door?

[11 : 19] And that's what 1 Peter 5a talks about, right? Be sober-minded. Be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. How would you treat a savage beast at your door?

You don't go anywhere near it. You don't give it an inch of room to get in. That's how we treat sin. That's how we fight sin. Don't give it any room to breathe. Expose your reign and rule over it.

Opress it. Don't give it any room to grow in your life. That's how we have to deal with sin and fight sin in our life. And I once heard a story of a really wealthy woman who was trying to hire a chauffeur.

She interviewed a few candidates, and a couple of them were exceptional drivers, and she had them drive up a mountain range, a narrow path right by the cliff.

And they were trying to show off how exceptional their driving skills were. So they drove as fast as they can and as close as they can to the precipice, and they made the trip in record time and came back.

[12 : 22] But the third driver was very different because he drove slowly, and he drove as far away from the precipice as possible. And to nobody's surprise, she hired the third and last driver because she doesn't want to die when someone's driving.

She wants to be driven in a safe manner. That's how we should treat sin. The goal is if we're asking ourselves, when we think about sin and temptation in our lives, how far can we go without sinning?

How close can we get without sinning? Then we're asking the wrong question. The goal is to stay at the center of God's will, not flirt with sin as much as you can.

It's a wild beast at your door, and that's how we should treat it. It's desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it. Cain, unfortunately, spurns God's counsel, and it says in verse 8, Cain spoke to Abel, his brother, presumably telling him, hey, let's go out to the field.

And it says when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother, Abel, and killed him. Old Testament law, for example, Deuteronomy 22, judges crimes committed in the field as premeditated murder because it's done in the field where a cry of help cannot be heard by anyone within range.

[13 : 40] So this is what Cain is doing. And the word kill refers to vicious violence. It's not just irregular, just generic word for kill.

It could translate almost butchered. He butchered him to death. Cain hacked him, his brother, to death. And notice how the word brother is repeated throughout this passage.

Throughout verses 8 to 11, the brother is mentioned six times. His brother, his brother, his brother, to highlight the heinousness of his sin.

He murdered his own brother, the little brother, whom he should have cared for and taken responsibility for. He killed in cold blood. So when the Lord speaks to Cain in verse 9, where is Abel, your brother?

And Cain replies, I don't know. I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper? Though Cain thinks the obvious answer is no, I'm not the brother's keeper.

[14 : 39] The correct answer, actually, according to the narrative, is yes. Yes, you are. You're his brother. And 1 John 3, 11 to 15 talks about this. John teaches Christians within the family of God to treat each other as brothers.

And he tells us not to follow the example of Cain, but instead to love one another. And think about that for a moment. If we really treated each other with the same sense of responsibility that we have toward our own siblings, what would that look like?

You know, if we would care enough then to tell the hard truth to each other, we would care enough then when someone's hurting our brother or sister, that we would do something.

We would care enough that, you know, this is what happens, right? If a stranger is sick, if an acquaintance is sick, you tell them to stay at home and wear a mask so that they don't get you sick, right?

But when it's your brother or your sister that's sick, you care. You're by the bedside caring for that sibling until he or she is well. Do we treat each other?

[15 : 47] Do we love one another, serve one another as brothers and sisters? Because that's what this passage is telling us. Yes, you are your brother's keeper. What would it look like for all of us to be brother's keepers?

So God interrogates Cain here. And if you might, if you remember, when God interrogated Adam, even though he did shift blame, right, he at least owned up to what he did.

But Cain lies to God's face. So you could tell he's more hardened. He's a greater sinner. He says, I do not know. And verse 2 described Abel as keeper of sheep.

And here he says, am I his brother's keeper? It's the same word. So it's almost like he's saying, am I the keeper's keeper? Of course not. He's the keeper whose sheep you accepted.

He's the keeper. I'm not a keeper. So he's just, you know, absolving himself of all responsibility. But God is patient and undeterred. In verses 10 to 12, he asks, what have you done?

[16 : 50] The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened his mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength.

You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth. So remember Cain was described in verse 2 as worker of the ground. So now his own denial comes to bite him. Also, you're not the keeper.

You're the worker of the ground. Well, then your ground will reject you, right? For Adam, remember, Adam himself was not cursed. The ground was cursed, right, when Adam sinned.

And said, now Adam's going to have to work with toil, with painful toil to work the ground and make it bear fruit. But now Cain himself is cursed from the ground. So that even when he works the ground with painful toil, it will not bear fruit for him, which forces him to a life of a wanderer and a vagrant.

So it's the same situation. There's a lot of similarities with Adam and Eve's sin, chapter 3, and the sins here. The words like no, keep, cursed, drive away, they all occur here.

[17 : 56] But it's not exactly parallel because it shows a picture that is farther down the sinful chain. So it's people are more degenerated. They're more evil. They're more wicked and callous in their relationship to God.

And so sadly, Cain seems incapable of repentance. And instead of weeping at the severity of his crime, he complains about the severity of his punishment.

Verses 13 to 14. My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground and from your face I shall be hidden.

I should be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth and whoever finds me will kill me. It would have been at this point totally understandable for God to just throw up his hands in exasperation and then just strike him down at that moment.

But he responds with grace in verses 15 to 16. Not so. If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And he puts a mark on him to protect him as a sign of God's protection over him.

[19 : 07] And so that's how merciful God is, right? And if God is just in exacting vengeance on sinners, in the same way, he's also merciful towards sinners.

He seeks to find a way for them, for them to repent and for them to return to God. And so here, even though the blood of Abel that's crying out from the ground is calling for his death, his immediate death, he has mercy on Cain and banishes him instead.

So he settles in the land of Nod, which means land of wandering. And that's located poignantly east of Eden, indicating that he's getting farther and farther away from the original paradise that God had created for humanity.

And in spite of all of this, in Cain's sins, we see God's grace toward him in the fact that he blesses him with progeny as well, right?

He still gets to bear God's image and produce children. Verses 17-24, we find his genealogy. But this is still the cursed line. It's a line that's separated from God.

[20 : 12] And we see that in some of the examples that we get in verses 19-23. So look at Lamech in 19-23. He says, He took two wives. Right away, that's a red flag.

Because we know from Genesis 2, God's intention for marriage was that a man shall leave his father's house to be united with all women. So it's between one man and one woman.

And so right away, when he says, He took two wives, it's threatening. It's ominous. And then Lamech turns out to be, unsurprisingly, a really unpleasant fellow.

His wives' names are Ada and Zillah, which means pretty, or chime, or tinkle for the other woman. So basically, one has a pretty face, the other has a pretty voice.

So it's describing that this Lamech is a really, he's a sensual guy. He enjoys women, he's taking up the woman he likes as his wife. So he's an unsavory character.

[21 : 09] Now, so in verses 23 to 24, he boasts in poetic form. Ada and Zillah, hear my voice. You wives of Lamech, listen to what I say. I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me.

If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is 77-fold. Self-centered, haughty, hot-headed man, right? So Cain at least knew something, he had done something wrong, he was trying to hide it from God.

But Lamech's boasting about killing a man, a young man, for wounding him. It wasn't like he was trying to kill him for wounding him, for bruising him. He kills him. And the poetry is so wonderful because at the end of each line, it has the word like my or me in it to just emphasize, highlight his egotism.

And the beauty of the poetry is a stark contrast to his unsavory character. Because what he does is appalling. But even though this line is cursed, it's separated from God, it's tainted with sin, in an imperfect way, Cain still experiences God's grace and blessing as his image bearer.

And we see this throughout verses 17 to 21. It says that Cain built a city, right? So that's urbanization. That's the beginning of the cities, which is necessary if you're cursed like Cain is and you can't be a self-subsistent farmer.

[22 : 36] You need to create other industries so that you can trade for food or buy food because you can't produce food for yourself. And verses 22 to 22 tells us that Lamech had three sons, Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal Cain, which all come from the same Hebrew word meaning to produce, highlighting their inventiveness.

And so the Jubal is the forerunner of the nomadic lifestyle and invents animal husbandry, right? Of course, Abel was a shepherd, but this is more broad. He's taking care of all kinds of livestock.

Jubal was the creator of musical instruments and Tubal Cain was the first to discover metalworking, right? So all of this is an example of God's common grace. Common meaning that it's common to all.

He shows grace even to his non-elect, to the people who are separated from and not chosen for his special grace, yet still even to them, God shows common grace. And these sons of Cain become the fathers of city, culture, and civilization.

So that's God's grace toward Cain, even in the midst of sin. But God's special grace, his saving grace, is reserved for the chosen line, and that's God's grace toward Seth.

[23 : 44] And that line begins in verses 25 to 26, still in chapter 4. It says, Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth. For she said, God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.

To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time, people began to call upon the name of the Lord. So with the murder of Abel, God's blessing can't rest on Cain.

So now it passes on to their second son, Seth. And Seth, his name is contrasted with Cain's, because in Cain, Eve said, I have gotten. So she named him Cain.

But with Seth, Eve says, God has appointed. God has put him. And so Jesus is recognizing the agency of God. And right away, the contrast between the two lines is highlighted by the fact that at that time, people began to call upon the name of the Lord.

So this is a reference to the beginning of organized, regular worship. This is the beginning of religion, really, in a way. And so at the time, so Cain's descendants are living without reference to God, but Seth descendants start to worship God in a regular, organized way.

[24 : 57] And that requires culture also, right? So for example, like the music that they produced will be used for singing, and the metal working that Cain's descendants produced will be used for building the temple, right?

So the animals that Cain's descendants learned to care for will be used for sacrifice. So all of this will be used, but Cain's descendants used those things without reference to God for their own glory, while Seth descendants used them, harnessed them all for God's glory.

Culture serves the purpose of the cult, the cultic purpose of worship. Cult, not in a generic way, not in a bad sense. So, the genealogy of Seth begins in earnest in chapter 5, and it's typical of Genesis to give you like a preview of the next section at the end of the previous section.

Verses 1 to 5, it says, this is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them man when they were created.

When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness after his image and named him Seth. And the days of Adam after he fathered Seth were 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters.

[26 : 11] Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, and he died. So notice how this passage explicitly connects God's creation of man and woman in his image and likeness with Adam and Eve's procreation of human beings in their own image and likeness.

So they're modeling God, following him as they bear children. Now before I talk further about God's grace towards Seth, I'm just going to address a couple questions that people always ask when we come to this text, and they're good questions.

And first is, how did these people have children in the first place? Right? Whom did they marry to have children with? So we'll notice it says in verse 4, Adam had other sons and daughters.

Right? So at this juncture of human history, there isn't anyone else to marry except for your siblings, your relatives. So Adam and Eve's children would have had to marry their siblings, and then the generation after them would have had to marry their cousins, and so on.

So you see this in the example of Abraham who was married to his half-sister Sarah. Right? So now that sounds really bad, right? But just listen to me for a little more. Spiritually, this wasn't a problem at that point because God did not forbid inbreeding until he gave the law of Moses in Leviticus 18.

[27 : 25] So this is not forbidden by God at this point. Biologically, this probably wasn't a problem at this point because the genetic code would have been relatively free of defects which would have minimized the risks of inbreeding that right now is so prevalent and prominent.

And sociologically, this wasn't a problem then as it is now today because these were marital relationships between consenting adults as opposed to non-consensual, extramarital, and pubescent or prepubescent relationships that incest usually is today.

So all this stigma that's at sensitive stage, just all of those things, it would have been totally different. It's not what we would think of in today's day. So at this time, even though God forbids incest later and today, it is totally unacceptable and reprehensible to God, it was permitted in the early days of humanity.

And the second question is how did they live for so long? Right? These men are called antediluvian patriarchs, meaning before the flood patriarchs, because the fact that they lived before the flood seems to be the reason that the narrative provides for their longevity.

So if you look at Genesis 6-3, God says, my spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh, his days shall be 120 years. So that's his pronouncement at the time of his judgment with the flood.

[28 : 47] And it does seem like after the flood, the age of the patriarchs declined precipitously until it plateaus around 120. Now, nevertheless, and it's significant, I think, it's that they never reach a thousand years.

They get tantalizingly close, but they never quite reach a thousand years. And I think narrator is trying to make the point that though they live a very long time, they are all, you know, they are not able to live to fullness.

They're not able to enter eternal life because of the consequence of Adam and Eve's sin. They all die. And it seems like at least some of their ages do seem to have symbolic significance. For example, Enoch is taken up to heaven at the age of 365.

I mean, the symbolism of that is lost on no one, right? The Lamech dies at the age of 777, right? And then French biblical scholar M. Barnounen, I think, I think is the one that came up with the best kind of explanation for this in terms of the symbolic significance of it.

He takes the cue from Enoch's age of 365, which is, and then he tries to use the astronomical periods that were used at the time in the ancient Near East and were known to the Babylonians.

[30 : 01] And as he did that, he discovered some striking parallels. So, for example, Lamech's 777 years is equal to the sum of the Sinotic periods of Jupiter and Saturn. Sinotic period is how long a planet takes to come back to the same place in the sky from our perspective.

And also significant is Jared's 962 years equal to the sum of the Sinotic periods of Venus and Saturn. And the Babylonian Sumerians also used the sexagesimal numerical system, meaning that the base number that they used for the numerical system was 60.

And there's some numbers, connections to 60 here as well. So, like, if you add up all the age at which these patriarchs have their first children and you divide it by 60 and then you add up all the age in which these patriarchs die and then you divide it by 60, the sum of the remainders is 365, like the age of Enoch.

Now, so, if this is the case, and this is what the narrator's intention is, then the cycle of these men's ears match the cycles of the heavenly spheres to indicate that, you know, the gods are in control of it and that they are living, you know, a life that's far more blessed than the life that people live after the flood.

Now, with that said, I don't think the symbolic significance of the numbers necessarily imply that these are made-up figures, right, because these were real historical figures and that's why they have names and that's why there's a record of their children and that's why specific numbers of age are assigned to them because we're supposed to understand them to have been real people.

[31 : 36] Yes, distant from the time of Moses' writing, but still real people who live. Now, getting back to the Setai genealogy, great, all of this, it shows that you get a distinct impression that this is a special line, it's blessed by God and several clues for that.

So, first, it's typical of biblical genealogy to highlight the seventh person in the genealogy because seven is the number of completion and the seventh number in Cain's genealogy was Lamech but here, it is Enoch, seventh from Adam and verses 22, 24, it says, Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters.

Thus, all the days of Enoch were 365 years. Enoch walked with God and he was not for God took him. So, twice, Enoch is described as having walked with God.

Right? That's the language that is used to describe all the godly men throughout the Old Testament. They walked with God and it says that he was taken, God took him. That's the language that is used to describe Elijah whom God takes in a fiery chariot, right?

So, he doesn't die. So, it seems to suggest that Enoch didn't have a normal death. He was somehow taken up by God. But Moses isn't really interested in how that happened as much as the fact that it did happen.

[32 : 56] And secondly, there's more detail given about Lamech as well. And Enoch and Lamech, they're given more detail here because there's Enoch and Lamech in the Canaanite line as well. So, it's intended to distinguish the characters.

And Lamech here, it says, he says, out of the ground that the Lord has cursed after he fathers Noah, he says, this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands.

And he says, he lives 777 years, which is, you know, remember Lamech, the other Lamech, the bad Lamech, boasted about how his revenge is 77-fold.

But Lamech here, he lives, not the Lamech, this, Noah's father, Lamech here, lives for 777. And you may have also noticed if you're reading the genealogy carefully that in addition to Enoch and Lamech who have the exact same names in the two genealogies, there is a lot of similar names if you look, if you compare the two.

In fact, the last seven names look almost identical in the genealogy. So if you switch Enoch in Setai line with Mahalalel's place, then even the order is exactly the same where these names occur.

[34 : 11] So Cain is parallel to Canaan, Enoch to Enoch, Eret to Jerad, Mehujael to Mahalalel, Methusael to Methuselah, and then Lamech to Lamech.

Right? I mean, this is intentional. So perhaps they had a practice of naming children after relatives, I mean, like we do today, or giving similar names to cousins. Right? So that's possible.

But I think that the similar names are given, provided intentionally also to draw a contrast between the two lines. The fact that this is the cursed line, but this is the blessed line that God's bringing.

And that contrast is made more obvious by the fact that in the Setai line, they give, they provide their longevity. Right? This is how long they live. Look how long they live. But with the Canaanite line, age is not given.

And then secondly, with each of the announcement of firstborn, in the Setai line, it says, and he had other sons and daughters, but in the Canaanite line, no such words exist.

[35 : 07] So they don't seem to have, they didn't seem to have had other sons and daughters. So it shows that the Setai line is more fruitful, he's more blessed by God, and they live longer as well.

And in fact, the only daughter mentioned in the entire Canaanite, there's only one, Nehemiah, right? So in the entire Canaanite line. And so, so all of, but, all of this, it shows God's special grace towards Setai.

Now this is what we call saving grace, electing grace, special grace. Now we're going to turn to God's grace toward us and look at chapter six. Because even with God's special grace toward the Setai line, if we had hoped that they would become an obedient race of men and become, you know, fulfill God's design for creation, then our hopes are very quickly dashed in chapter six.

It says in verses one to four, when a man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters weren't born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were attractive and they took as their wives any they chose.

Then the Lord said, my spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh, his days shall be 120 years. The Nephilim were on the earth in those days and also afterward when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them.

[36 : 27] They were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown. Now, there are several theories regarding the identity of the sons of God and if you want to know all of them, I'd be happy to tell you about it at the Q&A; because just for the sake of time.

But the simplest and I think by far the best explanation is that these sons of God are angelic beings who, like the serpent in Genesis 3, are now transgressing God-ordained creational order by marrying daughters of man, humanity.

And this view alone makes good sense of the fact that the sons of God are contrasted with daughters of man and why God so abhors this union. So early Jewish exegesis, the Roman Jewish historian Josephus, the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as New Testament texts like 2 Peter 2.4 and Jude 6-7 and earliest Christian writers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, they all agree that this is what this passage is referring to.

Sons of God refer to the fallen angels whom God punished as a result of their sin that's documented here in Genesis 6. And 2 Peter 2 talks about that in greater detail. So for example, other Old Testament texts refer to angelic beings as sons of God, Job 1.6, Psalm 29 verse 1.

And in fact, in Job chapters 1 and 2, you see God holding a court, right, with the heavenly beings, the angelic beings, and Satan comes as one of the sons of God to accuse Job before God, right?

[38 : 00] So that's the picture. And this is very consistent with other ancient Near Eastern views of their own pantheons with sons of God in the court, with the court of God. The main difference, of course, is that the Old Testament teaches that there's only one God.

All of these are not real gods. They're just God-like beings. They're angelic beings. While the other ancient Eastern religions believed that they were all real gods and actual offspring of the God. So that's a big, big difference.

But here, still, the sons of God, I think, is referring to angelic beings. And notice what they do. Try to pick up the familiar sequence of words here in verse 2, chapter 6.

The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were attractive and they took as their wives any they chose. Does this sound familiar to you guys?

We just saw it happen right in Genesis 3 because the word actually, the word attractive translated here is the same word translated as good in the earlier chapters. So God saw that it was good.

[39 : 00] And remember what Eve does in Genesis 3, 6. So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and it says later, she took of its fruit and ate.

So seeing, good, taking, and doing that, she usurped the creator's rights. And here, these angels are doing the very same thing. Sin is always the same.

You see that it's good and then you take what's not yours to take, what's forbidden to you by God. And it seems that it's not just the angels that are guilty, but it's the men who are guilty, which is why God punishes man also.

And it seems that this is not rape, right? Because it says that these sons of God took daughters of men as their wives. This is not rape, this is marriage, which means not only did the women consent, it's their fathers in this culture also consented.

So everyone in humanity is implicated in this sin. And in fact, other ancient New Yorks and religions actually encouraged fertility cults and sacred marriages with the gods.

[40 : 09] And so this is a polemic against that practice. And so God decides to punish humanity. He says, My spirit shall not abide in man forever for he is flesh.

His days shall be 120 years. Meaning that God's not going to let them live, give them the breath of life for an indefinite period of time, or even that long as the antediluvian patriarchs.

Instead, now it's going to be cut short. So this view then makes sense of the rise of the Nephilim. The Nephilim were not immortal, but they are described as mighty men.

Verse 4 says, The Nephilim were on the earth in those days and also afterward when the sons of God came into the daughters of men and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.

So the fact that Nephilim were there in those days and also afterward suggests that maybe this practice happened again at some point in human history. There's more. There's descendants of Nephilim you see throughout the Old Testament.

[41 : 10] So in Numbers 13.33, they're mentioned. So the Israelites are sent out to spy the promised land of Anan to bring back a report of how they can take the land. And then instead they come back cowering and scared and this is what they say, And there we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak who come from the Nephilim.

And we seem to ourselves like grasshoppers and so we seem to them. So they lose all their courage when they see the Nephilim in the land, the promised land. And the Nephilim aren't the only people described as giants in the Old Testament.

So Deuteronomy 2.10 talks about the Imim formerly lived there, a people great and many and tall as the Anakim. So Anakim are the people who are set to come from the Nephilim.

And like the Anakim, they're also counted as Rephaim but the Moabites call them Imim. So Anakim, Rephaim and some of the Rephaim took refuge among the Philistines in the valley of Rephaim and so that's probably the Goliath probably descended from them.

So you see, you remember that story. And that actually story is really illuminating because I think it helps clear up a common misunderstanding. When we hear the word giant or Nephilim we think of the race of giants from like Harry Potter.

[42 : 21] They grew up to like 25 feet. That's not what's going on here. So Goliath, anybody know how tall he is? Sorry? So he says the Bible describes him as six cubits and a span in 1 Samuel 17.4.

So that's actually six feet nine inches. So that's about the size of LeBron James. LeBron James is six feet eight and he's 250 pounds. I mean, that guy is a big man, right?

So I mean, so this is not talking about giants like, you know, like different, like these are big men, I mean, to be sure. They're mighty men. They were called heroes for a reason. But this is not, you know, some fantastical giant, you know, like from Harry Potter.

Now, I mean, if you were, imagine me facing LeBron James in battle. It's, it would be a very appropriate hyperbole to say that, oh, I look like a grasshopper to him, right?

I mean, so that's what's going on. So the Israelites know that, recognize that it strikes fear into their hearts just to hear of the Nephilim. And so God responds, but Nephilim, though fascinating, are reminders of humanity's depravity, make sure you remember that, and of unthinkable transgression of God's creation order.

[43 : 35] And it's because of that God responds in verses five to seven. The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said, I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.

So previously, in his act of creation, God saw that it was good. Now God sees that it is wicked. Wickedness of man was great in the earth. And it says, every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Not just our deeds, but every intention of the thoughts of our heart was evil continually. So God cares not only about what we do, but why we do them. He cares about our intention. And this verse right here is the clearest Old Testament teaching of the doctrine of total depravity.

We might also call that pervasive depravity, which states that the corruption of sin extends to every aspect of human nature. Now this doesn't mean that humanity is totally incapable of good, but it does mean that everything we do, even every good thing we do, is tainted with some semblance of evil and sin.

[44 : 53] Puritan theologian Jonathan Edwards understood this reality better than most people, and he distinguishes what he calls common virtue from true virtue. And writing that most virtues that we, so-called virtues we observe around us are simply common virtues, not true virtues.

He writes that true virtue is doing the right thing simply because God is worthy of our total trust and obedience. It's done out of love for God, out of obedience to him.

Common virtue is doing the right thing for our own sake, out of fear, out of pride. For example, common virtue is when someone is honest because he or she is afraid of getting caught in a lie and then punished afterward.

They're still honest, but they're honest for the wrong reason. It's a common virtue. Or, someone is honest because they say to themselves, oh, I'm not like one of those low-born, rotten liars because of pride.

Pride of thinking that you're more upright and honest than other people. Common virtue is when someone participates in service projects because he or she is afraid of being judged by people around them. Fear.

[46 : 07] Or someone who participates in those projects so that they can feel superior. Better. More accomplished than other people around them.

It's common virtue. We should be grateful for common virtue because if it didn't exist, this side would not function. That's an example of common grace as well. But God is not pleased with common virtue.

He says, every intention of the thought of his heart is still evil when we only have common virtue but not true virtue. Doing good deeds out of fear and pride is profoundly self-serving.

We're doing it for our glory not God's glory. So because we're taking a shortcut to virtue, what ends up happening is then we become more and more fearful and more and more prideful people which is deeply displeasing to God.

So if you're tempted to think that you're a pretty good person then we're wrong. We're very wrong. Every intention of the thoughts of our hearts are evil continually apart from Christ.

[47 : 10] The situation is so bad it says that God regretted that he had made man on the earth. Other passages of scripture say that God is not man that he should lie or a son of man that he should change his mind.

God doesn't regret anything. He doesn't repent of anything in one sense because he's the sovereign and transcendent God in his will he doesn't change but he does in a real way interact with human history respond to our actions and that's what we see here.

And it says he'd grieve him to his heart. That's the language that's used in Isaiah 54 6 to describe the grief of a deserted wife. Grieved.

That's the same word that's used in 2 Samuel 19 2 to describe a father who lost his son. Grieved. The Lord is grieved by the sin.

And his righteousness justice must issue forth in judgment. So he says he will blot out man from the face of the earth. So what then are we supposed to do? Is there any hope for humanity?

[48 : 14] And verse 8 offers a glimmer of hope. He says but Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. And the words in this passage like regretted, wipe out, favor, all sound like the name Noah in Hebrew.

So they're all pointing to him as the central figure of the next section of Genesis. It's through him that God's grace for humanity will appear. But even though Noah will be used by God to save the human race from the flood, he will not be able to save the human race from sin.

Which calls for a better and a greater Noah. And we see hints of this all throughout the passage. Remember what he said about the name Seth? It sounds like the Hebrew word for appoint.

And that's where he got his names. And that's an allusion to Genesis 3.15 which said, I will put, that's the same word, appoint, I will appoint enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and our offspring.

He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. So that promised offspring, the promised Messiah who is going to come to conquer Satan and defeat evil, that man is going to come in the line of Seth.

[49 : 24] So that's pointed at. And in Hebrews 12.22 to 24 it says, but you have come to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

God said to Cain in Genesis 4.10, the voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And according to Old Testament, blood is where the life is.

And so it is by the blood that we must make atonement for sin. But Cain's blood is not crying for atonement. It is crying for atonement in the sense that it is crying for vengeance.

That's what Abel's blood is crying out for. Abel's blood is crying out for vengeance for Cain's blood. It's calling for Cain's blood. But Christ's blood, according to the author of Hebrews, speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Because the blood that Christ shed on the cross doesn't call for vengeance and justice, but it calls for grace and mercy for sinners. The cry of vengeance that all of human history attests to, it calls for justice, it demands death.

[50 : 33] But that's satisfied by Jesus and his perfect sinless life and death on the cross. And so then it's by believing in Jesus that we can be filled with the Spirit and cultivate true virtue.

We can, it's not enough to strive to improve the human condition. We need to transform human nature and that can only happen through Christ because every intention of our thoughts are evil continually apart from him.

So I want to close by saying this to you, if you are feeling guilty, haunted, guilt-ridden today, Satan is accusing you and your conscience is bearing witness against you.

If the blood of Abel is crying out against you from everywhere for vengeance and condemnation, then hear instead for you the cry of the blood of Jesus Christ, which is crying out mercy, grace, love, forgiveness, and then come to him in repentance and faith.

There you will find redemption and salvation. So let's pray together. God, it is so easy to spot sin in human history, in your word, in our own hearts.

[52 : 01] So easy, Lord. Yet we praise you, God, that you have made a way for us through your son, Jesus, to be forgiven, to be atoned, to be redeemed by his blood.

We thank you for your mercy and grace. We just pray that you would help us to live in light of that grace, to trust in your grace and sovereignty throughout our history and throughout human history.

And we pray that you would give us the zeal and the love for others to share that grace as well. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.