

Sin Comes to the City: Genesis 4-11

I. Themes and Structure of the Primeval Events

- Genesis 4-11 tells of how sin infected humanity and caused social rebellion. It begins with Cain in his rebellion against God when he builds the city, which is the symbol of fallen humanity. As a result of fallen man in the form of the city, they rebel against God in a malignant way that reaches universal proportions in the flood (6:1-8) and the dispersion (11:1-9). The final rebellion of man will be in the apostasy of the end time (Matt. 24:36-39).
- If God had not stepped into history on these occasions, mankind would have destroyed itself. God's intervention is not only judgment but also the preservation of mankind.
- Thus these accounts, along with the fall, demonstrate the need for God's blessings in the world. They also explain why God called Abram and inaugurated the blessings through His covenant.
- The "accounts" (toledot) of Genesis 2:4-11:26.
 1. The Heavens and the Earth (2:4-4:26)
 2. The Book of Adam (5:1-6:8)
 3. Noah (6:9-9:29)
 4. Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10:1-11:9)
 5. Shem (11:10-26)

II. The Heavens and the Earth (4:1-26) Cont.

A. Cain and Abel (4:1-16)

The major theme of Genesis 4 is the spread of sin from the family to society.

The chiasmic structure of the narrative:

- A** Scene 1 (narrative): Cain and Abel are active, Yahweh passive (vv. 2b-5).
- B** Scene 2 (dialogue): Yahweh questions Cain (vv. 6-7).
- C** Scene 3 (dialogue and narrative): Cain and Abel are alone (v. 8).
- B'** Scene 4 (dialogue): Yahweh confronts Cain (vv. 9-14).
- A'** Scene 5 (narrative): Yahweh is active, Cain passive (vv. 15-16).

1. What similar motifs does the story of Cain and Abel share with the story of Adam and Eve fall (Gen. 3:1-13).

2. Compare and contrast Cain and Abel in verses 1-5.

3. Why is the Lord pleased with Abel and not Cain?

4. How does Cain respond to Lord's words in verses 6-7?

The enmity of the seed of the woman and the serpent (3:15) can be seen in verse 7.

5. How does the Lord respond to the sin of Cain (3:8-9)?

“to me”

6. What is the significance of Cain's punishment in verses 11-12?

7. How does God respond to Cain's complaint in verses 13-14?

8. What is the significance of Cain settling in Nod and what does this say about him?

9. How does this story end compared to how it began?

B. The Beginning of Civilization (4:17-26)

1. What is this section comparing and what is the point?

2. What is the significance of Cain's actions in verse 17?

3. What are the three major sins that Lamech commits in verses 19-22?

Lamech's song can be seen as a warning that if he is threatened again he will kill again.

4. What sets Seth's line apart from that of Cain's?

III. The Book of Adam (5:1-6:8)

A. The Curse (5:1-32)

1. What is the repeating phrase in chapter 5 and what point does this make?
2. What are the positive points in this section?
3. What is the significance of verse 3 in light of the previous two verses?
4. What does “walked with God” mean and what point are verses 21-24 making?
5. What is the significance of the statement in verse 29?

B. The Wickedness of Mankind (6:1-8)

The central theme of this passage is the wickedness of mankind.

1. How do the similar statements in verses 2 and 5 contrast each other?
2. What event does the wording of verse 2 reflect back on?

While humanity was following the divine decree to multiply and fill the earth, so evil was also abounding.

It is clear that the narrator is more interested in the moral aspects of the flood than he is in the physical details.

B. God's Covenant with Noah (9:1-17)

From this point on, the God of Israel would be known as a covenant-making and -keeping God.

1. Compare and contrast the covenant that God made with Adam with the one with Noah in 9:1-7.

2. What do we learn about God through the Noachic Covenant?

“This covenant does not depend on human obedience to the laws given to Noah; rather, men’s and women’s compliance with the laws allow them to live and enjoy this covenant.” (Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, p. 206.)

The word for “bow”

3. Does this covenant seem to be a conditional or unconditional? Why?

"What distinguishes the Noachic [Covenant] from the patriarchal one and for that matter all others recounted in the Old Testament is its truly universal perspective. It is God's commitment to the whole of humanity and all terrestrial creation—including the surviving animal population." (Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, p. 62.)

C. The Oracle of Noah (9:18-29)

“Before the blessing can be developed among those who are righteous, those who act with moral abandonment must be removed.” (Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, p. 211.) This will be a theme that will be carried on throughout the Old Testament, especially with Israel’s dealings with the Canaanites.

1. What is the significance of Noah being described as a “man of the soil” in verse 20?
2. Why does Noah get drunk and naked in verse 21?
3. What is the sin of Ham gazing on Noah in his nakedness in verses 22-23?
4. Why does Noah curse Canaan and his descendants for the sin of Ham?

V. Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10:1-11:9)**A. The Table of Nations (10:1-32)**

B. The Tower of Babel (11:1-9)

The chiastic structure:

- A** All the earth had one language (v. 1)
- B** there (v. 2)
- C** one to another (v. 3)
- D** Come, let's make bricks (v. 3)
- E** Let's make for ourselves (v. 4)
- F** a city and a tower
- G** And the Lord came down to see (v. 5;
cf. 8:1)
- F'** the city and the tower (v. 5)
- E'** that the humans built (v. 5)
- D'** Come, let's confuse (v. 7)
- C'** everyone the language of his neighbor (v. 7)
- B'** from there (v. 8)
- A'** (confused) the language of the whole earth (v. 9)

This appears to be a testimony to the divine commission to fill the earth (9:1) but the account tells how the nations were dispersed after the tower of Babel. This section ends with the people scattered across the earth, divided from one another and God. It is the climax of the primeval events and transition into the patriarchal narratives.

1. What command is humanity violating in verse 4?
2. What is the significance of the Lord coming down to see what mankind is doing?

In calling them “sons of man” He shows them to be mere humans.

The wording of 11:6 is strikingly similar to that of 3:22.

3. What is the real sin that God is judging in this section?

Thus, the main emphasis of this section is

4. What is the point of God confusing the people's languages in verses 8-9?
5. What is the irony of this judgment?
6. What is the difference between the previous judgments and this one?

VI. Shem (11:10-26)

“Adam was blessed; he was to rule and have dominion in the earth; his seed was to restore peace and righteousness through a bruising conflict with evil. And now, Abram was shown to be the heir of the promises and the commission. The genealogy thus authenticates the direct link to the blessing at creation.” (Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, p. 250.)

1. What is the difference between the genealogy account in chapter 5 and this genealogy account?

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