

Lesson 2: Fall

The Bible doesn't indicate how long Adam and Eve were in the garden before the events in Chapter 3 occur. I don't remember being told a specific time frame, but somehow I had the impression it happened "right away." After a careful reading, I'm not so sure. As you read Chapters 3 and 4, make note of places where your understanding of the events differs from what is actually written.

Using the provided chart, summarize the verses in your own words. After you have completed the chart, answer the questions without referring to outside sources. Remember these questions have no definitive answer, but can show how your understanding of the Bible changes.

Chapter 3	Description
3:1-7	
3:8-13	
3:14-15	
3:16	

Chapter 3	Description
3:17-19	
3:20-21	
3:22	

1. In what verses is God the main character?

2. Who are the main characters in verses 1-7?

3. How is God addressed in verses 1 through 7?

1. What is the main purpose of Chapter 4?
2. What can we learn about salvation from verses 6 and 7?
3. Compare Chapter 4:9-12 with Chapter 3. How are these verses related?
4. What do we learn about sin from Chapters 3 and 4?
5. Why did Cain kill Abel?
6. What do we learn about God?
7. What are the bright spots (verses) in Chapter 4?

Thoughts

I always thought that Satan tempted Eve, but the Genesis account does not say that the serpent was Satan. Other biblical writers (prophets and apostles) imply that Satan was the one who tempted Eve. This lack of certainty raises theological questions such as:

- Was the serpent really a serpent? If so, could it speak? Did it have conscious thought?
- Was the serpent Satan?
- Was the serpent possessed by Satan?

Some theologians see the Fall as a metaphor in which the serpent represents Satan, but is not really Satan. This interpretation indicates that Adam and Eve are representatives of man and woman and may or may not have existed. Whether the serpent speaks or has conscious thought is not important for these theologians since the story is only a metaphor.

Other scholars argue that the serpent was just a serpent, according to Genesis. However, the Genesis account does not preclude the possibility that Satan:

- took the form of a serpent,
- possessed the serpent, or
- spoke through the serpent.

Traditionalists believe that the serpent was Satan.

Whether the serpent was or wasn't Satan, Satan's promises are always based on truth, which makes it easier for us to believe. Most of the time, Satan doesn't explain or mention the consequences of sin. Only after man has sinned does he realize the scope of the consequences.

Temptation

With Eve, the serpent told her she would be like God and wouldn't die, which was true. Eve would be like God, because she would know the difference between good and evil. **However**, and this is where Satan gets us every time, he didn't say that Eve would be like God in every way; he did not explain what evil was (Eve had only experienced good in the garden); and he did not tell her she would be banished from God's presence. As Satan promised, Eve did learn how to tell the difference between good and evil, and she didn't die, at least not in the sense that we know death. What died was her ability to be with God.

The scene in the garden when Adam blames Eve and Eve blames the serpent always reminds me of a row of kids standing in front of an adult , each pointing to someone else as the person to blame.



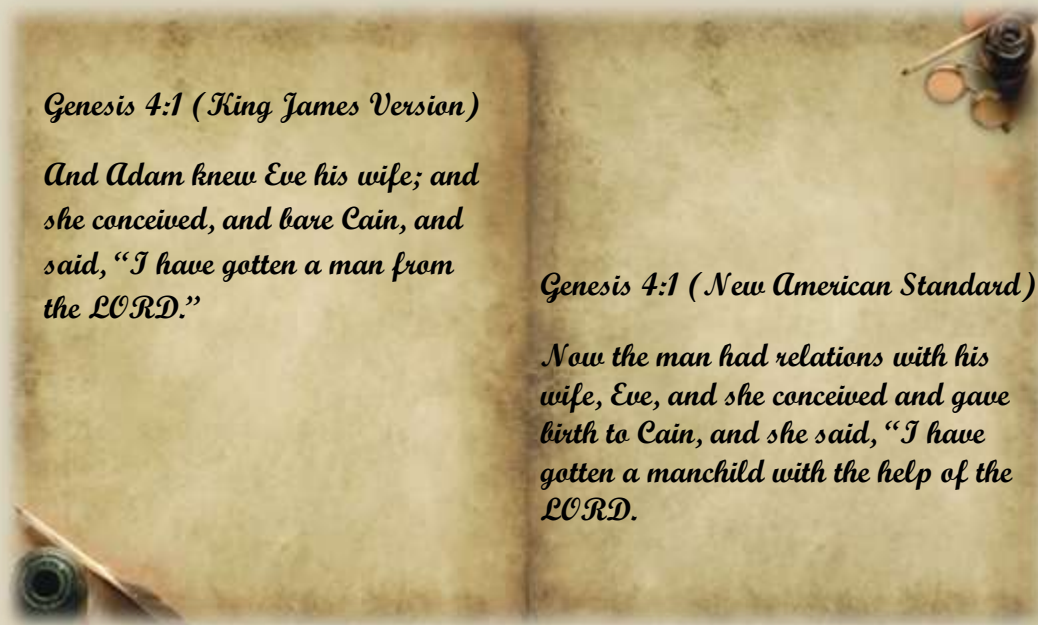
Some things never change. Man has always blamed others for his sin. Why? Do we seriously think that God doesn't know? God gives each of us the opportunity to confess our sins just like he did Adam; yet, we often try to find an excuse or blame someone else for our sins. How often do I fail to take responsibility for my sins, or gloss over them as not as bad as others? If I would confess, I would receive God's protection. After all Adam and Eve had done, God still protected them. He made them clothes before he sent them from the garden.

Personally, I have always loved the image of walking in the cool of the day in the garden with God. In the tropics, the sun sets quickly so there is about an hour of twilight. It is during this hour, that the temperatures drop, the sea breezes blow and a warm glow covers the waters. This is the image I have when I think of the cool of the day. Although the actual translation is more likely "the wind of the day," I'm keeping my image of the cool of the day. It is this reference to walking with God that makes me think some time passed between creation and the fall. It seems like the walk was a daily habit.

Cain and Abel

The Bible doesn't indicate the birth order or the number of children born to Adam and Eve. Assumptions were made that Cain and Abel were the first born, but other children could have been born to Adam and Eve prior to their birth or in-between their births. The same applies to the birth of Seth. The Bible does not indicate the number of years between the death of Abel and the birth of Seth, nor does it indicate if other children were born before or after Seth.

Eve's statement after the birth of Cain has been interpreted as (1) an acknowledgement of God's help or (2) a boastful statement against God. Depending on the translation, I can see it as a boast or as a thanks. What I do see is a difference in Eve's statement at Cain's birth and her statement at Seth's. "God has granted . . .(4:25)." It seems to me that Eve has no doubt whom to thank for her blessings at Seth's birth.



Questions have been raised as to why Cain's offering was rejected. I remember being told that it was because Cain's offering was not a blood offering; but that never made sense to me. How was Cain to provide a blood offering if he was a farmer? I think it is more likely that Cain's heart was not in the right place. Cain was not making his offering as a form of worship and thanks, but rather as a "duty" or "burden." I also get the feeling that Cain was an angry man; he is jealous of Abel's offering; he is hostile when God questions him. It is hard to have the right attitude when you are angry.

Some translations do not have Cain luring Abel into the field; they have Cain coming across him in the fields and killing him. According to the *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, this part of Genesis has been highly corrupted, with some parts actually missing in the original text. At issue is Cain's punishment. According to the laws set down in Deuteronomy:

- If the murder was pre-meditated, Cain should have been killed;
- If it was "a crime of opportunity or passion" then his life could be spared

I never gave Cain's punishment much thought in terms of the Mosaic laws of Deuteronomy.

Punishment

I can see how critics could use this apparent discrepancy to question the consistency of God and the Bible. I found it interesting that the translation of the word "punishment" in 4:13 is open to interpretation; it can mean punishment, iniquity or guilt. To me, the difference between punishment and guilt is significant. If Cain is telling God that his punishment is too great, I see Cain as a whiner; if Cain is telling God that his guilt is too great, I see Cain as repentant. It does seem that Cain recognizes that he will be separated from God, he will be a wanderer and he will be unprotected. At this point, God tells

Cain that he will avenge Cain's death seven (7) times over, if it should happen. I think Cain was repentant – at least for the moment – because God is willing to protect him.

Much has been made about the “mark of Cain,” but the Bible is silent as to its precise meaning. What is important, I guess, is that God protected Cain via this mark as Cain traveled east to Nod. (Location of Nod is not known.) It is possible that the mark of Cain was a “verbal” label, a talisman or a physical mark. Some have suggested that the mark could be a place such as Nod, where Cain could feel safe.

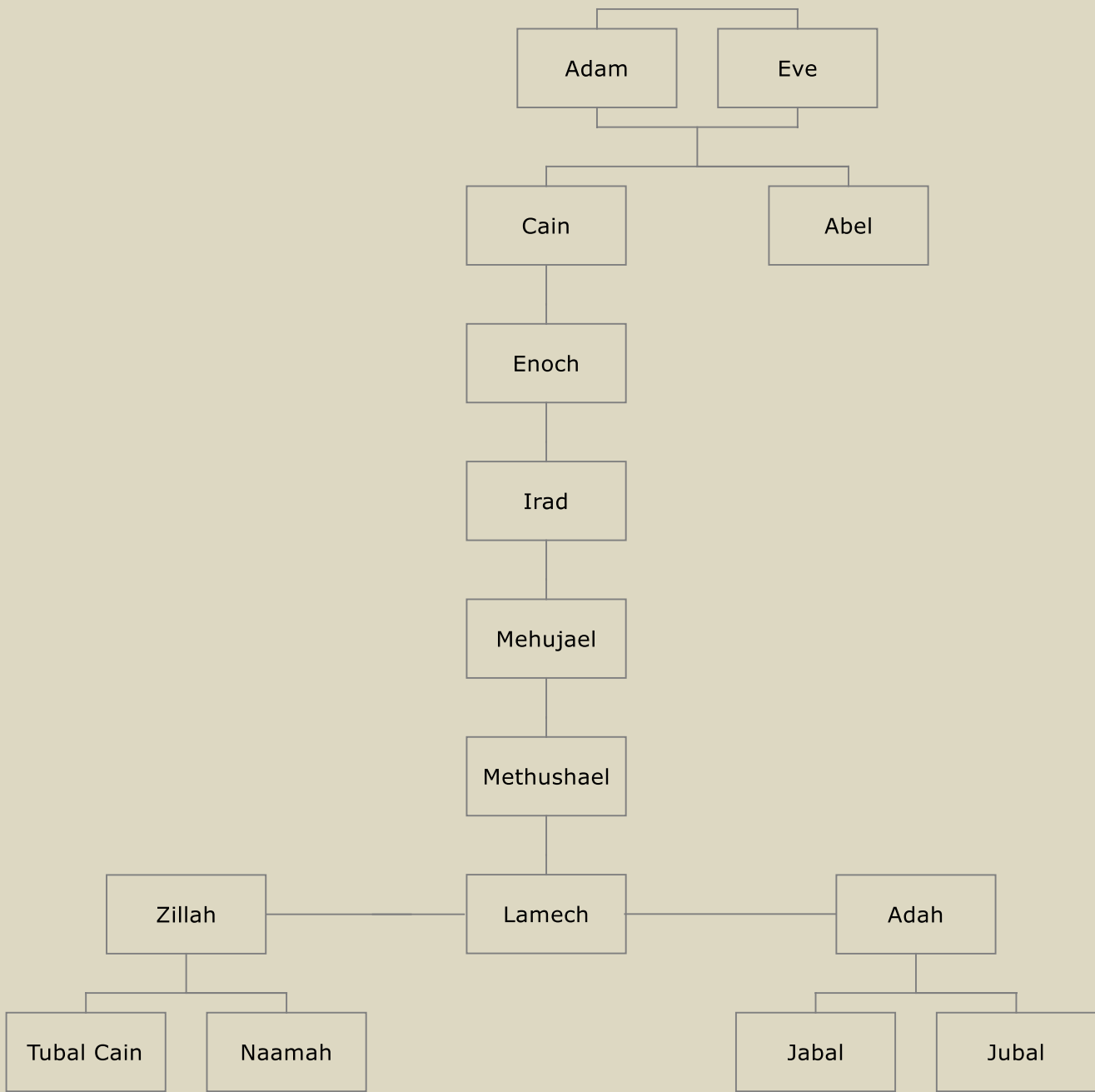
Genealogy

Cain's genealogy as presented in Chapter 4 would indicate that:

- Descendants worked with brass and iron.
- Descendants were nomads, raising sheep and livestock.
- Descendants enjoyed music.

These activities would indicate that Cain's descendants formed some type of civilization in the area in which they settled. The reference to brass and iron corresponds with the Ubaid/Uruk period of the Sumer empire (5300 – 3000 BCE).

The following chart gives a genealogy of Cain; however, the listing may not be linear.



Zillah and Adah were Lamech's wives and Naamah was Lamech's daughter. Lamech's statement that he killed a man has led to a lengthy debate as to its purpose. Was the statement an indication that Cain's descendants were killers too? Was the statement a boast for the killings? Or, was the statement a justification for Lamech's acts? Did Lamech kill because the man "wounded" him first so he was merely exercising his right to an eye for an eye? Was this incident included because it is an early precursor to the idea of "cities of refuge." (See Expositor's Bible Commentary for a detailed discussion of the city of refuge and Cain.)

Wikipedia.org has a reasonable summary of the Sumer empire, which is useful in understanding the culture towards the end of Cain's genealogy in Chapter 4.