THE PENTATEUCH PART I: GENESIS
LESSON 5: Genesis 4:1-6:8
CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL

• [Lesson 4](http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/genesis/Lesson_4.htm)  • [Genesis Lessons List](http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/genesis/Genesis_Menu.php)  • [Lesson 6](http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/genesis/Lesson_6.htm)

My Lord and my God,
You have told us that this earthly existence is our wilderness journey, our exile.  We trust Your promise that just as You prepared a place for our first parents to enter into Your "rest" that You also have a place prepared for us to enter into Your eternal "rest."  And like the children of Israel, You have promised if we trust and obey, that we will enter into that Promised Land at the end of our salvation journey.  Give us the strength and courage, Lord, to resist becoming too attached to what seems to us to be the "good" of our exile so that we do not give up striving for the "best" that awaits us in Your promise of eternity.  Beloved Holy Spirit, be our guide and our teacher on our journey to salvation.  We pray in the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.  Amen.

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*It was because of his faith that Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain and for that he was acknowledged as upright when God himself made acknowledgement of his offerings.*  *Though he is dead, he still speaks by faith*.  [Hebrews 11:4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/hebrews/hebrews11.htm#v4)

*Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart.*
Catechism of the Catholic Church #[397](http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc/p1s2c1p7.htm#397)

The drama of the Fall described both the natural and supernatural implications of our first parent's decision'implications that continued to affect the choices of humanity throughout salvation history.  In our journey of faith we continue to make these choices:

* To choose between two kinds of life: natural and supernatural
* To choose between two kinds of death: physical and spiritual
* To choose between two kinds of wisdom: human and divine
* To choose between two kinds of fear: fear of God or fear of suffering which can include the fear of not being accepted by the world's standards.

At the moment our original parents chose a path opposed to the will of God for their lives, they became "disgraced."  They lost their covenantal status of divine son-ship (CCC # [405](http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc/p1s2c1p7.htm#405)).  Their sin was personal and mortal; it affected the whole of human nature:

* It was personal because it was freely committed.
* It was mortal because God imposed the serious obligation of double death (physical and spiritual).
* It affected the whole human race by depriving succeeding generations of the supernatural life of divine son-ship and the preternatural gifts they would have possessed on entering the world if Adam and his bride had not sinned.

After their fall from grace, Adam and Eve were naked and ashamed, no longer clothed in grace in the image and likeness of God (CCC #[399](http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc/p1s2c1p7.htm#399)). God's judgment on His fallen children was exile from the garden Sanctuary, but not before He promised them a future Redeemer to crush the power of Satan and to restore to mankind that which was lost (CCC #[410](http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc/p1s2c1p7.htm#410)).  The succeeding books of Sacred Scripture will address the questions:

1. Who is the promised Redeemer who will be born from the "seed of the woman?"
2. How will He undo the work of Satan to restore man to God's image and likeness?

The tragic irony of man's fall from grace, which was a result of the desire to be "like gods in knowing good from evil" ([Gen 3:5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis3.htm#v5)), was that Adam and the bride were already like God, created in His image and likeness ([Gen 1:26](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v26)).  The result of their fall from grace left them only like God in knowing good from evil but no longer like God in the grace of God's righteousness and holiness.   Not only were they no longer "like" God in terms of grace and righteousness, they were also unable to be "with" God in the garden Sanctuary.  The godlike state they desired in knowing good from evil could not save them from God's judgment and the resulting physical and spiritual exile.

The coverings of fig leaves Adam and Eve made when they became aware of their fallen state were an inadequate solution for covering their spiritual and physical nakedness.  To cover their fallen condition, Yahweh sacrificed animals and made tunics to cover Adam and Eve' first, in the blood sacrifice that "covered" their sin and then in the animal skin tunics that covered their nakedness.  It may not be clear to those of us on this side of salvation history that the killing of the animals to cloth Adam and Eve in [Genesis 3:21](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis3.htm#v21) was a blood sacrifice to cover their sins, but it would have been understood by the people of the Sinai Covenant.

At the rendezvous between Israel and God at Mt. Sinai, God established His liturgical worship around the communal sin and spiritual restoration sacrifices of two lambs, offered daily throughout the week with the sacrifice doubled on the Sabbath.  The sacrifice of the two lambs, one offered in the morning and the second in the afternoon, was to be a perpetual sacrifice that would last so long as the Sinai Covenant endured.([1](http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/genesis/Lesson_5.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22end1))  It was therefore called the Tamid, which in Hebrew meant the "standing" as in the continual or perpetual sacrifice ([Ex 29:38-42](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus29.htm#v38)).  After the sin of the Golden Calf, God established sacred liturgy around seven classes of ritual blood sacrifice.  But the formation of the rites of the Sinai Covenant did not introduce blood sacrifice to the children of Israel.  Blood sacrifice had been established as a sin offering and communion offering and in the ritual of covenant formation long before the Sinai Covenant ([Gen 8:20](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v20); [15:8-21](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis15.htm#v8); [31:44](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis31.htm#v44), [53-54](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis31.htm#v53)).

The children of Israel also understood that in Adam's fall from grace, nakedness became a sign of sin while modesty became a sign of purity, a concept that was foreign to cultures that were contemporaries of the children of Israel.  One of the requirements of the Sinai Covenant was that all the priests, who stood as the symbol of "redeemed man" to the covenant people and who stood at the altar as God's representative to receive their sacrifices, were required to cover their nakedness, which was a symbol of Adam's sin.  Yahweh told Moses that the people were to make tunics for the priests.  The priests were required to wear tunics to cover their nakedness in order to avoid committing a mortal sin when they entered Yahweh's presence in the rites of ritual blood sacrifice and service to God in His Sanctuary:  *For the sons of Aaron you will make tunics and waistbands.  You will also make them head-dresses to give dignity and magnificence.  You will dress your brother Aaron and his sons in these; you will then anoint them, invest them and consecrate them to serve me in the priesthood.  You will also make them linen beeches reaching from waist to thigh, to cover their bare flesh (nakedness).  Aaron and his sons will wear these when they go into the Tent of Meeting and when they approach the altar to serve in the sanctuary, as a precaution against incurring mortal guilt.  This is a perpetual decree for Aaron and for his descendants after him* ([Ex 28:40-43](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus28.htm#v40)).  In this way God's work in covering the nakedness of Adam and Eve, who were barred from entering God's Sanctuary, and the covenant people's work in covering the nakedness of Yahweh's priests, who were ordained to serve in God's Sanctuary, foreshadowed Christ's work forgiving man's sins in His own blood sacrifice and thus, purified and restored to God's image, the faithful might enter into liturgical intimacy with God in His Sanctuary.

**Please read Genesis 4:1-8: The sons of Adam and Eve and the First Murder**
4**:1*The man had intercourse with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain.  'I have acquired a man with the help of Yahweh,' she said.* 2*She gave birth to a second child, Abel, the brother of Cain.  Now Abel became a shepherd and kept flocks, while Cain tilled the soil.* 3*Time passed and Cain brought some of the produce of the soil as an offering for Yahweh,* 4*while Abel for his part brought the first-born of his flock and some of their fat as well.  Yahweh looked with favor on Abel and his offering.* 5*But he did not look with favor on Cain and his offering, and Cain was very angry and downcast.* 6*Yahweh asked Cain, 'Why are you angry and downcast?* 7*If you are doing right, surely you ought to hold your head high!  But if you are not doing right, Sin is crouching at the door hungry to get you.  You can still master him.'* 8*Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let us go out'; and while they were in the open country, Cain set on his brother Abel and killed him.***

**Genesis 4:1** *The man had intercourse with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. 'I have acquired a man with the help of Yahweh,' she said.* The birth of Adam's sons will be the focus of this part of the narrative, coming at the beginning, the middle, and the conclusion of this section in the account of Adam's family ([Gen 4:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v1), [17-22](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v17), and [25-26](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v25)).  In Genesis 4:1 the literal translation is: "Adam knew his wife."  In the language of the Bible, "to know" (*yada*) someone doesn't mean intellectual knowledge of that person.  "To know" means "intimacy," both the physical intimacy between a man and a woman and the intimacy of a covenant family relationship (i.e., [Gen 4:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v1), [17](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v17), [25](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v25); [Ex 1:8](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus1.htm#v8); [Dt 9:24).  In Scripture the Hebrew word *yada* is never used for animals (Waltke, page 96; *Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon,* page 393-95, 1095).  In their exile, Adam and his wife begin their family.](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/deuteronomy/deuteronomy9.htm#v24)

[*'I have acquired a man with the help of Yahweh,' she said.* In](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/deuteronomy/deuteronomy9.htm#v24) [Genesis 4:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v1) the woman is the first person in Scripture to speak the sacred covenant name of God, YHWH, which with vowels is translated *Yahweh.* There is word play between the Hebrew word for "Cain," *qain*, and the verb "to acquire" or "to get," *qanah* (*Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon*, page 882, 888).  In the Hebrew text Eve refers to Cain as "a man (*ish*)," a mature male.  There are two interpretations of Eve's words: *I have acquired a man with the help of Yahweh.*

1. She is acknowledging God's help in producing a man, which is the essential part of the promise of [Genesis 3:15](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis3.htm#v15) ' the Redeemer must come from the "seed of the woman."
2. She acknowledges God's part in the birth of her man-child, but she is essentially boasting: "I have done this equally with God."

From the passage, it is difficult to know which interpretation is correct.  However, if one compares Eve's response to the birth of her child with Hannah's song of praise to the Lord in [1 Samuel 2:1-10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2samuel/2samuel2.htm#v1) after the birth of Samuel and the Virgin Mary's response to the angel Gabriel in [Luke 1:38](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/luke/luke1.htm#v38) followed by her song of praise in [Luke 1:46-55](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/luke/luke1.htm#v46), Eve's response seems to be self-centered rather than God-honoring.  Her response may be a foreshadowing of the difficulties her son will face in his "knowledge" of the Lord.  Perhaps Eve's response reflected her confidence that she could bring about the promise of the "seed of the woman" in [Genesis 3:15](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis3.htm#v15).  It was a false confidence that was shared by Sarah when she attempted to fulfill God's promise of an heir for Abraham by giving her husband her slave-girl  Hagar to produce the child she believed she was unable to bear ([Gen 16:1-4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis16.htm#v1)).  Human's taking their own initiative to bring about God's promises will become a reoccurring theme in Genesis.

**Question:** What does the birth of the first child in salvation history suggest, born from the woman as the woman was "born" from the side of the man Adam?
**Answer:** God intends that the sexes are to be mutually dependant on each other, in birth and in life, and both sexes are ultimately dependant upon God.

**Genesis 4:2** *She gave birth to a second child, Abel, the brother of Cain.  Now Abel became a shepherd and kept flocks, while Cain tilled the soil.*

Abel is identified as Cain's brother.  Cain is the more important of the two sons; he is the firstborn, the heir who had authority over his brother.  The word "brother" is a key word in this passage; it will occur seven times between Genesis 4:2 -11 ([2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v2), [8](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v8) twice, [9](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v9) twice, [10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v10), [11](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v11)).  The etymology of Abel's name is uncertain; his name may mean "vapor or breath."  If so, his name is a sad metaphor for a life cut short.  Abel is only mentioned in Genesis chapter 4 in the Old Testament.  He was considered to be the first martyr by Jews at the time Jesus lived, and later by Christians (see the Jewish apocryphal document 4 Maccabees 18:11).

**Genesis 4:3-4,** *Time passed and Cain brought some of the produce of the soil as an offering for Yahweh,* 4*while Abel for his part brought the first-born of his flock and some of their fat as well.  Yahweh looked with favor on Abel and his offering.* 5*But he did not look with favor on Cain and his offering...*

The occupations of the sons reflected the judgment on Adam in [Genesis 3:17-24](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis3.htm#v17); they labor in their exile to produce food from the land.

**Question:** How do the sons of Adam continue to observe Adam's covenant relationship with God?
**Answer:** Both men continue in their father's covenant relationship with Yahweh in acknowledging God's sovereignty in bringing their offerings to God's altar.

In bring forward an offering (*minha* = tribute), the offerer acknowledged the authority and superiority of the receiver over the offerer ([Gen 14:20](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v20); [1 Sam 10:27](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1samuel/1samuel10.htm#v27); [1 Kng 10:23-25](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1kings/1kings10.htm#v23)); hence Yahweh commanded the children of Israel: *No one will appear before me empty-handed* (repeated three times in Scripture in [Ex 23:15](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus23.htm#v15); [34:20](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus34.htm#v20); [Dt 16:16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/deuteronomy/deuteronomy16.htm#v16)).

**Question:** How did Abel's offering differ from Cain's offering?

**Answer:** Abel offered animal sacrifice from the firstborn (firstlings) of his flock, including the animal's fat ([Gen 4:4-5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v4)), while Cain offered produce from the soil.

That Abel offered the "firstlings" (the noun is plural-feminine; *Brown-Driver-Briggs,* page 114) of his flock, while Cain offered the produce of the land that he had grown, does not indicate that God preferred shepherds over farmers, but this does begin a reoccurring theme of God's special love for shepherds.

**Question:** Can you think of some shepherds who played a prominent role in salvation history?  Start your list with righteous Abel.
**Answer:**

1. Abel ([Gen 4:4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v4))
2. Abraham ([Gen 13:5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm#v5); [24:34-35](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis24.htm#v34))
3. Isaac ([Gen 26:14](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis26.htm#v14))
4. Jacob ([Gen 30:32-43](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis30.htm#v32))
5. Moses in Midian ([Ex 3:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis3.htm#v1))
6. David ([1 Sam 16:11-19](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1samuel/1samuel16.htm#v11); [17:14-15](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1samuel/1samuel17.htm#v14))
7. the Prophet Amos ([Amos 1:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/amos/amos1.htm#v1))
8. Jesus the Lord ([Ps 23:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/psalms/psalm23.htm#v1); [Jn 10:11](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john10.htm#v11))

**Question:** Where does Cain's failure begin?  What are the implications of this failure?
**Answer:** Cain's failure began at God's altar, and because he failed at the altar he failed to master sin'sin became his master and ultimately he risked failing at life.

**Question:** What is the message to us?  If we fail at the altar can we also fail at life?
**Answer:** Yes.  Our real success or failure at life will be judged as we stand before the throne of God in our Individual (Particular) Judgment (CCC [1021-22](http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc/p123a12.htm#1021)) and ultimately at the Last (Final) Judgment (CCC [1038-41](http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc/p123a12.htm#1038)).  If we fail at the altar, we will fail at life in eternity.

God judged Abel's sacrifice acceptable, but He judged Cain's sacrifice unacceptable.  Genesis does not tell us why neither Cain nor his sacrifice received God's favor, but the New Testament book of Hebrews records that Abel offered God a more acceptable sacrifice: *It was because of his faith that Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain, and for that he was acknowledged as upright when God himself made acknowledgement of his offerings.  Though he is dead, he still speaks by faith* ([Hebrews 11:4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/hebrews/hebrews11.htm#v4))*.*

There are three possible explanations why Abel's sacrifice of his firstborn female lambs/kids and their fat was superior to Cain's offering of grain:

1. The quality of the sacrifice
2. The manner of sacrifice
3. The spiritual quality of the worshiper

That Abel offered the animal's fat is significant, indicating that the victim was both a blood sacrifice and an offering reestablishing communion with Yahweh'either as a sin sacrifice, or a communion offering ([Lev 4:31](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus4.htm#v31); [7:28-34/18-24](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus7.htm#v28)), or both since Abel offered more than one animal ("firstlings" is plural-feminine; *Brown-Driver-Briggs,* page 114). Sin sacrifices had to be made and sin forgiven before communion offerings that reestablished fellowship with God.  In the ordinances of the Sinai Covenant, there were different sacrifices required for sins depending on the type of sin, whether a sin was against a command of God, or an injury caused to an individual, or a sin that included a wrong against God and another individual in which restitution could be made.  The standing of the person in the community and his wealth also determined the kind of sin sacrifice: different sacrifices were required for priests, kings, the common people, or the poor.

Under the Sinai Covenant, for the ordinary person who sinned inadvertently by doing something forbidden by God's commands, or for someone who was guilty of sins associated with ritual purity, the sin sacrifice required an unblemished yearling she-goat or a ewe lamb from the flock ([Lev 4:27-28](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus4.htm#v27), [32](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus4.htm#v32); [Num 15:27-29](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/numbers/numbers15.htm#v27); in [Gen 4:4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v4)).  The sinner was to lay his hands upon the victim's head, confess the sin, and slaughter the animal by God's altar of burnt offerings ([Lev 4:29](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus4.htm#v29), [33](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus4.htm#v33)).  The priest would then take some of the victim's blood on his finger and smear it on the horns of the altar.  The rest of the blood would then be poured out at the foot of the altar ([Lev 4:40](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus4.htm#v40), [34](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus4.htm#v34)).  The individual's sins having been atoned, the priest then removed **the fat,** which was to be burned upon the altar in the same way the fat was burned in a communion sacrifice: *He will then remove all the fat, as the fat was removed for the communion sacrifice, and the priest will burn it on the altar as a smell pleasing to Yahweh.  This is how the priest must perform for him the rite of expiation for the sin which he has committed, and he will be forgiven* ([Lev 4:31](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus4.htm#v31); also see [verse 35](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus4.htm#v35)).  In a communion sacrifice a male or female animal could be offered from the flock and its fat burned on the altar ([Lev 3:6-11](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus3.htm#v6)). At the time in salvation history before the Sinai Covenant, the male head of the family served as the priest ([Gen 8:20](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v20)).

The sin sacrifice classified as a sin of reparation (a sin against God or a member of the community that could be assessed in terms of property or money) was similar.  A sin sacrifice of reparation required the sacrifice of an unblemished ram in addition to the reparation amount.  In this sin classification the **animal's fat** had to be burned on the altar with the remainder of the animal cooked and eaten by the priest in the Holy Place of the Sanctuary ([Lev 6:17-23/24-30](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus6.htm#v17); [7:1-6/6:31-36](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus7.htm#v1)).  If the individual could not afford an animal from the flock, two turtledoves or two young pigeon could be offered instead, one for a whole burnt offering and the other as the sin offering ([Lev 5:7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus5.htm#v7)).  However, if the individual was extremely poor, he could offer a tenth of an ephah of wheaten flour as an offering for the sin committed, which the priest would burn upon the altar ([Lev 6:11-13](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus6.htm#v11)).  Note: there was no sacrifice of forgiveness for intentional sin ([Num 15:30-31](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/numbers/numbers15.htm#v30)).

That Abel included the animal's fat of the female firstlings of the flock would have signaled to the people of the Sinai Covenant, for whom this document was written, that Abel was probably offering a sin sacrifice to atone for his sins and a communion sacrifice to reestablish fellowship with God.  Abel's type of offering fulfilled two important qualifications: he offered the best he had to offer, he offered the "first fruits" of the flock (from the first animals born in the spring) and he offered animal sacrifice, which necessitated the shedding of the animal's blood.  The first century AD Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexander, speculated that this was the reason Abel's sacrifice was superior (*Sacrifices 88, Philo of Alexandria*) and the first century Jewish historian/ priest Flavius Josephus agreed (*Antiquities of the Jews* 1.54).

The second possibility is the manner of the sacrifice.  It is significant that the Septuagint (Greek translation written circa 250 BC) text of [Genesis 4:7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v7) differs slightly from the Jewish Masoretic translation (1000 AD) and suggests that it is the manner of sacrifice which was the problem (also see [Gen 15:10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis15.htm#v10) and [Lev 1:12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus1.htm#v12)):

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| --- | --- |
| Jewish Masoretic translation[Genesis 4:7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v7)  | Septuagint translation[Genesis 4:7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v7)  |
| *If you do well*  | *If you offered rightly,*  |
| *accepted?*  | *But did not divide rightly,*  |
| *And if you do not do well,*  |    |
| *Sin is crouching at the door;*  | *Did not sin?  Be still;*  |
| *Its (his) desire is for you,*  | *He shall return to you,*  |
| *But you must master it (him).*  | *And you shall rule over him.*  |

(*The Septuagint With Apocrypha: Greek and English,* Hendrickson Publishers, 1999, page 5; *The Anchor Bible: Hebrews,* Koester, page 475).

The New Testament passage in [Hebrews 11:4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/hebrews/hebrews11.htm#v4) refers to the reason for Cain's sin as it is  expressed in the Septuagint translation: *It was because of his faith that Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain and for that he was acknowledged as upright when God himself made acknowledgement of his offerings.*  *Though he is dead, he still speaks by faith* ([Heb 11:4).  According to the Septuagint translation of](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/hebrews/hebrews11.htm#v4) [Genesis 4:7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v7), Cain did not offer the right manner of sacrifice: "if you offered rightly," Yahweh told him. Cain could have bartered his gain for an animal from his brother's flock to atone for his sin and to reestablish fellowship with God, but he did not.

The character of the worshiper is the third possibility. The point is that Abel offered in faith and righteousness with a willing heart ([Mt 23:35](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew23.htm#v35); [Heb 11:4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/hebrews/hebrews11.htm#v4); [1 Jn 3:12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1john/1john3.htm#v12); Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews,* 1:53). Such faith and obedience pleases God.  [Hebrews 4:11](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/hebrews/hebrews4.htm#v11) suggests that Cain's faith'his belief in the power of the sacrifice to reconcile him with God, was lacking'perhaps because his repentance was not genuine or because he was denying that he had sinned and was only paying "lip-service" at the altar and not "heart-service."  From God's rebuke of Cain in [Genesis 4:7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v7), it appears that sin was the chief problem in Cain's life: *If you are doing right, surely you ought to hold your head high!  But if you are not doing right, Sin is crouching at the door hungry to get you.  You can still master him.'* Clearly, Cain was not "doing right" as St. John teaches in 1 [Jn 3:12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john3.htm#v12): *And why did he murder his brother?  Because his own actions were evil and his brother's upright.*

[**Genesis 4:5b-7**](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v5)*... and Cain was very angry and downcast.* 6 *Yahweh asked Cain, 'Why are you angry and downcast?* 7 *If you are doing right, surely you ought to hold your head high!  But if you are not doing right, Sin is crouching at the door hungry to get you.  You can still master him.'* In [Genesis 4:6-7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v6) God gave Cain the assurance that he had the power to master his temptation to sin, but he could only master sin if he resisted the temptation to sin and was obedient (to "do well"/ "offer rightly") in submitting himself to the will of God.

**Genesis 4:8** *Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let us go out'; and while they were in the open country, Cain set on his brother Abel and killed him.*

Instead of accepting God's fatherly correction, Cain, consumed by envy, lured Abel away from the family and murdered his righteous brother. It was a premeditated murder, not a crime of passion.  From this time forward in salvation history, every murder is the result of one brother in the family of man taking the life of another.

New Testament passages that mention Cain remember his failure as a warning to remain obedient to the will of God.  Cain became the image of the "seed of Satan" while the death of righteous Abel prefigured the suffering of the righteous at the hands of the wicked and the sacrifice of Christ, struck down by His jealous "brothers" ([Wis 2:12-24](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/wisdom/wisdom2.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v12); [Mt 27:18](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew27.htm#v18); [Mk 15:10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/mark/mark15.htm#v10)).

* *Alas for them, because they have followed Cain; they have thrown themselves into the same delusion as Balaam for a reward; they have been ruined by the same rebellion as Korah'and share the same fate* (Jude 11).
* *This is the message which you heard from the beginning, that we must love each other, not to be like Cain, who was from the Evil One and murdered his brother.  And why did he murder his brother?  Because his own actions were evil and his brother's upright* ([1 Jn 3:11-12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1john/1john3.htm#v11)).
* *Pilate answered them, 'Do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews?'  For he realized it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over* ([Mk 15:9-10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/mark/mark15.htm#v9)).

Cain is also remembered in other non-canonical Jewish documents as a man of wicked intent (1 Enoch 22:7; Jubilees 4:1-5; *Pseudo Philo, Biblical Antiquities*. 2:1; 59:4; 4 Mac 18:11; *Life of Adam and Eve* 23:2-5; Philo, *Worse* 68; Josephus, Antiquities 1:52, 60-61).

Perhaps the answer to why Cain's sacrifice was unacceptable lies in all three of the  possibilities mentioned; however, in the narrative it is not the reason why his offering was rejected that is important; it is his response to God's call to acknowledge his sin and his call to repentance that takes center stage in the narrative.

**Please read Genesis 4:9-16: Cain's Judgment and Exile**
**4:9*Yahweh asked Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?'  I do not know,' he replied.  'Am I my brother's guardian?'* 10*'What have you done?'  Yahweh asked. 'Listen!  Your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground.* 11*Now be cursed and banned from the ground that has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood at your hands.* 12*When you till the ground it will no longer yield up its strength to you.  A restless wanderer you will be on earth.'* 13*Cain then said to Yahweh, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear.* 14*Look, today you drive me from the surface of the earth.  I must hide from you, and be a restless wanderer on earth.  Why, whoever comes across me will kill me!'* 15*'Very well, then,' Yahweh replied, 'whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance.'  So Yahweh put a mark on Cain, so that no one coming across him would kill him.* 16*Cain left Yahweh's presence and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.***

**Question:** What two questions did God ask Cain?  What is familiar about the second question?
**Answer:** God asked "Where is your brother?" and He asked Cain the same question that God asked Cain's mother after her sin: "What have you done?"

**Question:** If God already knew the answer to these questions, why did He ask them?
**Answer:** As in the sin of Cain's parents, God was calling Cain to confession and repentance.

**Question:** What was Cain's response to the first question?
**Answer:** He asks "Am I my brother's guardian/keeper?"

**Question:** What did St. John write about the love of one's "brother"?  See [1 Jn 3:10-17](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1john/1john3.htm#v10); [4:18-21](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1john/1john4.htm#v18).  What did Jesus teach about loving each other and loving God?  See [Mt 22:36-40](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew22.htm#v36); [Jn 14:15](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john14.htm#v15), [21](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john14.htm#v21); [15:17](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john15.htm#v17).
**Answer:** John taught that it is love of our brothers and sisters in the family of man that determines if one is a "seed of the woman" and a child of God, or a "seed of Satan."  Jesus taught that we must love God with all our heart, soul, and mind and love our neighbor (brothers and sisters in the human family) as we love ourselves.  To live the law of love is Jesus' commandment, and to obey his commandments and to keep them is the way we show that we love God.

**Question:** Abel's blood cried out to God for justice. What was God's judgment on Cain and what was Cain's response?  How was Cain's judgment similar to the judgment on his parents?
**Answer:** Cain was to be exiled from Eden as his parents were exiled from the garden Sanctuary.  In God's judgment Cain will no longer be a successful farmer because even the land, which was the altar that received the blood of the sacrificed Abel, will refuse to serve him.  He was condemned to be a wanderer all his life'a spiritual wanderer with a restless soul, alienated from God.  Cain founded a city so he did not remain a physical wanderer ([Gen 4:17](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v17)).

**Genesis 4:15** *'Very well, then,' Yahweh replied, 'whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance.'  So Yahweh put a mark on Cain, so that no one coming across him would kill him.*

Cain was afraid that after being driven out from the safety and protection of his community that he would be killed.  God put a mark of protection upon him and pronounced a seven-fold judgment against anyone who initiated a blood feud in killing Cain.  The number seven is one of the four "perfect" numbers.  Seven symbolizes fullness and perfection; it is the number of covenant and in the New Testament, seven is the number of the Holy Spirit.  In this passage, the "sevenfold vengeance" represented God's perfect justice in Cain's verdict'no one was to be permitted to overrule God's justice without suffering a seven times judgment against them for what they do to Cain.

**Question:** Some scholars suggest the mark on Cain was a tattoo.  At what other time in Old Testament Scripture did God preserve people from death by placing a mark upon their bodies?  What is significant about this sign?  See [Ez 9:4-6](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/ezekiel/ezekiel9.htm#v4).
**Answer:** In [Ezekiel 9:4-6](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/ezekiel/ezekiel9.htm#v4), prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in the 6th century BC, Yahweh instructed a divine messenger dressed in white linen with a scribe's ink-horn in his belt to go throughout the doomed city of Jerusalem and to mark a *tau* (*taw*) on the foreheads of all the righteous.  The lives of all those marked by this sign were to be spared.  This letter, in the ancient Hebrew script, was a cruciform'it was the sign of the Cross, and it may be the same mark that protected Cain.

Early Christians made the sign of the Cross on their foreheads and not across the chest (Tertullian, *De Corona, chapter 3: Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol 3,* page 94).  Some scholars think the "sign" which protected Cain was the city he founded; a city that became a place of refuge for those needing to escape the vengeance of a blood feud.  Such cities will be established under the Sinai Covenant ([Num 35:12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/numbers/numbers35.htm#v12); [Dt 19:11-13](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/deuteronomy/deuteronomy19.htm#v11)).

The question most often asked concerning this passage is "Did Cain offer repentance for his brother's murder?"   There are two interpretations of [Genesis 4:13-14](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v13):

1. Cain did not repent; he only expressed self-pity and remorse over his own fate.
2. Cain repented and although he was held accountable for his sin, God forgave him and offered him divine protection.

Those scholars who embrace the second interpretation suggest that Cain's remorse was not that his punishment is too great but that the sin and the guilt he felt was too much to bear.  They point out that God's mercy in giving him the mark of protection suggests this interpretation.  Other scholars, however, suggest that God's protection was to prolong Cain's life in order to give him the opportunity, through the struggles he faced in exile, to come to genuine repentance and reconciliation.

 [**Genesis 4:16**](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v16)*Cain left Yahweh's presence and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.*

Cain was exiled.  He became the first in a long line of dispossessed Firstborn sons in salvation history.

**Question:** Can you think of other men, born as the honored re'shiyt, the firstborn heir who expected to carry the dignity and authority of their father, who became dispossessed in favor of a younger brother?
**Answer:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Dispossessedfirstborn sons**  | **Younger brotherswho succeeded them(Holy Seed\*)**  | **Scripture passages**  |
| Cain  | Seth\*  | [4:25-26](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v25)  |
| Ishmael  | Isaac\*  | [21:12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis21.htm#v12)  |
| Esau  | Jacob\*  | [25:23](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis25.htm#v23)  |
| Ruben  | Judah\*  | [49:3-4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis49.htm#v3); [8-10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis49.htm#v8)  |
| Zerah  | Perez\*  | [38:27-30](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis38.htm#v27)  |
| Manasseh  | Ephraim  | [48:17-19](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis48.htm#v17)  |

\* line of the holy seed leads to the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth: [Matthew 1:1-16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew1.htm#v1) and [Luke 3:23-38](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/luke/luke3.htm#v23)

There is a play on the Hebrew word for "wandered," *nad,* and the land to which Cain was exiled, *Nod:* Cain was to be exiled into the "land of wandering*."* It is interesting that the garden Sanctuary was in the "east" of Eden ([Gen 2:8](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis2.htm#v8)), the fierce Cherubim guarded the "east" entry to the garden Sanctuary ([3:24](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis3.htm#v24)), and now Cain was sent beyond Eden to the "east." The "east," which had been associated with fellowship with God, will now be associated with judgment, and separation from God:

* Cain was exiled into the east ([Gen 4:16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v16))
* The rebellious men who built the Tower of Babel separated from the people of God and moved "eastward" to found a city and to built the tower ([Gen 11:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis11.htm#v2))
* Lot separated from Abraham, moving to the "east" and settling in the Las Vegas of the ancient world, the sinful city of Sodom ([Gen 13:11).](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm#v11)

**[Please read Genesis 4:17-24: The Descendants of Cain](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v11)****[4:17](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v11)*[Cain had intercourse with his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch.  He became the founder of a city and gave the city the name of his son Enoch.](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v11)* [18](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v11)*[Enoch fathered Irad, and Irad fathered Mehujael, Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech.](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v11)* [19](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v11)*[Lamech married two women: the name of the first was Adah and the name of the second was Zillah.](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v11)* [20](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v11)*[Adah gave birth to Jabal: he was the ancestor of tent-swelling herdsmen.](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v11)* [21](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v11)*[His brother's name was Jubal: he was the ancestor of all who play the harp and the pipe.](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v11)* [22](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v11)*[As for Zillah, she gave birth to Tubal-Cain: he was the ancestor of all who work copper and iron. Tubal-Cain's sister was Naamah.](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v11)* [23](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v11)*[Lamech said to his wives: Adah and Zillah, hear my voice, wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I killed a man for wounding me, a boy for striking me.](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v11)* [24](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v11)*[Sevenfold vengeance for Cain, but seventy-sevenfold for Lamech.](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v11)***

[This is the first of the genealogical lists around which the narrative of Genesis revolves.  The narratives and the genealogical lists, which are sandwiched between the narratives, vary in length.  Often the reader of Scripture ignores the lists or considers them to be only interludes in the text and focuses on the narratives.  This is a mistake.  The inspired writer has a specific reason for supplying the lists.  The men named in the lists have a role in shaping the context of the narrative, demonstrating God's promise of the preservation of the "promised seed" and pointing to the coming of the Redeemer-Messiah.](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v11)

[An often asked question is where did Cain find a wife?  St. Augustine suggested that Cain's wife was a sister: *As, therefore, the human race, subsequently to the first marriage of the man who was made of dust, and his wife who was made out of his side, required the union of males and females in order that it might multiply, and as there were no human beings except those who had been born of these two, men took their sisters for wives,--an act which was as certainly dictated by necessity in these ancient days as afterwards it was condemned by the prohibitions of religion... and though it was quite allowable in the earliest ages of the human race to marry one's sister, it is now abhorred as a thing which no circumstances could justify* (*The City of God XV.16*).](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm#v11)[Genesis 5:4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v4) records that Adam had sons and daughters.  Abraham's wife Sarah was a half-sister ([Gen 20:12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis20.htm#v12)). The prohibition against incest will not be established until the Law of Moses in the Sinai Covenant ([Lev 18:6-18](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus18.htm#v6)), when the death penalty will be imposed for any covenant member practicing incest ([Lev 20:10-21](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus20.htm#v10)).

Cain and his family became the first city dwellers.  Cain's descendant Lamech was the first polygamist.

**Question:** How many generations from Cain are recorded?  Look up these names in a Bible dictionary and give the meaning of each name listed in the Cain genealogy.
**Answer:** There are seven generations listed:

1. Cain ("to acquire, possess") fathered
2. Enoch (a synonym for "adam," which means "man") fathered
3. Irad (etymology unknown) fathered
4. Mehujael (etymology unknown but "el" is the word for "god" singular) fathered
5. Methushael (etymology unknown) fathered
6. Lamech (etymology unknown) fathered
7. Jabal ("to lead"), Jubal ("trumpet"), Tubal-Cain (tubal = "metal"; cain in Hebrew means "to acquire" but became associated in other Semitic languages with the word we would translate as "smith," as in "blacksmith"), and Naamah ("pretty").

We cannot be certain if each generation named is the next generation or if generations are skipped.  Many ancient Near Eastern king lists omit several generations between a king and his ancestor, with the next king listed being identified as a "son" of the previous king in the list, even though a century of more may have elapsed between their reigns.   For example in one Sumerian king list up to seventy generations are omitted.  Such lapses are even found in the Biblical record; for example, [Exodus 6:14-25](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus6.htm#v14) lists four generations between Levi son of Israel/Jacob and Moses, but [1 Chronicles 7:23-27](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1chronicles/1chronicles7.htm#v23) lists a more reasonable ten generations for the same period.  [1 Chronicles 6:3-14](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1chronicles/1chronicles6.htm#v3) lists the descendants in the line of Levi while [Ezra 7:1-5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/ezra/ezra7.htm#v1) omits six of the names.  These are not errors or inconsistencies but are a summary of the list of descendants who are the "sons" of an ancestor.  Sometime there are other reasons for omitting names.  In St. Matthew's list of Jesus' genealogy, for example, he wanted to manipulate the list to yield three sets of 14 names to total 42 names.  To make his list reflect this pattern, he purposely omitted three Davidic kings.  Then too, in the king lists of the ancient Near East when there was no direct line of descent, a king of a new family line often claimed to be the "son" of a previous important ruler, as in the case of Daniel's identification of Babylonian King Belshazzar as the "son" of the great king Nebuchadnezzar.  Historically Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus, a commoner who usurped the throne of Nebuchadnezzar's heirs.  To give his line credibility, it is likely that Nabonidus claimed to be a "son" of the former great king, and, therefore, so did his son.  It was in the same way that the Persian King Darius I invented a connection to the great Persian King Cyrus I when he usurped the Persian throne.  The list of ten generations from Adam to Noah ([Gen 5:1-32](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v1)) and the ten generations from Noah's son Shem to Abraham ([Gen 11:10-26](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis11.htm#v10)) may be lists purposely organized to yield the number ten, the number of perfection of order.

**Question:** What contributions did the city dwelling Lamech and his descendants make to civilization?  Their names suggest their trades
**Answer:** Stock-breeding, music, metal technology, law/ justice, and maybe prostitution.  Since the names of these descendants of Cain suggest their occupations, the inclusion of Tubal-Cain's sister, Naamah, whose name means "pretty," may be a veiled reference to prostitution.

Scholars do not agree about the intent of Lamech's poem in [Genesis 4:23-24](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v23).  Some Bible scholars, like the Navarre scholars, see it as the start of "rampant violence" (*The Navarra Pentateuch,* page 61), others as the beginning of "blood feuds" (*New American Bible*).  However, Lamech's poem is about his response to violence and may indicate the establishment of a code of justice in the application of *lex talionis*, the "law of reciprocity" (sometimes referred to as the law of "an eye for an eye"), and the necessity of witnesses who testify to a crime or act of violence.  Addressing his wives, who are his two witnesses, he says: *I killed a man for wounding me, a boy for striking me.  Sevenfold vengeance for Cain, but seventy-sevenfold for Lamech*.  In other words, unlike Cain's murder, which was an unprovoked attack on a brother, Lemach takes a life in self-defense.  The civil law of *lex talionis* was meant to be just and humane'a man cannot seek revenge for a wrong by harming the innocent'like killing a man's entire family.  The punishment must fit the crime.  The *lex talionis,*  the "law of reciprocity," is found in the Hammurabi Code (c. 2000 BC), in the 8th century BC Assyrian laws, in the Noahide code, which permits the death penalty for a murderer ([Gen 9:5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v5)), and in the Law of the Sinai Covenant: *If further harm is done, however, you will award life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stroke for stroke* ([Ex 21:23-25](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus21.htm#v23); also see [Lev 24:17-20](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus24.htm#v17); [Dt 19:21](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/deuteronomy/deuteronomy19.htm#v21)).  The law required the imposition of a punishment that was equal to the damage caused and its aim was to limit excess violence.   The principal of *lex talionis* was to prevent the devastating acts of revenge fueled blood feuds; it was the very reason God gave Cain His mark of protection.

The necessity of witness also became necessary to dispensing justice:

* The Law of the Sinai Covenant established the necessity of two witnesses ([Num 35:30](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/numbers/numbers35.htm#v30); [Dt 7:6-7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/deuteronomy/deuteronomy7.htm#v6); [19:15](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/deuteronomy/deuteronomy19.htm#v15)).
* Jesus spoke of the necessity of having two witnesses to sustain a charge against a covenant member ([Mt 18:16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew18.htm#v16)).
* The testimony of two false witnesses will be brought against Jesus in his trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin the night before His crucifixion ([Mt 26:60](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew26.htm#v60)).

The question remains what did Lamech mean by *Sevenfold vengeance for Cain, but seventy-sevenfold for Lamech*?  It can be interpreted as Lamech giving himself permission to seek vengeance far beyond the act of violence committed against him, or it can be interpreted in light of God's pronouncement of protection over Cain in [Genesis 4:14](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v14), which Lamech quotes: *Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance,* meaning that anyone who does violence against Cain with be answerable to God seven times greater than what was done to Cain.  In the light of God's statement of protection over Cain, Lamech may be saying that he should be given even greater protection under the law of God since his killing was not premeditated but was an act of self defense, and he should be protected from a blood feud against himself and his family seventy-seven fold'in other words, to the ultimate degree.

**Please read Genesis 4:25-5:32: The Descendants of Seth**
**4:25*Adam had intercourse with his wife, and she gave birth to a son whom she named Seth, 'because God has granted me other offspring,' she said, 'in place of Abel, since Cain has killed him.'* 26*A son was also born to Seth, and he named him Enosh.  This man was the first to invoke the name of Yahweh.* 5:1*This is the role of Adam's descendants: On the day that God created Adam he made him in the likeness of God.* 2*Male and female he created them.  He blessed them and gave them the name Man, when they were created.* 3*When Adam was a hundred and thirty years old he fathered a son, in his likeness, after his image, and he called him Seth.* 4*Adam lived for eight hundred years after the birth of Seth and he fathered sons and daughters.* 5*In all, Adam lived for nine hundred and thirty years; then he died.* 6*When Seth was a hundred and five years old he fathered Enosh.* 7*After the birth of Enosh, Seth lived for eight hundred and seven years, and he fathered sons and daughters.* 8*In all, Seth lived for nine hundred and twelve years; then he died.* 9*When Enosh was ninety years old he fathered Kenan.* 10*After the birth of Kenan, Enosh lived for eight hundred and fifteen years and he fathered sons and daughters.* 11*In all, Enosh lived for nine hundred and five years; then he died.* 12*When Kenan was seventy years old he fathered Mahalalel.* 13*After the birth of Mahalalel, Kenan lived for eight hundred and forty years and he fathered sons and daughters.* 14*In all, Kenan lived for nine hundred and ten years; then he died.* 15*When Mahalalel was sixty-five years old he fathered Jared.* 16*After the birth of Jared, Mahalalel lived for eight hundred and thirty years and he fathered sons and daughters.* 17*In all, Mahalalel lived for eight hundred and ninety-five years, then he died.* 18*When Jared was a hundred and sixty-two years old he fathered Enoch.* 19*After the birth of Enoch, Jared lived for eight hundred years and he fathered sons and daughters.* 20*In all, Jared lived for nine hundred and sixty-two years; then he died.* 21*When Enoch was sixty-five years old he fathered Methuselah.* 22*Enoch walked with God.  After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch lived for three hundred years and he fathered sons and daughters.* 23*In all, Enoch lived for three hundred and sixty-five years.* 24*Enoch walked with God, then was no more because God took him.* 25*When Methuselah was a hundred and eighty-seven years old he fathered Lamech.* 26*After the birth of Lamech, Methuselah lived for seven hundred and eighty-two years and he fathered sons and daughters.* 27*In all, Methuselah lived for nine hundred and sixty-nine years; then he died.* 28*When Lamech was a hundred and eighty-two years old he fathered a son.* 29*He gave him the name Noah because, he said, 'Here is one who will give us, in the midst of our toil and the laboring of our hands, a consolation out of the very soil that Yahweh cursed.'* 30*After the birth of Noah, Lamech lived for five hundred and ninety-five years and fathered sons and daughters.* 31*In all, Lamech lived for seven hundred and seventy-seven years; then he died.* 32*When Noah was five hundred years old he fathered Shem, Ham and Japheth.***

The literal translation of [4:25](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v25) is: *Adam knew his wife and she gave birth to a son whom she named Seth, 'because God has granted me other seed...* Seth's name may mean "in place of"'meaning he was given to Eve to take the place of Abel.

**Question:** Compare Eve's comments after the birth of Cain ([Gen 4:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v1)) to her comments after the birth of Seth.
**Answer:** In Cain's birth she put herself first and then mentioned God as a partner in the birth of her first son, but in Seth's birth she only acknowledged God's graciousness in granting her another son'not in place of Cain, but in place of righteous Abel.

**Question:** What significant observations are made about Seth in this passage?
**Answer:** He is the "seed" that continues in the promise of [Genesis 3:15](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis3.htm#v15), and he is the first man to establish liturgical worship (in addition to sacrifice) outside the garden Sanctuary, "calling," in payer, on *the name of Yahweh*.

**Genesis 5:1-2***This is the role of Adam's descendants: On the day that God created Adam he made him in the likeness of God.* 2*Male and female he created them.  He blessed them and gave them the name Man, when they were created.* [Genesis 4:25-5:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v25) is a short prologue to the genealogy of Seth.  It is intended to connect the creation of Adam and Eve in the image and likeness of God to Adam's descendants through Seth.  The word "role" in [5:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v1) is the Hebrew word *cepher*, which means "writing, document, book, or scroll" (*Brown-Driver-*Briggs, page 706-7).  Drawing our attention to the creation of Adam and his bride in [Genesis 1:27](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v27), the inspired writer assures the reader that this is the written record of Adam's lineage'his *toledot(h)*, in Hebrew.  According to Sacred Scripture this is not a myth; this account is history.

**Question:** The genealogical list that begins in [5:3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v3) establishes what repeated pattern?

**Answer:**

* the name of the father
* the name of his son and his age when the son was born
* the number of years the father lived after the birth of this son
* other sons and daughters were born
* the father's age when he died.

**Question:** What irony does the pattern of this list suggest?
**Answer:** The list reflects the irony that each succeeding generation of humanity receives the inheritance of both life and death. But in spite of the judgment that ends in death ([Gen 3:19](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis3.htm#v19)), God's original blessing of fertility continues to sustain life on earth, and His breath/spirit is passed from generation to generation, each man/woman born in His image but no longer in His likeness.

**Question:** What is significant about [verse 5:3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v3) in describing Adam's fathering of Seth?  What does this suggest?  To what previous passage are these verses linked?

**Answer:** [Genesis 5:3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v3) records that Adam had a son "after his own image and likeness," an echo of [Genesis 1:27](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v27), which was repeated in [5:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v1).  This connection to God's creation of man (*adam*) in His own "image and likeness" links humanity's participation, through an act of God, in the transference of God's image to each succeeding generation.  However, while God's "fathering" was perfect, man's "fathering," contaminated by sin, will be imperfect.

In identifying that it is Seth who was the "seed of the woman" created in Adam's image and likeness, and Seth who was the first to invoke the covenant name of God, Scripture suggests that the "promised seed" will be a man descended from Seth who will both crush the power of the Serpent and restore man to God's image and likeness.

The rare expression "walked with God" is found in verse 22 of the genealogy.  It is only found four times in Scripture where it is applied to Enoch, Noah and the Covenant of Peace for a perpetual priesthood that Yahweh made with Aaron's grandson, the priest Phinehas ([Num 25:10-13](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/numbers/numbers25.htm#v10)):

1. [Genesis 5:22a](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v22): *Enoch walked with God.*
2. [Genesis 5:24](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v24): *Enoch walked with God, then was no more, because God took him.*
3. [Genesis 6:9](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v9): *This is the story of Noah: Noah was a good man, an upright man among his contemporaries, and he walked with God.*
4. [Malachi 2:6](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/malachi/malachi2.htm#v6): *The law of truth was in his mouth and guilt was not found on his lips; he walked in peace and justice with me and he converted many from sinning.*

This phrase means more than closeness to God; it suggests a deeply intimate relationship that is more supernatural than natural, like the way in which Adam and Eve "walked" with God before the Fall.

The genealogical pattern noted above is repeated throughout the list but departs from the genealogical pattern in the accounts that concern Enoch and Noah.

**Question:** What is exceptional about Enoch?   What else does Scripture tell us about this man?  See [Sir 44:16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/sirach/sirach44.htm#v16); [49:14](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/sirach/sirach49.htm#v14); [Lk 3:37](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/luke/luke3.htm#v37); [Heb 11:5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/hebrews/hebrews11.htm#v5); [Jude 14](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/jude/jude.htm#v14).
**Answer:** [Verses 22 and 24](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v22) record that Enoch "walked with God," which means that Enoch was a man of righteousness who had an intimate relationship with God similar to the relationship Adam and Eve enjoyed with God before the Fall when they "walked" with God in the garden Sanctuary ([Gen 3:8](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis3.htm#v8)).  The Book of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) records that *Enoch pleased the Lord and was transferred to heaven, an example for the conversion of all generations* ([Sir 44:16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/sirach/sirach44.htm#v16)) and *No one else has ever been created on earth to equal Enoch, for he was taken up from earth* ([Sir 49:14/16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/sirach/sirach49.htm#v14)).   Enoch wasspared the suffering of death ([Heb 11:5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/hebrews/hebrews11.htm#v5)).

This is not to say that Enoch went immediately into the heavenly Sanctuary to live in God's presence, only that God spared him the curse of suffering in physical death.  The gates of heaven were closed to mortals until the coming of the Redeemer-Messiah and Enoch, despite his righteousness, was stained with original sin like all sons of Adam, a sin which would be cleansed by the sacrifice of the Redeemer-Messiah.  Enoch is listed in Jesus' genealogy in [Luke 3:37](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/luke/luke3.htm#v37), and St. Jude notes that Enoch was the seventh patriarch from Adam ([Jud 14](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/jude/jude.htm#v14)).  It is interesting that Scripture records that he lived 365 years, the number of days in a solar year'it is a number that may symbolize that he "walked with God" every day of the year for his entire life.

**Question:** Who was the only other man mentioned in Scripture who did not suffer physical death before being "taken up" by God? See [1 Kings 2:1-11](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1kings/1kings2.htm#v1).
**Answer:** The Prophet Elijah.

**Question:** What hope does the account of Enoch's life give us?
**Answer:** Enoch was an example of righteous faith, and he gives all of us the hope that man can find life with God in the midst of the curse of death'when one "walks with God" physical death is not the end; it is only the beginning.

**Question:** Lemach lived a significant 777 years.  How does the account concerning his son Noah break the genealogical pattern?  What is lacking from the established pattern in the accounts of both Enoch and Noah? What links Enoch and Noah besides their genealogical connection?  See [Genesis 5:22](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#22) and [6:9](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v9).
**Answer:** Lemach doesn't just "father" Noah; he gives him a name which prophesizes consolation and rest: *Here is one who will give us, in the midst of our toil and the laboring of our hands, a consolation out of the very soil that Yahweh cursed.*  Both Noah and Enoch "walked with God."  The information on Noah in the list only names his sons.  Noah's death in this list isn't mentioned, only his age when he fathered his sons is recorded.

In [Genesis 5:28](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v28) a link is made between Noah's name and the Hebrew words for "comfort" and "rest," suggesting that Noah's name, *nh* in the ancient Hebrew script in consonants, may be linked to the verb root *nwh,* meaning "to rest," and to the Hebrew word for "comfort," which is *nhm* (*Anchor Bible Dictionary, vol. IV,* page 1123)*.*  In any event, there is definitely a word play on the etymology of Noah's name, connecting his name to the "rest" Noah is expected to bring from the curse of man's painful labor ([Gen 5:29](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v29)) and the "comfort" that will come from the promise of salvation Noah brings to his family through the Ark ([Gen 9:28-29](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v28)).  The word play continues in [Genesis 6:8](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v8), contrasting the human corruption of the earth with Noah's righteousness: *But Noah won Yahweh's favor* *(grace).* The Hebrew word for favor/grace is *hen.* Written in consonants, the Hebrew for "grace" *hn* is the reverse of Noah's name in consonants, *nh.*

Neither of the accounts of Enoch or Noah ends in death. Noah's death won't be recorded until after the Flood narrative in [Genesis 9:29](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v29), in the same pattern as the Seth genealogy: *In all, Noah's life lasted nine hundred and fifty years; then he died.* The hope for all of is that despite being surrounded by a world inundated with sin, both Noah and Enoch were righteous men who "walked with God" ([Gen 5:22](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v22); [6:9](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v9)).

**Question:** How many generations are there from Adam to Noah?  What is the significance of this genealogical line?

**Answer:** Ten.  This is the line of the "promised seed," the covenant line that descended through Seth.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Father**  | **Age of father when son was born**  | **Son**  | **Age at death**  |
| Adam  | 130  | Seth  | 930  |
| Seth  | 105  | Enosh  | 912  |
| Enosh  | 90  | Kenan  | 905  |
| Kenan  | 70  | Mahalalel  | 910  |
| Mahalalel  | 65  | Jared  | 895  |
| Jared  | 162  | Enoch  | 962  |
| Enoch  | 65  | Methuselah  | 365  |
| Methuselah  | 187  | Lamech  | 969  |
| Lamech  | 182  | Noah  | 777  |
| Noah  | 500  | Shem  | 950  |

Methuselah lived the longest of the ten Pre-Flood Patriarchs.  His life overlapped the life of Adam by 243 years and overlapped the life of Noah's son Shem by 98 years.  Methuselah provided a living link between the events Adam and Eve experienced in Eden and in their exile and the generation of the Post-Flood world through the memories and stories he shared with Shem.  Methuselah died the year of the great Flood.

**Question:** Compare the names of the Cain genealogy with the Seth genealogy.  What names are the same or very similar in both genealogies?
**Answer:** Methuselah in Seth's genealogy is very like Methushael in Cain's; the names Enoch and Lamech are found in both lists.

Certain names are popular in different generations; this phenomenon was as common in ancient times as it is today.  Some names remain popular for a number of generations before they loose their appeal.  Bible names were very popular names until the post World War II generation.  Looking at the names of individuals in ancient documents is one on the clues historians use in helping to assign those documents to a certain historical period.([2](http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/genesis/Lesson_5.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22end2))

**Great age of the Pre-Flood Patriarchs:**What are we to make of the accounts of the ages of Pre-Flood Patriarchs?  Other ancient Near Eastern civilizations also had traditions of ancestors who lived to great ages prior to an event that their histories recorded as the Great Deluge:

* Based on the tablets of the ancient archives of the great Temple of Marduk, Babylonian historian Berossus (c. 300 BC) copied an ancient king list that named ten long-lived kings who reigned before the Great Flood.  According to the ancient list, these kings reigned from ten to sixth thousand years.  On his copy of the list, Berosus noted: *In the time of Xisuthros the Great Deluge occurred.*
* The Weld Prism (c. 2170 BC), discovered at Larsa, an ancient city a few miles north of Ur in Mesopotamia,  recorded a list of kings from the beginning of humanity to the generation of the scribe Nur-Ninsubur, who recorded the data.  His list included ten long-lived kings who lived prior to the Great Flood.  This tablet was inscribed at least a hundred years before the birth of Abraham.
* Other tablets which listed long-lived Pre-Flood kings were discovered among the 50,000 tablets dating to the 3rd millennium BC that were discovered in several archives of Nippur, an ancient city about 50 miles southeast of Babylon.  The Nippur Tablets listed Pre-Flood kings who had extremely long reigns.
* In addition to the Sumerian and Babylonians, the Egyptians, Akkadians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Hindu civilization of India, and other cultures also had traditions of great longevity for the earth's earliest inhabitants.

(*A History of the Ancient Near East,* page 42, 256).

**Please read Genesis 6:1-8: The Increasing Corruption of Humanity**
6:**1*When people began being numerous on earth, and daughters had been born to them,* 2*the sons of God, looking at the women, saw how beautiful they were and married as many of them as they chose.* 3*Yahweh said, 'My spirit cannot be indefinitely responsible for human beings, who are only flesh; let the time allowed each be a hundred and twenty years.'* 4*The Nephilim were on earth in those days (and even afterwards) when the sons of God resorted to the women, and had children by them.  These were the heroes of days gone by, men of renown.* 5*Yahweh saw that human wickedness was great on earth and that his heart contrived nothing but wicked schemes all day long.* 6*Yahweh regretted having made human beings on earth and was grieved at heart.* 7*And Yahweh said, 'I shall rid the surface of the earth of the human beings whom I created'human and animal, the creeping things and the birds of heaven'for I regret having made them.'* 8*But Noah won Yahweh's favor.***

This passage is usually interpreted as a prelude to the account of the Flood, highlighting man's wickedness, depravity, and growing separation from God.

**Genesis 6:1-2** *When people began being numerous on earth, and daughters had been born to them,* 2*the sons of God, looking at the women, saw how beautiful (good) they were and married (took) as many of them as they chose.*  Parenthesis indicates literal translation.

There are three interpretations of Genesis 6:2 coupled with Genesis 6:4: 4*The Nephilim were on earth in those days (and even afterwards) when the sons of God resorted to the women, and had children by them.  These were the heroes of days gone by, men of renown.*

1. The "sons of God" are fallen angels who had intercourse with human women and produced a violent race of "super" men.
2. The "sons of God" are men from the "promised seed"'descendants of Seth who become enamored by the daughters of the "seed of the serpent," and these mixed marriages produce men who stood opposed to the will of God and dominate humanity.
3. The "sons of gods" are tyrant-kings from the city-dwelling line of Cain whose descendants became more powerful, dominating the people of God and taking their daughters in forced marriages.

In Scripture the title "sons of God" is used for angels of the heavenly court ([Job 1:6](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/job/job1.htm#v6); [2:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/job/job2.htm#v1) href ="http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/job/job#v7">38:7), for rulers like King David and his son Solomon ([2 Sam 7:14](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2samuel/2samuel7.htm#v14); [1 Chr 17:12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1chronicles/1chronicles17.htm#v12)), and men in covenant union with Yahweh ([Wis 2:13](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/wisdom/wisdom2.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v13); [5:5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/wisdom/wisdom5.htm#v5); [Hos 1:10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/hosea/hosea1.htm#v10); [Jn 1:12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john1.htm#v12); [Rom 8:14](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/romans/romans8.htm#v1), [19](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/romans/romans8.htm#v19); [Gal 4:5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/galatians/galatians4.htm#v5), [6](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/galatians/galatians4.htm#v6); [Phil 2:15](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/philemon/philemon2.htm#v15); [Heb 12:7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/hebrews/kebrews12.htm#v7); [1 Jn 3:1,2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1john/1john3.htm#v1)).  No where in Scripture is the title "sons of God" applied to Satan or to the fallen angels.

The first view that the "sons of God" referred to fallen angels was an interpretation favored by Jewish scholars (*1 Enoch, 6:1-7*)and by some early Church Fathers like St. Clement of Alexandria.  However, this interpretation was contradicted by Jesus in [Matthew 22:30](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew22.htm#v30) and in [6:3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v3) these men are clearly defined as men of "flesh."

**Question:** What did Jesus say in [Matthew 22:30](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew22.htm#v30) which refutes the first view?
**Answer:** Jesus said: *For at the resurrection men and women do not marry; no, they are like the angels in heaven.* Angels are only spirit beings.  They do not have a physical form and they do not procreate.

Most Catholic scholars do not embrace this view in light of the Church's encyclical on the study and interpretation of Scripture by Pope Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus*.  This document teaches that an interpretation is false if it contradicts another passage in the sacred text: *all interpretation is foolish and false which either makes the sacred writers disagree one with another, or is opposed to the doctrine of the Church* [PD, #14].  If the interpretation was that angels were engaging in marrying humans it would be in direct contradiction of Jesus' statement in [Matthew 22:30](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew22.htm#v30) and therefore it must be rejected.

View #2 dates to Christian scholars in about the 3rd century AD and proposes that the "sons of God" were men of the promised line of Seth.  Those godly men of Seth line were attracted by and married the pretty and sinful daughters of pagan urban peoples from the line of Cain, and their union produced what the New Jerusalem translation described as *the heroes of days gone by, men of renown.* This was the view held a number of Church Fathers including Saints Ephraim (*Commentary on Genesis 6.3.1*), Augustine (*City of God, 15.23*), John Chrysostom (*Homilies on Genesis, 22.4*), and Cyril of Alexandria (*Glaphyra in Genesim, 2.2*):

* *[Moses] called the sons of Seth "sons of God," those who, like the sons of Seth, had been called "the righteous people of God."  The beautiful daughters of men whom they saw were the daughters of Cain...* (Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis 6.3.1*; quoted from *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament, vol. I,* page 124).
* *All that we indubitably know, from the authentic Scripture in the Hebrew and Christian traditions, is the fact that in the period before the flood there were many giants, all of whom belonged to the earthly city in human society, and that there were sons of God descended from Seth who abandoned their holiness and sank down into this city of men* (Augustine, *City of God, 15.23*).

View #3 proposes that these men were power rulers, an interpretation which is also old, and which is presented in the commentaries of the 1st century AD Jewish Targums like *Targum Onkelos* and *Neophyti I* (Sailhamer, page 120).  This view proposes that "sons of gods" were powerful rulers who appropriate semi-divine status to increase their power base and were able to force the lovely daughters of Seth into their harems: *and married as many of them as they chose.*  The men described in [Genesis 6:1-4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v1) were not godly men; they were men who took what they wanted and entered into plural marriages.  This view is supported by the use of the plural noun for "god" in the Hebrew text; in Hebrew it is the word *elohim.* It is a Hebrew word used for the One True God, but it is a word that is also used in Scripture for pagan gods in general (i.e., [Gen 3:5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis3.htm#v5); [31:30](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis31.htm#v30); [35:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis35.htm#v2), [4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis35.htm#v4); [Ex 18:11](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus18.htm#v11); [Josh 24:2-24](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/joshua/joshua24.htm#v2); etc).  This interpretation is supported by the fact that the only daughters mentioned, with the exception of the one daughter in Cain's line, are the many daughters born in each generation of the Seth lineage; these daughters are mentioned nine times in [Genesis 5:4 to 5:30](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v4) ([Gen 5:4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v4), [7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v7), [10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v10), [13](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v13), [16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v16), [19](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v19), [22](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v22), [26](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v26), [30](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v30)).

Historically we also have evidence that kings in the ancient Near East claimed divine status.  For example, Egyptian Pharaohs from the earliest period of recorded history claimed to be the "son" of Osiris, the embodiment of Osiris son the god Horus.  Tablets discovered from the early second millennium portrayed the kings of Uruk, Enmerkar, Lugalbanda, and the hero Gilgamesh as part-human, part-divine (*History of the Ancient Near East,* page 109).  We also know from both historical and Biblical accounts that kings took beautiful women into their harems and common men lived in fear that a powerful ruler, in coveting a beautiful wife, would kill the husband to possess her.  Abraham feared he would be killed when he was in Egypt and presented Sarah as his sister ([Gen 12:11-13](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis12.htm#v11)).  Sarah was forcibly taken by the Egyptian Pharaoh into his harem ([Gen 12:14-15](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis12.htm#v14)).  Later she was again taken by the Philistine King Abimelech in [Genesis 20:3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis20.htm#v3) into his harem.  Isaac had the same fears concerning his lovely wife Rebekah ([Gen 26:7-10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis26.htm#v7)).  In each case, God intervened to have these women returned to their rightful husbands, securing the continuation of the "promised seed" through these beautiful daughters of Seth.

It is significant that the literal Hebrew text of [Genesis 6:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v2) reads that the men identified as "sons of gods/God" "saw" the women were "good" and "took" as many as they wanted as wives.  The language of the Hebrew text links the actions of these men to Adam and Eve's fall from grace when then "took" that which was forbidden because they "saw" it was "good."  The sin of the men identified in [Genesis 6:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v2) as "sons of gods" repeats the pattern of the first sin in [Genesis 3:6](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis3.htm#v6) when Adam and Eve desired to be "like gods" themselves.  Compare [Genesis 3:6](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis3.htm#v6) to [Genesis 6:3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v3):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [**Genesis 3:6**](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis3.htm#v6)  | [**Genesis 6:2**](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v2) **(Interlineal Hebrew-English translation)**  |
| *The woman* ***saw*** *that the tree was* ***good*** *to eat and pleasing to the eye and that it was enticing for the wisdom it could give.  So she* ***took*** *some of its fruit and ate it.* | *The sons of gods/God* ***saw*** *the daughters of men, that they were* ***good****.  And they* ***took*** *wives for themselves from all those whom they chose.* |

The Hebrew text identified the sons born from these mixed marriages as *Nephilim,* which the New Jerusalem translates as "men of renown" but which is rendered in the literal Hebrew as "men of name."  The next verses link these men to the increase of wickedness across the face of the earth:  *Yahweh saw that human wickedness was great on earth and that his heart contrived nothing but wicked schemes all day long.  Yahweh regretted having made human beings on earth and was grieved at heart.  And Yahweh said, 'I shall rid the surface of the earth of the human beings whom I created'human and animal, the creeping things and the birds of heaven'for I regret having made them'* ([Gen 6:5-7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v5)).

**Genesis 6:6-7** *Yahweh regretted having made human beings on earth and was grieved at heart.* 7*And Yahweh said, 'I shall rid the surface of the earth of the human beings whom I created'human and animal, the creeping things and the birds of heaven'for I regret having made them.'*

Yahweh's heart was grieved because of the sins of man.  The heart was believed to be the seat of knowledge, wisdom, and the center of the true nature of a person's essence.  In this passage the God who is love ([1 Jn 4:16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1john/1john4.htm#v16)) is described as having the same feelings as a human whose love was betrayed'the betrayal grieved His heart'if God can love, He can also grieve ([Eph 4:30](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/ephesians/ephesians4.htm#v30)).

*for I regret having made them.*

The passage records that God "repented," or "changed his mind" about having created human beings.  The passage is not suggesting that God is changeable; He is not ([Num 23:19](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/numbers/numbers23.htm#v19); [1 Sam 15:29](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1samuel/1samuel15.htm#v29)).  However, God will change His plans for man, when man fails to cooperate in His plan: *Sometimes I announce that I shall uproot, break down and destroy a certain nation or kingdom, but should the nation I have threatened abandon its wickedness, I then change my mind about the disaster which I had intended to inflict on it* ([Jer 18:7-8](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/jeremiah/jeremiah18.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v7))*.* God's unchangeable intention is to do what is good for mankind and this is consistent with his unchanging character of goodness (also see [Ex 32:12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus32.htm#v12), [14](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus32.htm#v14); [1 Sam 15:11](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1samuel/1samuel15.htm#v11); [2 Sam 24:16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2samuel/2samuel24.htm#v16); [Amos 7:3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/amos/amos7.htm#v3), [6](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/amos/amos7.htm#v6)).

Who then were the sons produced from these mixed marriages? Scripture calls them *Nephilim.* The Nephilim were powerful men filled with violence'this Hebrew word is sometimes translated as "giants" and this word is only found twice in the Bible ([Gen 6:4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v4) and in [Num 13:33](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/numbers/numbers13.htm#v33)).  The Hebrew root of the word *Nephilim*  comes from the verb "to fall" (*napal*), suggesting their condition as "fallen men" of the serpent's seed (see [Ez 32:20-28](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/ezekiel/ezekiel32.htm#v28); *Strong's' Lexicon* page 95, #s 5303 and 5307; *Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon,* pages 656, 658).  The passage calls them "heroes" (*gibborim*) and men "of renown," literally "men of name," meaning men who made a name for themselves in the annals of ancient peoples, like the builders of the Tower of Babel sought to make a "name" for themselves ([Gen 11:4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis11.htm#v4)).  These powerful men probably came to be regarded as semi-divine like Gilgamesh and other ancient heroes whose exploits are recorded in ancient myths, taking the history of the ancient world and transforming part of what was a collective historical memory into a cultural myth.

Between the account of the marriage of the sons of gods with the daughters of men and the men of violence their unions produced, comes a curiously terse statement: *Yahweh said, 'My spirit cannot be indefinitely responsible for human beings (adam/man), who are only flesh; let the time allowed each be a hundred and twenty years'* ([Gen 6:3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v3)).  This verse must be interpreted within the context of the verses that came before and after the statement, and the parts of Scripture that focused on the conditions that contributed to the continued alienation of man and God.   The last time Scripture focused on mankind as a whole was in [Genesis 5:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v2) where it was recorded that God created male and female and *he blessed them and gave them the name Man (adam), when they were created*, referring to "Man" in the collective sense.   In [Genesis 6:3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v3) the focus returned to man (*adam*) as a whole, with the roll of the long lived individuals of the "promised seed" in the line of Seth sandwiched in between the two statements concerning mankind collectively.  The statement in [6:3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v3) that God's spirit cannot continue to prolong the lives of men who are made of "flesh" suggests it was not "flesh" that prolonged the lives of the righteous line of the "promised seed," but it was the spirit of God that gave them unusually long lives.

*let the time allowed each be a hundred and twenty years.*

The limit of the 120 years can be interpreted two ways:

1. From this point the lives of the individuals recorded in Genesis will continue to grow shorter until the conclusion of the Pentateuch were Moses dies at the age of 120 ([Dt 34:7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/deuteronomy/deuteronomy34.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v7)), or
2. God allotted 120 years for mankind to come to repentance before God cleansed the earth with the Great Flood.  The granting of 3 times 40 years (=120 years) could be similar to the 40 days allotted the sinful people of Nineveh to come to repentance in the Book of Jonah ([John 3:1-10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john3.htm#v1)).

Like many Jewish scholars, Sts. Ephraim and Jerome saw the 120 years as an open door to repentance before judgment:

* *This generation will not live 900 years like the previous generations, for it is flesh and its days are filled with the deeds of flesh. Therefore, their days will be 120 years.  If they repent during this time, they will be saved from the wrath that is about to come upon them.  [..].  Grace granted one hundred and twenty years for repentance to a generation that, according to justice, was not worthy of repentance* (Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis,* 6.4.1; quoted from *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament, vol. I,* page 125).
* *Furthermore, least [God] may seem to be cruel in that he had not given to sinners a place for repentance, he added, "But their days will be 120 years," that is, they will have 120 years to do repentance.  It is not therefore that human life was contracted to 120 years, as many wrongly assert, but that 120 years were given to that generation for repentance, since indeed we find that after the flood Abraham lived 175 years and others more than 200 and 300 years* (Jerome, *Questions on Genesis, 6.3;* quoted from *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament, vol. I,* page 125).

The number 120 in the significance of numbers in Scripture would signify 10 times 12, or perfection of order multiplied times perfection of government'in other words, a perfectly allotted span of time according to God will.

**Question:** What does Scripture record was God's judgment against the growing human violence and wickedness?  Compare God's judgment in [Genesis 6:5-6](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v5) on the condition of mankind to God's judgments during the Creation event in [Genesis 1:1-31](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v1), and the "sons of gods" and their judgment of the daughters of men in [6:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v2).  What is the exception found in Genesis 6:8?

**Answer:** In contrast to what the sons of gods "saw" was "good" (physically pleasing) in the daughters of men, and in contrast to the righteous "good" God "saw" in His acts of Creation, now God only "saw" man's wickedness ([Gen 6:5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v5)) and resolved to destroy life on the earth.  The exception was the good God saw in Noah son of Lamech.

**Genesis 6:8** *But Noah won Yahweh's favor (grace).*

Despite the growing corruption of humanity, God continued to dwell in the midst of His people.  But the closeness of their relationship to Him was determined by their degree of holiness; as human wickedness increased, men grew to be more alienated from God.  Throughout salvation history, there has always been a direct relationship between man's holiness as defined by covenant commitment and God's closeness to His people.  Noah is an example of the kind of holiness that gave him unity with God.  Noah walked with God, and it was because of the closeness of his relationship with God that Noah would be selected to fulfill one of the most amazing missions in salvation history.

Endnotes:

[1](http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/genesis/Lesson_5.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22note1). The day ended at sunset; therefore, what we designate as "afternoon" was for the people of Israel "evening."  The designation "twilight" in [Exodus 29:39](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus29.htm#v39) & [41](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus29.htm#v41) is in the Hebrew text literally "between the twilights," of dawn and dusk or 12 noon.  The 1st century AD Jewish priest/historian, Flavius Josephus, recorded in his history, *Antiquities of the Jews, 14.4.3,* that the sacrifice of the second daily lamb was at the ninth hour Jewish time, which is 3PM our time.

[2](http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/genesis/Lesson_5.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22note2). For example, the Egyptian word *mose/ mosis,* meaning "is born," was a common suffix in Egyptian theophoric names (names that contained the name of a god) in the early 18th dynasty period of Egyptian pharaohs (1550-1390BC): Thutmoses, Ramoses, Ahmoses, Kamoses, etc.  This is why some Bible scholars, both Jewish and Christian, date Moses' Exodus to that period.  They propose that Moses' Egyptian name had the name of an Egyptian god as a prefix that was dropped when he renounced Egypt in favor of Israel (for example, Ra-moses, "the god Ra is born"). The documents discovered in the archives of the ancient city of Mari (on the banks of the Euphrates River) revealed such names as Abamram, Jacob-el, and Benjamites, all of which are similar to the Bible names of Abram/Abraham, Jacob, and Benjamin, proving the names recorded in the early history of the Bible were also the names of real men who lived in that same period of history.  See *Evidence That Demands a Verdict,* page 105; *Egypt: Gods Myths and Religion,* Barnes & Noble Books, Anness Publishers Ltd., New York, 2002, page 89-97; *Anchor Bible Dictionary, vol. IV, "Mari,"* pages 525-536.

**Questions for group discussion:**

**Question:** What is an example of choosing between fear of God and fear of suffering or fear of not being accepted by the world's standards?
**Answer:** One possible answer:  The Church, as God's vehicle of salvation, teaches that abortion is a mortal sin (CCC [2270-74](http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc/p3s2c2a5.htm#2270)).  The world says there is no reason to "suffer" an unwanted pregnancy.  Many, through fear of suffering economic hardship or a personal hardship, choose abortion. Others support the sin of abortion because of the world's wisdom which is dictated by those who advocate "freedom of choice."  To chose abortion is not only choosing to fear "suffering" more than to fear God, but it is choosing not to trust God in helping us overcome hardships.

**Question:** In [Genesis 4:5b-8](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v5) God asked Cain: *'Why are you angry and downcast?  7 If you are doing right, surely you ought to hold your head high!  But if you are not doing right, Sin is crouching at the door hungry to get you.  You can still master him.'* In [Genesis 4:6-7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v6) God gave Cain the assurance that he had the power to master his temptation to sin, but he could only master sin if he resisted the temptation to sin and was obedient (to "do well"/ "offer rightly") in submitting himself to the will of God.  How does God correct us when we fall into the error of sin?  How should we respond?
**Answer:** God does not cause suffering, but He can use our sufferings caused by sin to bring us to repentance through the redemptive judgments that accompany the damages and sufferings sin causes us physically and spiritually.  God also corrects us through His Church, the vehicle He has provided to help us on our journey to salvation.  Some people, like Cain, blame God for the way sin causes suffering in their lives, whether personal sin or the sin of the world which affects us all'the innocent and the guilty.  Others reject the Church's teaching in the same way Cain rejected God's correction. What we should do is to run to confession and throw ourselves on the mercy of God in full repentance for our sins through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and we should pray for the victory of the blood of Jesus Christ over the sin that is in the world, and for the repentance of those who contribute to sin and suffering in the world.

**Question:** Is it important for us to offer our hearts in sincere repentance and service to the Lord before we approach His altar? What does it mean when someone pays "lip service" and not "heart-service" at the Lord's altar?  When in the Liturgy of the Mass does God ask for our "hearts"?  What does our acclamation mean when we respond to the priest's call concerning our "hearts"?