

Genesis #6: The Beginning of Civilization

¹ Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD." ² And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. Genesis 4:1-2 (ESV)

³ In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴ and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. Genesis 4:3-5 (ESV)

First fruits means: God gets my first and best.

Note: The New Testament says that the reason Cain's offering was rejected was because of jealousy in his heart against his brother (1 John 3:12). And Abel's offering was acceptable to God because Abel offered it in faith (Heb. 11:4).

Commentary note: The term translated "offering" (mincha) in this passage is used in the Levitical laws for the bloodless thank offering, consisting either of flour and oil or of flour prepared with frankincense (Lev. 2:1, 4, 14, 15); it is also used in the Old Testament in the broader sense including both bloodless and bloody offerings. The broader sense is obviously intended here. There is no evidence in the text that God had specified a blood sacrifice. This comes later.

Why did God accept one brother's offering and refuse the other? It was NOT what they brought in their hands. It was what they brought in their hearts.

⁶ The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it." Genesis 4:6-7 (ESV)

⁸ Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. ⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" ¹⁰ And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. ¹¹ And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹² When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." Genesis 4:8-12 (ESV)

¹³ Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. ¹⁴ Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." ¹⁵ Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him. ¹⁶ Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. Genesis 4:13-16 (ESV)

Commentary note:

The word translated punishment in verse 13 in Hebrew is the word “woni”. It usually means “iniquity” or “guilt”, but occasionally means “punishment”. The LXX (Greek translation) of the Bible and other older versions all translate this word as “iniquity”. God’s response to Cain in verse 15 seems to additionally support that Cain was not whining about his sin, but was remorseful.

¹⁷ Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. When he built a city, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch. ¹⁸ To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad fathered Mehujael, and Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech. ¹⁹ And Lamech took two wives. The name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah.

Genesis 4:17-19 (ESV)

Why we do not believe in/practice polygamy:

General principle: The Bible records the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Reason #1: It violates God’s original design for marriage. (Genesis 2:24, Matt. 19:4-5)

Reason #2: Polygamy is always reflected in a negative light in the Bible and leads to bad results.

Reason #3: The qualification for a NT elder is to be a one-woman man. This is the pattern for the church. (1 Timothy 3)

Reason #4: The example of Jesus, Jesus is a groom and He has one bride, the church.

²⁰ Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. ²¹ His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. ²² Zillah also bore Tubal-cain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah. ²³ Lamech said to his wives: “Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. ²⁴ If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold.” ²⁵ And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, “God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.” ²⁶ To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD.

Genesis 4:20-26 (ESV)

²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Hebrews 12:24 (ESV)