

SESSION 38: A NEW DIRECTION

Genesis 4:25-5:2

August 18, 2024

PREFACE

To our regret and shame, many of us can cite times in our personal history—or perhaps just one dramatic time—when, as a Christian, we rebelled against God; when, for whatever reason, He said go west and we went east. ❑ But afterward we were convicted of our sin, confessed, repented, and by His forgiving grace later found ourselves back in fellowship with our Lord.

e.g., Jonah 1:1-2.

I stand by my earlier position that we cannot say with certainty whether Adam and Eve are—or are not—in heaven. Adam lived 930 years; a lot can happen in a lifetime of almost one thousand years, and none of it is recorded in Scripture or elsewhere beyond the days of Eden. For example, in the “roster of faith” in Hebrews 11, the earliest name mentioned is not Adam, but his son Abel.

Nevertheless, in the passage before us we have pretty good evidence that the first couple did not remain in that initial state of rebellion against their Maker, as recorded in Genesis 3.

Before we proceed into that, however, let’s establish where we are in this narrative. We have just left the story, in vv17-24, of an unholy family—the Cainites—which ends (the story, not the family line) in the story of Lamech and his family. Lamech was Cain’s great-great-great-great grandson, and he represents, in a broad sense, the culture of the world in opposition to the culture of righteousness, those aligned with the physical over the spiritual. In other words, the fallen, depraved culture in which all of us dwell still today.

If we didn’t have v25, v24 would leave us discouraged over civilization’s prospects, and wondering why Yahweh permitted Cain to murder the more righteous Abel.

Read Genesis 4:25-26.

v25

Then Adam knew his wife again; and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth...

I must confess that a conversion process must take place in my brain whenever I read the name Seth (Hebrew, *Sheth* [shet]). I have long been a student of ancient Egypt, and their multi-faceted god of the deserts, storms, chaos and war: *Set* (Greek, *Seth*). So not unlike translating the face of a digital clock into the more familiar analog clock face, I must wipe away the darker image of the Egyptian Set and replace it with the more benign and brighter Seth of Genesis.

More than a few assume from the text that there was an extended period in which Adam and Eve had no sexual union, and hence, no more children until they decided to start again and Eve subsequently gave birth to Seth. There is no reason to hold that position. Verse 25 simply records another son born to the couple. Period.


But for some reason—as evidenced in the name she gave him—Eve saw in *this* birth a special sign; at the very least she saw in this birth God’s gracious hand, his condescending mercy in replacing the loss of Abel.

for she said, “God has set for me another seed in place of Abel, for Cain killed him.”

Among our common versions the LSB alone translates this literally. The other versions alternate between “appointed” and “granted,” but Eve uses a word that is a play on the name she gives the boy, which is evident in English. “Since ‘set in place of’ means ‘to substitute’ we may adequately interpret the name ‘Sheth’ to mean substitute... As a word of Eve it definitely connects the two acts and states that God meant Seth to be a substitute for the slain Abel” (Leupold).

However long it had been since their egregious behavior with the serpent, it is clear from Eve’s spirit in this that they were no longer living in open opposition to God, but, presumably, striving to live in obedience to Him.

It may be that the person who saw a prophetic connection between this birth and the “seed” in 3:15 who would “crush [the serpent] on the head” was not Eve or Adam (who seems to have already faded into the background) but the author, Moses. He is the one pressing the “seed” narrative from here through Chapter Five.

And here one more pattern is set, one that will be seen time and again throughout much of the OT: God's favor is bestowed not on the eldest, but a younger son. Cain, the eldest received God's *disfavor*, while the younger of the two, Abel, received God's favor. Because he was killed by the eldest, Seth (younger still) will replace Abel as the recipient of God's favor. There are a number of examples of this pattern,  but to cite just one, David was the least of the sons of Jesse, yet it was in him God established the Davidic line and throne—an *eternal* throne on which would reign the Messiah.

Examples in Genesis of the eldest son being passed over:

Japheth (10:2-5)
Ham (10:6-20)
Nahor (11:29; 22:20-24)
Ishmael (17:20)
Lot (19:19-38)
Esau (Chapter 36)

v26

And to Seth, to him also, a son was born; and he called his name Enosh.

It is an interesting name that Seth gives his son: Enosh (ee-NOSH). Elsewhere, when used as a common noun, and simply translated “man” or “mankind,” it refers to the *frailty* of man, his earthiness, his mortality. Once again the venerable William Wilson fleshes this out for us.

Wilson: [Enosh means] to be sick unto death, in very great distress, mortal, fatal, and according to nature; the common name of man in regard to his being heir to corruption and weakness; not used of man before the Fall.

In this *enosh* is just about synonymous with another word translated “Man”: *adam*. So we wonder why Seth named his son Enosh.

Was it because he was particularly frail when born?

Was it a way to give him his own name, but also hearken back to his grandfather—either in a respectful or, remembering his dad's great sin, more accusatory way?

Or was it Seth's way to acknowledge the general frailty and mortality of mankind as a whole—especially in contrast to the strength and immortality of Yahweh? That is, was it a way to express his submission before God?

Then men began to call upon the name of Yahweh.

While there are a few who want to translate this, “Then men began to be called **by** the name of the Lord,” the consensus, as seen in our common versions, is that this refers to men “calling upon” the name of the Lord—that is, calling out to Him in public worship.

And here it seems natural to associate this with the immediately preceding statement about Seth naming his son Enosh. If this was a time of spiritual awakening and acknowledgment of Yahweh as merciful, unchangeable, and faithful (as his personal, covenantal name implies), then it would have been only natural for man to acknowledge his own lowliness, his “frailty” (*enosh*) before sovereign God. Thus Seth may have chosen his son’s name to commemorate this special time of awakening, and worship of Yahweh.

Here is the picture: From the creation of man, *private* worship had existed in one form or another. We can safely assume that in 130 years this worship had had its natural ebbs and flows—periods of faithful adherence, followed by stagnant periods of relative disinterest. For whatever reason, the naming of Enosh marked a time when this worship flowered into a more public form of worship which incorporated a calling out to God by the audible use of His name.

Now we turn the page to Chapter Five, where for the first time we get a picture of the breadth and depth of these generations. But before that the chapter begins with a brief recapitulation of how it all began.

Read Genesis 5:1-5.

v1

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.

We begin by recognizing that this is clearly organized by Moses. That is, he knows how the story ends (or at least the end as witnessed by him), so he steers the narrative—as he has from Genesis 1:1—in that direction. Thus he does not waste any ink on Abel, since his line ended with him; nor does he waste any ink on Cain, since he was a reprobate whose line in the scope of God’s economy goes nowhere. Instead Moses zeroes in immediately on the line through Seth. ➡

And speaking of Moses, we notice something else right off; something is familiar about this first verse in Chapter Five: it is almost identical to v4 of Chapter Two. Moses has used the same template to express the “generations of Adam” as he did earlier to express the “generations of the heavens and the earth.”

Perhaps here we should remind ourselves that what Moses knew must be informed by what the *ultimate* author—the Spirit—knew. After all, Moses the man did not know that the Seth line would culminate in the Messiah—he did not even know it would continue into the Davidic line! So how did he know to record Seth’s history and not Cain’s? It would seem that the Spirit’s counsel would be critical for this.

2:4 These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that Yahweh God made earth and heaven.

5:1 This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.

But there are also two differences.

the “book” of the generations

The word translated “book” (*sepher*) refers to any writing complete in itself, no matter its length. By this Moses may be referring to an even more ancient document as his source for what follows. Not necessarily, but perhaps.

“Elohim”

Logically, because he is hearkening back to the Creation epoch, Moses returns to using *Elohim* (“God”) as in Chapter One. This emphasizes “the Creator who is to be feared,” in contrast to the more personal, gracious *Yahweh* employed in Chapters Two to Four. (Not by a *different* author, as some contend; just a different emphasis by the *same* author.)

In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.

This is not just a repeat of the creation of man, a simple refresher course, but an effort by Moses to ground what follows in the fact that it all began with God—just as Luke does in his backward genealogy of Christ Jesus, which ends with, “the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.” It all begins with God, and Moses doesn’t want the reader to forget that, as he plows through the long list of human “begats” which follow.

Verse 3 states that “Adam...became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image...” Moses reminds us, in v1, that the *first* man was created “in the likeness of God.”

Thus we are to remember that God, Adonai Elohim, Yahweh is behind it all. He created man pristine, sinless; that was His intention.

In other words, God is the Father of all humanity. And Chapters Three and Four have revealed that His children have now gone in different directions—their own way; even the righteous, such as Seth and his son Enosh have lost that original state enjoyed by the first man and woman for a while.

v2

He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created.

Just as Eve named her third son Seth, and Seth named his son Enosh, so—we learn here explicitly for the first time—God named his first human creation “Man.” We’ve taken that for granted all along, but Moses states it clearly here. And we have learned that “Man” (i.e., mankind), “man,” and “Adam” are all of the same word in Hebrew.

This presents a fascinating dichotomy: Verse 1 states that “God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.” Man is made in the likeness of God—yet, God chose to name this creation—both as a species and as a proper name—“Man,” which means from the ground, the soil from whence he came. For whatever His reason, God wanted human beings to be of the earth, of the soil—not just *residing* on this planet, but *of it*.

Made in the image of God, yet people of the soil—no wonder we’re confused!

We are familiar with Hollywood’s love of grand, epoch stories that go on for hours and hours, requiring thirty-five Blu-ray discs to tell the story in its entirety. Well, here’s one for you, Hollywood. How about telling the epic story that would cast into shade every other feeble epic previously produced: the story of Yahweh God’s plan for Mankind, from Creation all the way through to the Eternal State for some, the lake of fire for the rest.

Not just a series of action sequences (*talk about your action sequences! see the Eschaton*) alternating with romantic interludes, but the intricate, complex reasoning behind it all—God’s purpose, His plan from beginning to end, how it all fits together perfectly, with perfect result.

Now, I’d pay good money to see that.

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God’s Favor Bestowed not on the Eldest, but a Younger Son

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