

Genesis 4-5 – From Adam to Noah

Review

Last time, we examined the details of God’s creation of man and woman along with His provision of the Garden of Eden as a dwelling place for them. We saw God’s establishment of marriage as a partnership between man and his complimentary counterpart - woman. Then in Genesis 3 we found that Adam and Eve fell into the trap set for them by the serpent – disobeying God’s command not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. At the end of chapter 3, God pronounced judgment upon the serpent, the woman, and the man due to their sin. In the midst of that curse, God gave the first prophecy concerning Jesus – the seed of the woman who would come to rescue mankind out of death in our sins.

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Chapters 4 & 5 list the descendants of Adam and Eve down to Noah and his three sons just prior to the great flood. After briefly listing the descendants of Adam and Eve’s son Cain, these genealogies quickly focus in on the line of their son Seth through whose line, Jesus the מָשִׁיחַ *māšîaḥ* would be born. But first we find the story of the first murder.

Cain and Abel

¹Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain [קַיִן qayin - possession], saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.” ²And again, she bore his brother Abel [אָבֵל hebel - breath]. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. — Genesis 4:1-2 (ESV)

I find it cute that many of the English language translations still use the traditional euphemism “knew” for sexual relations (although some of the more modern ones use more modern “cute” euphemisms). Regardless of what we call it though, Eve recognized that the conception of her new “possession” Cain was accomplished by the LORD working within her body and Adam’s.

NOTE – Notice I didn’t refer to Cain as Adam and Eve’s firstborn. Certainly, Cain is the **first-mentioned** of their children, but that doesn’t necessarily imply that they hadn’t had others beforehand. This is a subtle but important principle that we must learn and remember. God doesn’t tell us everything in His Word. How could He? Why should He? God tells us what we need to know in His Word, focusing our minds more and more closely on His Word’s main message – the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Furthermore, the truly miraculous characteristic of God’s Word is that it is **“living and powerful”** as the writer of Hebrews wrote (Hebrews 4:12). God reveals to us by His Word new things about Himself daily as we grow to become able to take them in.

Before we move on, remember that the meanings of the Hebrew names for people and places we find in Genesis are significant. Often there is an associated play on words within the text. Such is the case with Cain as we see here.

³In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their

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fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. Genesis 4:3-5a (ESV)

These verses are fruitful ground for trite jokes about God not being a vegan, how much better meat smells on the grill than vegetables, etc. But the important take-away for us here isn't in *what* Cain and Abel brought to God as offerings but *why*. Abel's gift was accepted because of the spirit of gratitude, trust, and faith in which Abel offered it.

⁴By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.

Hebrews 11:4 (ESV)

Just as his mother Eve recognized that she received Cain "*with the help of the Lord*," Abel knew that the firstborn of his flock was a blessing from God, and he wished to show God his gratitude for it. Furthermore, Abel's offering bore an element of risk. There was no guarantee that his flock would produce more offspring. Nevertheless, Abel brought an offering of the firstborn in faith, trusting that God would provide for his needs. We see at the end of verse 4 that God honored Abel's offering due to this spirit in which Abel brought it.

ASIDE – Thousands of years later, God formalized a requirement under His Law for devoting every first-born offspring (people and animals) to Him and the means for their redemption as a foreshadowing of His own offering of His own firstborn Son Jesus for the redemption of mankind out of death in our sins. (cf. Numbers 18:15-17)

By contrast, the spirit in which Cain brought his offering must have been somewhat different. We don't know this directly from the text itself, but we can easily infer it by God's reaction. Perhaps, Cain brought his offering simply because he had seen his brother make an offering and assumed he should do likewise. Once again, we don't know this directly from the text, so we need to be very careful about reading something into it that isn't God's intent. Clearly though, Cain's offering didn't carry the same element of risk that Abel's did. Maybe Cain didn't bring his offering in the same spirit of faith, gratitude, and trust as Abel did either.

Regardless of the specifics with Cain's and Abel's offerings, God makes clear in His Word His expectations for the spirit in which we bring our offerings to Him – not as what Paul called "eye service," to garner approval and respect from others, but out of a heart of true contrition, faith, and trust. When Jesus performed His miraculous healings, He most often left the ones He had healed saying, "*your faith has made you well.*" Jesus' teaching about the widow's small offering springs to mind.

¹Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, ²and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. ³And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. ⁴For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on." Luke 21:1-4 (ESV)

...So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. ⁶The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? ⁷If you do well, will you not

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be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to ^[לְךָ 'עַל] you, but you must rule over it.” Genesis 4:5b-7 (ESV)

Here now we encounter the first instance of jealousy and of anger with God. I can only speak for myself, but if we honestly assess our own lives, I think we are all subject to both of these sinful emotions now and then. Cain was angry because he didn't understand God's actions or His plans. The fact is that God needed to teach Cain (and us) something about our own nature after the fall of mankind into sin. Cain's proper response should have been joy in celebration with his brother who had found favor in God's eyes. Instead, Cain envied his brother, and coveted Abel's blessing for himself. When our fellow creatures are blessed of God, we should share in their joy, not envy them and covet their blessing for ourselves in their place. That sin of covetousness is what God warned Cain to beware of here.

In verse 7 we find another instance of the controversial English translation of the Hebrew לְךָ 'עַל. Recall that we found a similar controversy when we looked at Genesis 3:16 where God pronounced His judgment upon Eve for her disobedience. As it does with that verse, so the ESV does here – translating לְךָ 'עַל as “contrary to.” So also, most other English translations render לְךָ 'עַל as “for” in this verse as they did in Genesis 3:16. But here in Genesis 4:7 the Hebrew word has a slightly different connotation – that sin was seeking to come after Cain to do him harm.

⁸Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. ⁹Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?” ¹⁰And the LORD said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground.” Genesis 4:8-10 (ESV)

Some manuscripts add a phrase to verse 8 indicating that Cain asked Abel to meet him in the field where he planned to kill him. Who knows whether Cain premeditated his brother's murder or whether he struck out at him in a fit of anger? Does it really matter? What was done was done – the very first murder of one person by another. God had not yet formally outlawed murder, but almost everyone is revolted by the idea nevertheless. This is another aspect of the sense of justice and righteousness with which God imbued mankind when He created us in His image even before He formalized these concepts in the Law of Moses.

In his guilt and shame over what he had done, Cain then compounded his sin by uttering the first lie told by a human being that we find recorded in God's Word (Genesis 4:9). Of course Cain knew where his brother was, and of course, so did God. Once again, as with God's questions to Adam and Eve in the garden, God's purpose in asking wasn't for His own information, but to bring the realization of Cain's sin into focus for Cain himself so that he could have the opportunity to repent of it.

Abel, having been murdered by his own brother, became the first in a long line of righteous martyrs. Jesus reminded the Pharisees of this thousands of years later.

³⁴Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, ³⁵so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of

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Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Matthew 23:34-35 (ESV)

11And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." 13Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. 14Behold, 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." 15Then 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. 16Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod [נֹד - wandering], east of Eden. Genesis 4:11-16 (ESV)

Once again, God couched His pronouncement of judgment for Cain's sin as a curse upon the ground that Cain had to work for his livelihood. Recall that God proclaimed a similar curse upon the earth in judgment upon Adam's sin. God also told Cain that he would become a wanderer on the earth. We see another Hebrew play on words in Genesis 4:16 where we read that Cain went to dwell in נֹד which means "wandering." What is most tragic about this whole affair is hidden in plain sight in Genesis 4:16 which tells us that Cain went off to wander "***away from the presence of the Lord.***" We have no way of knowing whether Cain eventually repented of his sins of covetousness, murder, and bearing false witness so that he might be redeemed by the blood of Jesus. If not, the story is tragic indeed.

Here in this passage, we also find an intriguing mention that we might have easily missed in a cursory reading. During this conversation, both Cain and God mention other people whose existence is not explicitly revealed in the text of God's Word. In Genesis 4:14 Cain voices his fear that "***whoever finds me will kill me.***" In response, God put a mark on Cain to protect him, saying the He would take vengeance Himself, "***If anyone kills Cain.***" All of this begs the question in my own mind where these "whoever" and "anyone" came from. So far in the narrative we have only encountered four people by name – the two brothers and their parents. Clearly, there were other people who aren't mentioned by name in the Bible. We need to bear this important fact in mind as we continue to examine the genealogies found in the remainder of Genesis 4 and in Genesis 5.

The Descendants of Cain

Starting here in verse 17 and going up to the story of Noah's flood, we find a genealogy of the descendants of Adam beginning first with a short list of Cain's descendants, and then returning to Adam and Eve to follow the descendants of their son Seth down to Noah whose family were the sole survivors of the flood.

Before we look at those names in detail, I wanted to share with you some statistics that should bring home to us an important truth – no genealogy found in any of the world's texts is or could possibly be complete!

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But just for fun, let's consider the possibility that we might write down a complete genealogy of all mankind (assuming of course that we even *knew* the names of all those who have gone before, are now alive, and are yet to be born). Suppose we could write each name in a space about 1/8 inch tall and 1 inch wide. That's easy with names like Jim. Maybe not so much with names like Chedorlaomer. Scientists estimate that there have been about 100 billion people who ever lived on the earth. I have no idea where they came up with that number, but let's roll with it for the purpose of illustration. To write each of those 100 billion names in a space of 1/8 square inch would require over 16,000 acres of paper or nearly 7 million letter-size sheets.

Furthermore, assuming that one person could write one name per second. It would take nearly 3,200 years for one person to accomplish. Of course, the task would be doomed from the start, since at the time of this writing about four new names are added to the list in the second our poor genealogist takes to write down just one. To overcome that issue, we would need to assign at least five people to the task. It would then only take them about 640 years to write down the original 100 billion names. But by that time, at humanity's present birth rate another 81 billion names will have been added to the list. Nevertheless, they could eventually finish the task as long as they write down names faster than new ones are added. Then of course at least five people would need to devote their lives full time to keeping our new genealogy up to date. By the way, this also assumes that the assigned genealogists work 24/7 throughout all eternity from the inception of the project.

And all of that is just to write the names down without even considering the family relationships among them.

Those who know me can attest that I rarely say all, none, always, or never in my writing. But in this case, I'm comfortable saying that *all* genealogies are necessarily focused on limited groups of people for specific purposes. In God's Word, we find the genealogies start with one specific pair of progenitors – Adam and Eve – and focus on one particular descendant – Jesus of Nazareth. They do this to drive home the point that Jesus – God the Son came to earth in the form of the man Jesus of Nazareth in fulfillment of the prophecies written about Him throughout the Bible, beginning with the first messianic prophecy uttered by God Himself to the serpent in Genesis 3:15 that we studied last time.

So, with that in mind, let's delve into these genealogies, beginning with a look at Cain's descendants.

¹⁷Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch [חֲנוֹךְ ḥănôḵ- dedicated]. *When he built a city, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch.* *¹⁸To Enoch was born Irad* [עִירָד 'irād - fleet], *and Irad fathered Mehujael* [מְהוּיָאֵל m'ḥûyā'ēl – smitten by God], *and Mehujael fathered Methushael* [מֶתוּשָׁאֵל m'tûšā'ēl – who is of God], *and Methushael fathered Lamech* [לֶמֶךְ lemeḵ - powerful]. *¹⁹And Lamech took two wives. The name of the one was Adah* [עֲדָה 'ādā - ornament], *and the name of the other Zillah* [צִלְהָ šillā - shade]. *²⁰Adah bore Jabal* [יָבָל yābāl- stream of water]; *he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock.* *²¹His brother's name was Jubal* [יֻבָל yûbāl - stream]; *he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe.* *²²Zillah also bore Tubal-cain* [תּוּבַל קַיִן tûbāl qayin- you will be brought of Cain]; *he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah* [נַעֲמָה na'āmā - loveliness]. Genesis 4:17-22 (ESV)

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Here in this passage, we find all that God’s Word has to say about the line of Cain. We won’t delve too deeply into it, but there are a few points to be noted. First, in Genesis 4:17 we find the first instance of a name which is later re-used. The Enoch mentioned here is not the same Enoch we read about in Genesis 5 who walked with God and then was not. Similarly, the Lamech mentioned here is not the same Lamech who was Noah’s father. Whenever we examine the genealogies found in God’s Word, we need to be vigilant to remember that the Bible often reuses the names for people. Consequently, it is sometimes very difficult to determine the relationships among them. This is particularly true of the genealogy of Esau as we will see when – God willing – we take up our study of Genesis 36.

There is something else about this passage that greatly perturbs me. Can anyone guess what it is? Look at verses 20-22 regarding the sons of Adah and Zillah. Three times in these verses Moses says, “**he was the father of all those who...**” do something – **do, not did!** But as we shall soon see, every one of the descendants of the people we read about here in this passage died in the flood – **almost** every one of them anyway. The only answer to this conundrum that I can think of is that at least two of Noah’s daughters-in-law must have been descendants of Lamech by his wives Adah and Zillah. This may be the very reason that these two ladies and Zillah’s daughter Naamah are mentioned by name when none of the other women after Eve are. Perhaps the descendants of these three ladies eventually married Noah’s sons – Shem, Ham, and Japheth. But we’re getting ahead of ourselves again.

BTW – It’s little wonder that מְחֻיָּאֵל **m’hûyā’ēl** – smitten by God – never gained much popularity as a baby name. But I digress...

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.” Genesis 4:23-24 (ESV)

Lamech sounds like a really nice guy, huh? I must admit I have no idea why God chose to include this little poem in His Word. Nor am I entirely sure I **want** to know. I do know and trust God has some purpose of which I’m not yet aware. Furthermore, I know and trust that God will reveal to me the things I need at the time I need them.

God’s Word now leaves behind the line of Cain and takes up the line of Seth through whose descendants the LORD Jesus was eventually born.

25 ***And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name***
Seth [תַּשׁ *šēt* - compensation], ***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 [עֲנוֹשׁ *’ēnôš* - man]. ***At that time people began***
to call upon the name of the LORD. Genesis 4:25-26 (ESV)

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Moses says here in verse 26 that people began to call upon the Name of the LORD at that time. All well and good, right? But notice that the word LORD is in all uppercase. Remember from one of our previous lessons that whenever we see that, the Hebrew text reads – יהוה *Y'hōvâ*. But Moses himself wasn't told God's name until thousands of years later at the burning bush when he asked how he should answer the Israelites if they asked the Name of the One who had sent him to them (Exodus 3:14). Even then, God did not use this proper Name – instead saying “*tell them 'I AM* [אני *hāyā*] *sent me to you.*’” So how could Moses know what people were calling God thousands of years prior? This brings us to an interesting point. Sometimes the scribes through whom God has revealed His Word to us don't know or understand themselves what God's Spirit leads them to write.

CAVEAT – Before we press on, we need to note something we will henceforth ignore. A great deal of study and writing has been devoted to calculating the specific dates and times of Biblical events using the ages of the Israelite forefathers detailed in the genealogies we are about to examine. Some have taken this practice to the nth degree, going so far as to declare the exact date and hour when God began His work of creation saying “*Let there be light*” – the fourth hour of Monday, October 7, 3761 BC. In the two millennia since Jesus ascended back to His Father, considerable energy has been devoted in trying to determine the day and hour of His return. This even though Jesus Himself taught that “*...concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.*” In my (always) humble opinion, there is little value in such shenanigans for bringing us closer to God or giving us better understanding of His Gospel. Therefore, for the most part, we will simply ignore the dates and ages mentioned in the text except where they may offer us some special insight.

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Before we launch into our study of the genealogy we find in Genesis 5, let's remind ourselves about what Paul wrote to Titus concerning genealogies.

9But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. Titus 3:9 (ESV)

Nevertheless, we find this genealogy in the text of the book we have under consideration, and we will not skip over it. We do find some valuable insights within this list – particularly the intriguing story of Enoch who apparently didn't die in the ordinary sense. Genealogies in themselves are not unprofitable and worthless – Paul's words to Titus notwithstanding. What is unprofitable is allowing disputes to arise over them and obsessing over them as the Jewish leaders did before, during, and after Paul's day continuing even to the present time.

1This is the book of the generations of Adam** [אדם *'ādām* - man]. **When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God.** **2Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created.** **3When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth** [שֵׁט *šēṭ* - compensation]. **4The days of Adam after he fathered Seth were 800 years; and he had other sons and daughters.** **5Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, and he died.

Genesis 5:1-5 (ESV)

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The entirety of Genesis 5 is devoted to this genealogy of Adam’s descendants through Seth to Noah. The line of Seth eventually led to the tribes of Israel and through the tribe of Jacob’s son Judah to King David through whose royal line Jesus was eventually born. This genealogy takes a poetic form. Each stanza of the poem except the last ends with the phrase “**...and he died**” with one very notable exception that we’ll examine in detail. Each stanza but the last contains the phrase “**...and he had other sons and daughters.**” Thus, we have an answer to the question where Cain found his wife although it may not be that pretty for the modern mind to ponder! Clearly, she must have been either one of his sisters or nieces, grandnieces, etc.

Before we move on, notice that God says Adam fathered Seth “**in his own likeness, after his image.**” Does this wording sound familiar? It should. These are the very words God used in Genesis 1 when He created man on the sixth day (Genesis 1:26-27).

6When Seth had lived 105 years, he fathered Enosh [אֱנוֹשׁ 'ēnôš - man]. 7Seth lived after he fathered Enosh 807 years and had other sons and daughters.

8Thus all the days of Seth were 912 years, and he died.

9When Enosh had lived 90 years, he fathered Kenan [קֵינָן qênān - possession]•

10Enosh lived after he fathered Kenan 815 years and had other sons and daughters. 11Thus all the days of Enosh were 905 years, and he died.

12When Kenan had lived 70 years, he fathered Mahalalel [מַהֲלָלֵל mahālal'el – praise of God]. 13Kenan lived after he fathered Mahalalel 840 years and had other sons and daughters. 14Thus all the days of Kenan were 910 years, and he died.

15When Mahalalel had lived 65 years, he fathered Jared [יָרֵד yered - descent]•

16Mahalalel lived after he fathered Jared 830 years and had other sons and daughters. 17Thus all the days of Mahalalel were 895 years, and he died.

18When Jared had lived 162 years, he fathered Enoch [חֵנוֹךְ ḥănôk - dedicated]•

19Jared lived after he fathered Enoch 800 years and had other sons and daughters. 20Thus all the days of Jared were 962 years, and he died. Genesis

5:6-20 (ESV)

As promised, we won’t pay any attention to the ages and years in these passages. Thousands of words have been written about them. Many timelines have been constructed. Much has been made of the fact that people in these times lived much longer than people do today. There’s no need for us to add to that pile of knowledge and speculation. Such is left “as an exercise for the student.”

Notice in verse 9 that the name Kenan (קֵינָן qênān) means possession just like the name Cain (קַיִן qayin). Remember also that Cain’s son Enoch is not the same person as Jared’s son mentioned in verse 18 & 19.

21When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah [מֵתוּשֶׁלַח m-tûšelah - man of the dart]. 22Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years

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and had other sons and daughters. ²³Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. ²⁴Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him. Genesis

5:21-24 (ESV)

Enoch is a person of particular interest because unlike all the other men in this poetic genealogy, we don't find the phrase "*...and he died*" written about him. This has led to a great deal of speculation not only about the idea that Enoch apparently didn't die in the usual way of all flesh, but also about possible future events involving him. For example, it has been proposed that Enoch and Elijah (the other person in God's Word who didn't die as other people do) will be the two witnesses who will be killed by the antichrist and then be resurrected back to life (Revelation 11:1-14).

Outside his listings in various genealogies, Enoch is mentioned two other places in the Bible. One is in Hebrews 11:5 referring to Enoch's faith and rescue out of death. The other is a very cryptic reference in Jude 1:14 about a prophecy uttered by Enoch that appears nowhere else in God's Word.

*²⁵When Methuselah had lived 187 years, he fathered Lamech [למך *lemek* - powerful]. ²⁶Methuselah lived after he fathered Lamech 782 years and had other sons and daughters. ²⁷Thus all the days of Methuselah were 969 years, and he died.*

*²⁸When Lamech had lived 182 years, he fathered a son ²⁹and called his name Noah [נח: *nōah* - rest], saying, "Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed, this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands." ³⁰Lamech lived after he fathered Noah 595 years and had other sons and daughters. ³¹Thus all the days of Lamech were 777 years, and he died.*

*³²After Noah was 500 years old, Noah fathered Shem [שם *šēm* - name], Ham [חם *hām* - hot], and Japheth [יפת *yepet* - opened].* Genesis 5:25-32 (ESV)

I know I promised not to even acknowledge the years and ages mentioned in this genealogy, but of course the name מְתוּשֶׁלַח *m'tūšelah* is virtually synonymous with longevity. He is the longest-lived man we know of directly from the text of God's Word.

BTW – Lamech's life must have been quite fulfilling since he lived 777 years...

...nyuk, nyuk, nyuk. 😊

Remember that Lamech the father of Noah is a different person from Lamech the great-great-grandson of Cain who gave that inspirational poem to his wives earlier in the chapter. In verse 28 we find another messianic prophecy in Lamech's words that "*Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed, this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands.*" Of course, this is a reference to the salvation out of sin's curse that Jesus (who was descended from Noah) would bring when God the Son became the man Jesus of Nazareth and dwelt among us as עִמָּנוּאֵל *'immānū'el*.

But before God brought respite from sin through Noah, He first brought about a tremendous catastrophe upon all the earth in which Noah and his family played a central role.

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Looking Ahead

Next time, we'll look at the flood of Noah.