

Genesis 4:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch:
and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the
name of his son, Enoch.

Analysis

And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the nam... This passage belongs to the primeval history section (Genesis 1-11) which establishes universal truths about God, humanity, sin, and divine purposes before focusing on Abraham and Israel. These chapters answer fundamental questions about human origins, the spread of wickedness, God's judgment, and the preservation of a righteous remnant.

Recurring patterns emerge: human sin escalating from individual disobedience to societal corruption, divine patience followed by judgment, gracious preservation of a remnant, and covenant promises ensuring redemptive purposes continue. The genealogies connect historical persons, demonstrate the fulfillment of divine promises (blessing and multiplication), and trace the line leading to Abraham and ultimately Christ.

Key theological themes in this section include:

1. sin's destructive progression affecting all humanity
2. God's righteous judgment while preserving mercy
3. human pride and autonomy opposing divine sovereignty
4. cultural development as both blessing and potential idolatry
5. God's sovereign plan advancing despite human rebellion.

These narratives provide the necessary context for understanding God's calling of Abraham and the covenant promises through which all nations will be blessed.

Historical Context

The primeval history (Genesis 1-11) parallels ancient Near Eastern traditions including Sumerian King Lists (pre-flood longevity), Akkadian flood traditions (Atrahasis, Gilgamesh), and Mesopotamian city foundation myths. However, Genesis demythologizes these traditions, presenting monotheistic history rather than polytheistic mythology. The genealogies connecting Adam to Noah to Abraham provide historical framework absent in pagan myths.

Archaeological evidence confirms ancient urbanization (chapter 4's cities), agricultural development, metallurgy, and musical instruments emerging in Mesopotamia's early history. The Babel account reflects Mesopotamian ziggurat construction (stepped pyramid temples), particularly in Babylon. Linguistic diversity requiring explanation was obvious to ancient peoples, making the Babel narrative culturally relevant.

For Israel in covenant with Yahweh, these chapters explained their relationship to surrounding nations. All peoples descended from Noah, but Israel descended from Shem through Abraham—chosen for blessing all nations. The flood demonstrated God's justice and mercy: judging wickedness while preserving the righteous. This pattern would recur throughout Israel's history, assuring them that God's covenant faithfulness endures despite judgment on the wicked.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does understanding this verse shape our doctrine of humanity, sin, or salvation?
2. How should this truth about City Building shape our daily decisions and priorities?
3. How does this passage point forward to Christ and the gospel of redemption?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּדַע	וְקַיִן	אֵת	אִשְׁתּוֹ	וַתְּהַר	וַתֵּלֶד	אֵת	חֵנוֹךְ:
knew	And Cain	H853	his wife	and she conceived	and bare	H853	Enoch
H3045	H7014		H802	H2029	H3205		H2585
וַיְבִנֵהוּ	בְּנֵה	הָעִיר	וַיִּקְרָא	כְּשֵׁם	הָעִיר		
H1961	and he builded	a city	and called	after the name	a city		
	H1129	H5892	H7121	H8034	H5892		
כְּשֵׁם	בְּנוֹ	חֵנוֹךְ:					
after the name	of his son	Enoch					
H8034	H1121	H2585					

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 49:11 (Parallel theme): Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names.