

# THE UNGODLY LINE

**Genesis 4:17-26**

**Sunday May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010 Morning Service**

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Genesis 4 & 5 describe the early development of human society in 2 different directions.

In chapter 4 we follow Cain & his family down to v24: society without God.

End of chapter 4 we go back to Adam & Eve v25 & see the start of a different society, a godly line which chapter 5 describes. There are still 2 societies: which society do you belong to?

## **1. I. Society Without God v17-24**

The family history of Cain sets out essential features of godless/secular society.

### **1. The Good**

Human beings, even in rebellion against God are still creatures made in the image of God.

- 1) Community. Marriage and family v17 & a city v17. This is a significant development.
- 2) Some recognition of God. v18, the 'el' ending of names refers to 'God'. Secular society doesn't necessarily deny God's existence.
- 3) Patterns of economic organisation: v20 Jabal, the 'father of those who live in tents and raise livestock.' The lifestyle of the nomadic pastoralist.
- 4) Music and culture: v21 Jubal 'the father of all who play the harp and flute'.
- 5) Technology and industry: v22 Tubal-Cain 'who forged all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron'.

So secular human society to this day involves sophisticated culture, extraordinary technological achievements, complex economic organisation, growing cities. Man is made in his image. Therefore Christians should not be simply enemies, denouncers and rejecters of secular society around. Yes, there will be lots to lament, but there are achievements to respect, good to acknowledge & benefits to enjoy. And it is all ultimately from God.

### **2. The Bad**

- 1) Procreation without praise (to God) This is a chapter of three births, v1, 17 & 25. Note the contrast.

In secular society men & women receive blessings from God but give him no praise. Rom 1:21 they 'knew God they neither glorified God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile & their foolish hearts were darkened'.

- 2) Community without dependence (on God). Cain finds in his family and in the city, support from others without looking up to God. Psalm 55:9-11 'I see violence in the city. Day and night they prowl about on its

walls, malice and abuse are within it. Destructive forces are at work in the city: threats and lies never leave its streets'. The city of Babylon becomes in the Bible the great symbol of godless secular society. Yet the Bible also speaks of the city as a place where God can be: Jerusalem has the temple at its heart. The whole Bible anticipates the new Jerusalem, the perfect city & people of God, where God is himself dwelling among us.

3) Marriage without principles (from God). Lamech decides to redesign what God gave: in this case to take two wives instead of one v19. In the design in Gen 2 there is no third party, no divorce, no 2nd attempt. These days people also redesign marriage: people move on from one marriage to another. Others want to call 'civil partnerships' marriage. Once we have turned away from God we are in the dark as to how to live. God's design and pattern for a man & woman in marriage is that they become one for their lifetime.

4) Beauty without righteousness (in God). Names in ancient world carried weight. Adah v19 means pleasure. Zillah means shade, such as shade cast by a beautiful tree. Naamah v22 means loveliness. See 6:2: probably 'the sons of God' are those in Seth's line, 'the daughters of men', probably women in the ungodly line of Cain: 'they were beautiful'. But Adah & Zillah are involved in a polygamous marriage. Beauty without righteousness is tragic. In secular society the outward appearance not inner character become paramount. 1 Pet 3:3-4 'Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewellery and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight'.

5) Progress without reverence (for God). As we have seen v20-22 outline areas of extraordinary human development but there is no anchorage morally. So in secular society striving for economic livelihood can become the endless pursuit of materialism: culture can become a proud vehicle for human self exaltation: technology can serve the ends of mass extermination or lives ruined by drug abuse. Human community cannot save us, however splendid the creativity or brilliant the intellects. Money, work, music, culture, science & technology can serve God's kingdom, but only if we reverence the God who made us & gave us all this.

6) Violence without repentance (to God). Lamech has murdered someone & defiant about it v23-24. This sort of behaviour that came to dominate ancient world until we read in 6:11 'The earth was corrupt in God's eyes and was full of violence'. Technical prowess and moral failure are tragically combined. This is a portrait of our world today too. Is there any alternative? Yes.

## 2. II. Godly Society 4:25-26

In v25 we return to Adam and Eve and a new beginning and a radical alternative to the sort of society Cain had created. What are its marks?

1) Praise to God. Eve acknowledges God: 'God has granted me another child'. Name Seth means granted. Have you come with a thankful heart this am? Let Eve teach us.

2) Hope in God. Notice Eve's further words: 'God has granted me another child in the place of Abel since Cain killed him'. Cain was a murderer and Abel is dead. Where is the promised coming righteous deliverer (see 3:15) to come from? If you read in Luke 3:38 the genealogy of the Christ ends 'the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God'.

3) Dependence on God. V26 Seth calls his son Enosh which means 'frail one'. Seth is not a boaster in human sufficiency like Lamech. The flip side is 'At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD'. People who know they are weak, cry out to God. Prayer and need are flip sides of same coin. There are two humanities, to which do you belong?