

The Primeval History

Study Guide

LESSON
THREE

A WORLD OF VIOLENCE



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STUDY GUIDE

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How to use this lesson and study guide

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Preparation** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule breaks** — Review the outline and the time codes to determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions in the outline.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Notes** — Use the Notes section to follow the lesson and to take additional notes. Many of the main ideas are already summarized in the notes, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Review Questions** — Questions on the basic content of the lesson. Answer review questions in the space provided. Review questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Application Questions** — Questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Preparation

- Read Genesis 4:1–6:8.

Outline

- I. Introduction (0:25)
- II. Literary Structure (2:13)
 - A. Early Violence and Hope (3:12)
 - 1. Narratives (3:59)
 - 2. Genealogies (7:35)
 - B. Later Violence and Hope (11:06)
 - 1. Sons of God (12:05)
 - 2. Nephilim (15:31)
 - 3. Afterword (18:04)
- III. Original Meaning (19:20)
 - A. Connections (19:59)
 - 1. Early Violence and Hope (20:55)
 - 2. Later Violence and Hope (42:08)
 - B. Implications (44:42)
- IV. Modern Application (46:35)
 - A. Inauguration (47:34)
 - 1. Violence (48:02)
 - 2. Deliverance (50:25)
 - B. Continuation (53:03)
 - 1. Continuing Violence (53:54)
 - 2. Continuing Faith (55:06)
 - C. Consummation (56:26)
 - 1. End of Violence (56:52)
 - 2. Final Deliverance (57:45)
- V. Conclusion (59:25)

Notes

I. Introduction

II. Literary Structure

This portion of Genesis is a carefully crafted literary work with a unified purpose.

A. Early Violence and Hope (Gen. 4:1-5:32)

Genesis chapters 4 and 5 divide into four parts, forming two parallel sets of narratives and genealogies.

1. Narratives

Genesis 4:1-16 deals with sinful Cain in five dramatic steps.

- Cain is alone, banished.
- Distinction between sacrifices.
- Cain murdered his brother Abel.

- The curse.

- The protection.

The second narrative turns attention away from sinful Cain to Adam's third son, righteous Seth. The report of Righteous Seth divides into three short steps:

- Birth of Seth

- Birth of Enosh

- Men began to call on the name of the Lord

2. Genealogies

- First genealogy: Cain's Sinful Lineage (Gen. 4:17-24).

- Second genealogy: Seth's Righteous Lineage (Gen. 5:1-32).

Both Cain's genealogy and the lineage of Seth contain the names Enoch and Lamech. Moses explicitly contrasted these men with each other.

Enoch:

- sinful Enoch exalted himself
- righteous Enoch walked with God

Lamech:

- sinful Lamech was a murderer
- righteous Lamech hoped in God's redemption

B. Later Violence and Hope (Gen. 6:1-8)

The two main steps of these verses describe a series of threatening events and reveal how God reacted to these events.

1. Sons of God (Gen. 6:1-3)

Three reasonable identifications have been suggested:

- Sethites

- angels

- kings or noblemen

The violence exemplified earlier in the exploits of Cain and his descendants reached another area of life: the violation of women.

2. Nephilim (Gen. 6:4-7)

- Probably not “giants”

- Most likely “strong warriors or warlords”

With the appearance of the Nephilim, sin utterly dominated humanity.

3. Afterword (Gen. 6:8)

The destruction of violent, sinful humanity through the flood would actually result in deliverance for future generations.

God would bring deliverance through the one special son of Seth, the man named Noah.

III. Original Meaning

A. Connections

The violence of early human history closely resembled the violence Israel had endured.

1. Early Violence and Hope

Moses wanted his readers to associate:

- Cain and his family with the Egyptians.
- Righteous Abel, Seth, and the Sethites with Israel as the people of God.

a. Sinful Cain (Gen. 4:1-16)

Moses focused on five concerns that allowed the Israelites to connect this passage to their own day:

- Occupations of Cain and Abel
- Sacrifices offered by Cain and Abel.
 - God rejected Cain's sacrifice but was pleased with Abel's sacrifice.
 - Moses first approached Pharaoh to ask for the release of Israel because he wanted to offer sacrifices to Yahweh.

- Murder
- Cain's location on earth
- Cain's protection

b. Righteous Seth (Gen. 4:25-26)

Seth's use of the divine name "Yahweh" associated him with Israel.

- The name "Yahweh" was used from the time of Seth.
- During the time of Moses, this name became the principal name used for God.

The Israelites should have associated themselves with Seth through the theme of prayer.

Moses wanted his readers to notice that the Egyptians were like Cain and the Israelites were like Abel and Seth.

c. Cain's Sinful Lineage (Gen. 4:17-24)

Moses shaped these genealogies so that the Israelites associate the Egyptians with the wicked and themselves with the righteous:

- Cain was a city builder.
- The name of Cain's city.
- The pride Cain's descendant Lamech took in his act of murder.
- The death of children.

- Lamech's claim to increased protection.
- Cultural sophistication of Cain's line.

d. Seth's Righteous Lineage (Gen. 5:1-32)

This association was built on at least four factors:

- The nation of Israel descended from the line of Seth.
- Repeated focus on the righteousness of Seth's descendants.
- Moses' emphasized the numbers of Sethites.
- Moses stressed the long lives that many Sethites enjoyed.

Moses wrote about early violence and hope of deliverance in the primeval history in order to draw firm associations with his contemporary world.

2. Later Violence and Hope

Moses said that the Nephilim existed on the earth in primeval days “and also afterward.”

Moses wanted his Israelite readers to associate the primeval Nephilim of Genesis chapter 6 with the terrifying Nephilim warriors of Canaan.

B. Implications

Genesis 6:8 mentions Noah to indicate that God intended to deliver the Israelites from these threats as well.

IV. Modern Application

A. Inauguration

The inauguration of the kingdom in Christ's first coming recalls the world of violence in the primeval history in at least two ways:

1. Violence

The New Testament compares Jesus' death on the cross to the violence of the death of Abel (Heb. 12:23-24).

2. Deliverance

Jesus brought the hope of deliverance to the world.

Through his death and resurrection, Jesus accomplished the deliverance he announced.

B. Continuation

The New Testament applies this portion of primeval history to the continuation of the kingdom, the time between the first and second comings of Christ.

1. Continuing Violence

Jesus taught that his followers would suffer hatred and persecution from the world.

Jesus said that the violence to come against his followers would continue the pattern of violence that reached back to the blood of righteous Abel.

2. Continuing Faith

Followers of Christ throughout the ages must follow the example of faithful Abel (Heb. 11:4).

C. Consummation

The return of Christ we will see an end of violence against the people of God. We will experience a final deliverance to a world of everlasting blessing.

1. End of Violence

The end of violence is a central aspect of the New Testament portrait of the consummation.

2. Final Deliverance

Christ will grant endless blessings of life and peace to his people. Our deliverance will be full and final.

When Christ returns:

- All who have trusted him will see an end to violence.

- They will inherit a full and glorious deliverance into an eternal world of salvation.

V. Conclusion

7. Describe two ways the New Testament applies this portion of the primeval history to the continuation of the kingdom.

8. Describe two ways the New Testament applies this portion of the primeval history to the consummation of the kingdom.

Application Questions

1. Moses contrasted the lives of Cain and Abel. Which character is most like you? Why? What was Moses hoping to accomplish by contrasting various characters?
2. In Genesis 6:3, God reacted to the violence of mankind by saying that he would wait 120 years before judging mankind. What does this tell you about the longsuffering nature of God toward the sinfulness of mankind?
3. Despite the corruption and violence of mankind, a thread of hope can be traced throughout God's relationship with us. What thread of hope is found in the Primeval History. How should this give you hope today?
4. Explain how the pattern of God's deliverance remained the same from the Primeval History, to the contemporary world of the Israelites, to the New Testament. How does God's deliverance in the modern world compare to these earlier stages?
5. How is Christ' atoning work on the cross prefigured in the violence and hope of Genesis 4:1–6:8?
6. Describe the deliverance at the consummation of the kingdom. How does it make you feel that at the consummation of the kingdom our deliverance will be full and final?
7. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study? Why?