Chapter 2: The Descent of Humanity (Gen 4:17–24)

Adam and Eve enjoyed a deep personal involvement and intimacy which culminated in a sexual relationship.[510] Whether that occurred before or after the fall remains unknown. [511] As a result of that act, Eve "acquired (*qanah*) a man." She appears to have ironically alluded to Adam's statement, "She will be called woman because from man she was taken" (Gen 2:23). Now a man had come from a woman.[512]

She then bore Abel, and gave him a name which means "vapor, breath, or futility." [513] In God's words of judgment against the serpent after the fall, he declared that people would align themselves either with the serpent or with the Lord as his "seed" (Gen 3:15). The battle between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman began with Cain and Abel. As frequently occurs in Genesis, God granted the favor expected by the firstborn son to the younger brother. [514]

Despite the fall, both sons worked to fulfill the cultural mandate of Gen 1:26–28 by stewarding the planet's natural resources.[515] Cain continued in the profession of his father as "a servant of the ground," while Abel shepherded domesticated animals.[516] At one point, they brought gifts of thanks to God for his generosity to them.[517] Moses's original readers would have likened this to a vassal king bringing tribute as a sign of deference and respect to his suzerain overlord.[518]

According to the author of Hebrews, Abel made his offering by faith, while his brother did not.[519] Therefore, the Lord rejected Cain's gift. When God exposed his failure, Cain burned with anger against Abel.[520] The Lord gave Cain an opportunity to confess his error,[521] but he left God's questions unanswered. Then, the Lord informed Cain that sin was lying in wait for him.[522] He needed to prepare himself to face temptation and rule over it.[523]

Nevertheless, Cain chose the way of the serpent.[524] Moses portrayed his premeditated act as an outrageous result of consuming jealousy.[525] While they were in the field, Cain killed his brother. He vented his anger toward God on the most likely scapegoat by destroying the one whom the Lord accepted.[526]

When God confronted him, Cain's reply belied a heart much harder than those of his parents. He denied any awareness of Abel's situation,[527] sarcastically responding, "Should I be

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[510]Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 96.
[511] Walton, *Genesis*, 260.
[512] Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 96.
[513] Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "הֶבֶל" (*hebel*), *BDB*, 210–1, https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/210/mode/2up.
[514] Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 96.
[515] Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 97.
[516] Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 222.
[517] Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 4:7.
[518] Walton, *Genesis*, 262.
[519] Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 335.
[520]Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 182.
[521] Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 98.
[522] Walton, *Genesis*, 264.
[523] Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "masha," *BDB*, 605, https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/604/mode/2up.
[524] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 100.
[525] Walton, *Genesis*, 264.
[526] Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 230.
[527] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 106–7.

shepherding the shepherd?"[528] In only one generation, people had gone from tending paradise to denying an obligation to a family member.[529]

The Lord responded with outrage,[530] saying, "What have you done? The voice of the blood of your brother is crying out to me from the ground!"

As a result, God cursed Cain from the ground, banishing him from places where he could cultivate the land.[531] Cain became a restless wanderer in his quest to find food.[532] No longer would he enjoy community. He would become a man without a sense of belonging, a fate worse than death.[533]

Cain feared that he would be subject to the same treatment he delivered to Abel. Surprisingly, the Lord granted him a pledge and a protective action.[534] Although God did not promise Cain that he would live, the Lord would render perfect judgment against anyone who killed him.[535] Then, the Lord marked Cain with a sign and exiled him.

Cain Dedicated a City

1) Gen 4:17: In parallel with Gen 4:1, Moses wrote, "Then Cain knew his wife. And she conceived and she bore Enoch."[536] Although Moses did not cite the name of Cain's wife, his original readers would have assumed that she was one of Adam's "other daughters" (Gen 5:4).

Clearly, the mark placed upon Cain worked. Not only did he survive, Cain produced a family line.[537] This genealogy names one son in each of seven generations—the number of perfect completion—ending with Lamech's four children.[538] Cain's descendants introduced the first metalworking, poetry, and cities.[539] These comprise the hallmarks of great civilizations.[540] As in Genesis 1, Moses wrote a subtle polemic against the pagan mythologies of Israel's neighbors. In other Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) nations, people attributed these cultural advances to either the gods or semi-divine beings.[541]

Moses continued, "And it happened that he was building a city. And he called the name of the city by the name of his son Enoch." In an ominous sign, the man who killed the first martyr built the first city (Gen 4:8).[542] The name Enoch appears to be related to the verb meaning "to dedicate,"[543] apropos for someone with a city designated in his honor.[544]

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[528]Schlimm, *From Fratricide to Forgiveness: The Language and Ethics of Anger in Genesis*, 338, Http://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/10161/890/D_Schlimm_Matthew_a_200812.pdf?sequence=.
[529] Walton, *Genesis,* 267.
[530] Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary,* 98.
[531] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15,* 107.
[532] Walton, *Genesis,* 265.
[533] Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17,* 232.
[534] Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17,* 233.
[535] Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview,* 165.
[536]Wenham, *Genesis 1–15,* 111.
[537]Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17,* 237.
[538]Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 99.
[539]Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 99.
[540]Walton, *Genesis,* 276.
[541]Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 99.
[542]Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview,* 182.
[543]Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *"khanak*," *BDB*, 335, https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/334/mode/2up.
[544] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15,* 111.

Unlike Jacob, who changed the name of Luz to Bethel—which means "the house of God" (Gen 28:16–19)—Cain chose to glorify humanity rather than the Lord.[545] Indeed, those who built cities in early biblical history typically demonstrated an obsession with making a name for themselves. They promoted human self-sufficiency (Gen 11:4; Num 32:41–42).[546]

Cain's enterprise seems to contradict the Lord's decree that he would live as a fugitive (Gen 4:11–14). While this may represent an act of defiance, Moses did not report God's displeasure.[547] Living in a city ended Cain's wandering alienation and provided security.[548] Even after his rebellion, Cain and his descendants enjoyed the blessing of ruling and subduing the earth (Gen 1:26–28).[549]

Archaeological discoveries point to the unfolding of successive human civilizations dating back approximately 14,000 years.[550] People built ANE cities close to a river or springs, as they needed a reliable water supply.[551] They fortified their construction with a wall and strong gate.[552] The organization necessary to build a municipality and keep its mudbrick and stone walls in repair led to the development of assemblies of elders and monarchies to rule them.[553] Each city typically had its own ruler (Gen 14:1–2). Small villages—which depended upon the cities for protection, religious activities, and commerce—often developed around them.[554]

A city's inhabitants considered the history of its founding an important aspect of their heritage. Such documents usually included information about advantageous natural resources, unusual characteristics of the builder, and assistance from the patron deity.[555] Since people believed that cities represented the dwelling places of the gods, they viewed divine guidance for their construction as essential (Ps 46; Joel 3:16, 20–21; Heb 12:22). In most ANE mythologies, the gods themselves built the cities which people inhabited.[556]

For example, the Sumerians believed that the gods fashioned the city of Uruk, and that its temple had descended from heaven to house them.[557] Likewise, people thought that the gods constructed Babylon.[558] According to Enuma Elish, the gods gave Marduk control of the entire universe after he defeated the cosmic sea monster. In gratitude to him, the lesser gods built the sacred city of Babylon so that Marduk could rest:[559]

"The [gods] opened their mouths and said to Marduk, their lord, 'Now, O lord, you who have caused our deliverance, what shall be our homage to you? Let us build a shrine whose name shall

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[545]Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 100.
[546]Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 183.
[547]Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 237–8.
[548]Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 99–100.
[549]Walton, *Genesis*, 277.
[550]Michael Balter, "The Seeds of Civilization," http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-seeds-of-civilization-78015429/?no-ist.
[551]Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 4:17.
[552]James D. Price, "ir" *NIDOTTE* 3:396–9, 396–7.
[553]Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 4:17.
[554]James D. Price, "ir" *NIDOTTE* 3:396–9, 396–7.
[555]Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 4:17.
[556]Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 83.
[557]S. N. Kramer, trans., "Gilgamesh and Agga," in *ANET*, lines 30–4, 46–7, 46, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n71/mode/2up.
[558]E. A. Speiser, trans., "Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic)," in *ANET*, lines 55–64, 68, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n93/mode/2up.
[559] Walton, *Genesis*, 150.

be called "Lo, a chamber for our nightly rest;" let us repose in it! Let us build a throne, a recess for his abode! On the day that we arrive we shall repose in it.'
"When Marduk heard this, brightly glowed his features, like the day, 'Construct Babylon, whose building you have requested, let its brickwork be fashioned. You shall name it "The Sanctuary."'
"The [gods] applied the implement; for one whole year they molded bricks. When the second year arrived, they…set up in it an abode for Marduk, Enlil, (and) Ea. In their presence he was seated in grandeur."[560]

In ancient Egypt, people revered pharaohs as both kings and the incarnation of the sun god. One Pyramid Text states, "For the King is a great power who has power over the other powers; the king is a sacred image, the most sacred of the sacred images of the Great One. And whomsoever he finds in his way, him he devours piecemeal...Thousands serve him, hundreds make offerings for him."[561]

Another Egyptian wrote, "To the king, my lord, and my sun god say, 'Thus Biridiya, the true servant of the king. At the feet of the king, my lord, and my sun god, seven times and seven times I fall.'"[562]

Therefore, Seti I, the father of Rameses the Great testified:
"Another good thought has come into my heart, at the command of the god, even the equipment of a town, in whose august midst shall be a resting place, a settlement, with a temple. I will build a resting place in this spot, in the great name of my fathers, the gods. May they grant that what I have wrought abide, that my name will prosper."[563]

Read Gen 4:17. How did the Lord continue to bless Cain? What was Cain implying by building a city and naming it after his son?

Minds on Earthly Things

2) Read Phil 3:17–19: In contrast to building our own empires (Cf. Gen 4:17), God calls us to direct our efforts toward the expansion of his kingdom (Luke 9:59–60). Consequently, the Apostle Paul wrote these words to the Christians in Philippi: "Fellow imitators of me become, brothers [and sisters]. And continually keep your eyes on those who walk according to the pattern you have in us."

To assist these new believers living in a thoroughly hedonistic environment,[564] Paul exhorted them to imitate him, as he emulated Christ (1 Cor 11:1; 1 Thess 1:6).[565] Other Jewish

[560] "The Creation Epic" (Enuma Elish), *ANET*, tablet 6:47–65, 68–9, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n93/mode/2up.
[561]Raymond O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), lines 407–8, 82, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n509/mode/2up.
[562]W. F. Albright and George E. Mendenhall, trans., "The Amarna Letters, RA XIX," in *ANET*, lines 1–10, 485, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n509/mode/2up.
[563]James H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt* (5 Vols.) (*ARE*) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906), section 172, 3:82, https://archive.org/stream/cu31924082479241#page/n113/mode/2up.
[564]Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 216.
[565]Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 213–4.

and Christian leaders also challenged their followers to internalize and practice their way of life (2 Chron 34:31–33; 2 Chron 36:11–14; Heb 13:7).[566]

This commonly occurred in the Greco-Roman milieu as well. The first century AD statesman Seneca wrote the following:

"We can get assistance not only from the living, but from those of the past. Let us choose, however, from among the living, not men who pour forth their words with the greatest glibness, turning out commonplaces and holding. as it were, their own little private exhibitions, not these, I say, but men who teach us by their lives, men who tell us what we ought to do and then prove it by practice, who show us what we should avoid, and then are never caught doing that which they have ordered us to avoid. Choose as a guide one whom you will admire more when you see him act than when you hear him speak."[567]

How did Paul want the Philippians to mimic him? In this epistle, he prayed for others with a spirit of thanksgiving so that they might grow in sincerity and blamelessness (Phil 1:3–4, 9–11). Paul rejoiced in the advance of the gospel, recognizing that even in his imprisonment God accomplished his will (Phil 1:12–14, 29–30). Emulating Jesus, he sought to live a life characterized by love, a desire for unity, and self-denying humility (Phil 2:1–8, 14–18).

The apostle recognized the insufficiency of observing rites of the Mosaic law when compared to the great value of knowing Christ (Phil 3:2–11). Paul put the sins of his past behind him as he strove to live as Jesus demands (Phil 3:12–16). He rejoiced in all things, practiced prayer rather than worrying, focused upon good things, and enjoyed contentment regardless of his circumstances (Phil 4:4–9, 11–14).

However, Paul recognized the difficulty of imitating someone no longer present in Philippi. Therefore, he called his original readers to "continually keep your eyes on those who walk according to the pattern you have in us." While "us" may refer to his co-author Timothy, more likely Paul cited Epaphroditus, a man from their own city (Phil 1:1–2; Phil 2:25–30).[568]

Copying the behavior of those who practice living in a Christ-like manner matters because "Many walk—as I was often saying to you, and even now crying I am telling you—who are enemies of the cross of Christ." Philippi was located on a major highway running from east to west a full day's walking distance from the coast. It appears that the apostle singled out certain itinerant missionaries who passed through the city.[569]

Paul described them as those, "...whose end [is] destruction, whose god [is] their stomach, and [whose] glory is in their shame." These people considered themselves Christians, but their evil ways of living testified otherwise. Even today, those who preach false doctrines and model tainted behavior can lead those who follow them to destruction (2 Cor 11:13–15).[570]

"Destruction" (*apōleia*) points to an eternal state of torment and death, rather than causing someone to cease to exist.[571] Rejecting the salvation available to us through the cross results in the condemnation of our souls (Matt 10:28; Heb 10:26–31).[572]

These false believers set their minds on earthly things instead of heavenly ones.[573] The

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[566]Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 363–4.
[567]Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Moral Epistles, Vol. 1* (LCL; trans. Richard M. Grummere; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917), epistle 52, 349, https://archive.org/stream/adluciliumepistu01seneuoft#page/348/mode/2up.
[568]Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 217–8.
[569]Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 367.
[570]Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 221.
[571]Albrecht Oepke, "ἀπώλεια" (*apōleia*) *TDNT* 1:397.
[572]Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 223.
[573]Fee, Paul's Letter to the Philippians, 372.

metaphor "their god [is] their stomach" was likely familiar to Paul's readers. The great fifth century BC playwright Euripides reported the Cyclops as saying:[574]
"And as for Zeus's thunderbolt, I do not shudder at that, stranger, nor do I know any respect in which he is my superior as a god. [If I ever thought about him before,] I am not concerned about him henceforth...When Zeus sends his rain from above, taking my water-tight shelter in this cave and dining on roasted calf or some wild beast, I put on a feast for my upturned belly, then drinking dry a whole storage-vat of milk, I drum on it, making a din to rival Zeus's thunder... "The Earth brings forth grass willy-nilly to feed my flock. These I sacrifice to no one but myself—never to the gods—and to my belly, the greatest of divinities. To guzzle and eat day by day and to give oneself no pain—this is Zeus in the eyes of men of sense...For my part, I shall not forgo giving pleasure to my heart."[575]

Paul wrote of people who gave themselves over to bodily desires until pleasure became their god (Rom 16:17–18). What should have provoked shame they saw as glorious.[576] In contrast, for the apostle, to live was Christ and to die was gain (Phil 1:21).[577]

a) Read Phil 3:17–19. In what ways can we imitate Paul? How can we identify those who set their minds on earthly things? Why should we avoid becoming like them? Is there someone in your life whom you consider worthy of imitation?

Citizens of Heaven

b) Read Phil 3:20: Paul continued, "For our commonwealth in heaven exists." This creates an extremely abrupt transition from Phil 3:17–19. Not only does the word "for" seem out of place, the language, style, and rhythm of these verses change the flow of the passage. Consequently, many scholars hold that—as in Phil 2:6–11—Paul inserted an early Christian hymn here.[578]

In these verses we again see the apostle's "now and not yet" theology.[579] As believers we begin to experience eternal life due to the impact of the Holy Spirit in our lives (Rom 8:9–11; 2 Cor 1:21–22; Eph 1:13–14). However, our complete participation in the kingdom of God shall not begin until Christ's return (1 Cor 15:50–57; 1 Thess 4:13–18). That event shall initiate the renewal of everything on earth into the kingdom of God (Rom 8:18–23).[580]

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[574]Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 216.
[575]Euripides, "Cyclops," in *Cyclops, Alcestis, Medea* (trans. David Kovacs; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 320–40, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0094%3Acard%3D316.
[576]Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 372–3.
[577]Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 374.
[578]Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 28–9.
[579]Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 376.
[580]Regarding Rom 8:23, there are indications in the Greek text that it is precisely because the holy Spirit dwells within us that we groan as we wait for the coming of God's kingdom in all its fullness. Some translations give the impression that we groan despite the Spirit's presence.

However, everything remains under Jesus's control (1 Cor 15:20–28; Col 1:15–20).[581] Even those acts which Paul previously associated with the Father, he attributed to Christ (Rom 8:29–30; Eph 1:18–22).[582] As Christians, our allegiance belongs to the kingdom of heaven, not to our earthly cities.[583] Paul placed his emphasis upon the word "our," as it appears first in the sentence.[584] This created a strong contrast between the false teachers and the believers in Philippi (Phil 3:18–21).[585]

The word translated as "commonwealth" (*politeuma*) occurs only here in the New Testament. Typically, it refers to a state or government.[586] However, the term also describes a colony of relocated foreigners or veterans.[587] Within the Roman Empire, the military often secured a recently conquered nation by removing some of its people and replacing them with those loyal to the emperor. As a result, Greco-Roman ideals and customs took hold in foreign areas.[588]

In 42 BC, the last great battle to establish the Roman republic occurred on the Plains of Philippi. The grateful victors made the city a Roman colony and resettled veterans of the battle there.[589] Those dwelling in Philippi enjoyed Roman citizenship, unlike most people living in the empire. Thus, they received all the rights and privileges of people born in Rome, even though they lived elsewhere.[590]

Likewise, the Christians of Philippi lived on earth while their citizenship remained in heaven (Eph 2:19–22). All of them—even the enslaved, who could not claim the privileges of Roman citizenship—comprised the Lord's colony, with Christ as their ruler. In Greco-Roman society, a person's citizenship determined one's allegiance and regulated ethical behavior (Acts 16:20–21).[591]

A second century Christian author wrote this:

"For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity...But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers.

"They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the

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[581]Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 229.
[582]Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 376.
[583]Hermann Strathmann, "πολίτευμα" (*politeuma*) *TDNT* 6:535.
[584]Matthew S. DeMoss, *Pocket Dictionary for the Study of New Testament Greek* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 100. In Koine Greek, the word "for" can never appear at the beginning of a sentence or clause. What the author wished to emphasize comes at the beginning of the sentence or clause.
[585]Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 231.
[586]Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 216.
[587]Danker et al., "πολίτευμα" (*politeuma*), *BDAG*, 845.
[588]Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 231.
[589]John B. Polhill, *Paul and His Letters* (Nashville: B & H, 1999), 161.
[590]Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 231.
[591]Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 216–7.

flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives...Christians dwell as sojourners in corruptible [bodies], looking for an incorruptible dwelling in the heavens."[592]

Although we remain here on earth, believers enjoy the rights and privileges of our heavenly commonwealth. For us, eternal life has already begun.[593] Furthermore, God calls us to live as people belonging to the heavenly Jerusalem (Matt 5:14–16; Rev 21:1–2).[594]

This perspective eventually created conflict between Christians and imperial forces. In particular, the requirement to burn incense as a sacrifice to the emperor—who claimed the right to veneration as a—god resulted in tremendous persecution for those who refused to deny Jesus as their only Lord.

After Pliny the Younger began governing a region of northern Turkey in 109 AD, he experienced great consternation when seeking to determine how to deal with these recalcitrant Christians. Therefore, he wrote the following to the emperor Trajan (reigned 98–117 AD):
"Having never been present at any trials concerning those who profess Christianity, I am unacquainted not only with the nature of their crimes, or the measure of their punishment, but how far it is proper to enter into an examination concerning them...Whether the very profession of Christianity, unattended with any criminal act, or only the crimes themselves inherent in the profession are punishable; on all these points I am in great doubt...
"The method I have observed towards those who have been brought before me as Christians is this: I asked them whether they were Christians; if they admitted it, I repeated the question twice, and threatened them with punishment; if they persisted, I ordered them to be at once punished...[595]
"Anonymous information was laid before me containing a charge against several persons, who upon examination denied they were Christians, or had ever been so. They repeated after me an invocation to the gods and offered religious rites with wine and incense before your statue (which for that purpose I had ordered to be brought, together with those of the gods), and even reviled the name of Christ: whereas there is no forcing, it is said, those who are really Christians into any of these compliances. I thought it proper, therefore, to discharge them...
"[Others] affirmed the whole of their guilt...was, that they met on a stated day before it was light, and addressed a form of prayer to Christ, as to a divinity, binding themselves by a solemn oath, not for the purposes of any wicked design, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble, to eat in common a harmless meal. From this custom, however, they desisted after the publication of my edict...
"After receiving this account, I judged it so much the more necessary to endeavor to extort the real truth, by putting two female slaves to the torture, who were said to officiate in their religious rites: but all I could discover was evidence of an absurd and extravagant superstition. I deemed it expedient, therefore, to adjourn all further proceedings, in order to consult you. For it appears to be a matter highly deserving your consideration, more especially as great numbers must be involved in the danger of these prosecutions, which have already extended, and are still likely to

[592]Mathetes, "The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaues, Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. 1* (ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Cox; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 5–6, 307–9, https://archive.org/stream/writingsapostoli00unknuoft#page/306/mode/2up.
[593]Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 231–2.
[594]Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 379.
[595]Most translations of this letter indicate that the punishment was execution.

extend, to persons of all ranks and ages, and even of both sexes. In fact, this contagious superstition is not confined to the cities only but has spread its infection among the neighboring villages and country.[596]

Pliny's letter confirms Paul's statement, "for a savior we eagerly wait (*apekdexomai*), our Lord Jesus Christ." Our emperor does not reside in Rome but in heaven (Acts 2:32–36; Acts 7:55–56; Heb 1:1–3).[597] The word which Paul used conveys a burning expectation for God to fulfill his divine plans,[598] culminating in the return of Christ to earth from heaven.[599] Then all of creation shall be restored to pristine wholeness (Isa 65:17–25; Rev 21:3–7; Rev 22:1–5).[600]

Most people in the Roman Empire used the term "savior" (*kurios*)) when describing Caesar,[601] the ruler of their earthly commonwealth.[602] From the time of Octavian (Augustus) through the reign of Hadrian, (27 BC–128 AD), subjects of Rome hailed their emperors as the "saviors of the world."[603]

Since the Philippians' true emperor was Jesus,[604] Paul encouraged them to exhibit more excitement about the return of Christ than for a visit from their imperial ruler. After all, the benefits of belonging to an earthly nationality cannot eclipse the advantages of our heavenly citizenship (Isa 35:4–10; James 4:4; Heb 11:13–16; Heb 13:14).[605]

Read Phil 3:20. How can you tell if your citizenship is in heaven? What made this verse especially pertinent for believers in Philippi? Why did the allegiance of Christians lead to conflict with the Roman Empire? How does our heavenly commonwealth contrast with the one Cain built (Gen 4:17)?

Glorified Bodies

c) Phil 3:21: Paul continued, asserting that Christ "shall transform our lowly bodies [to become] similar in form to his glorified body." The apostle did not subscribe to the Greek view of the human body. For example, Plato (427–347 BC) claimed, "the body (*sōma*) is our tomb (*sēma*)."[606] Our bodies comprise such an intrinsic part of us that Christ will renew them in

[596]Pliny the Younger, *Letters of Pliny the Younger*, Vol. 2 (ed. F. C. T. Bosanquet; trans. William Melmoth; New York: Hinds, Noble, and Eldredge, 1900), 10.96, 394–5, https://archive.org/stream/lettersofplinyyo00plin#page/394/mode/2up.
[597]Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 232.
[598]Walter Grundmann, "ἀπεκδέχομαι" (*apekdexomai*) *TDNT* 2:56.
[599]Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 380.
[600]Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 232.
[601]Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 381.
[602]Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 218.
[603]Deissman, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*, 369, https://archive.org/stream/lightfromancient00deis#page/n519/mode/2up.
[604]Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 233.
[605]Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 218.
[606]Plato, "Gorgias," in *Plato in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 3*; trans. W. R. M. Lamb; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 493a,

resurrection, not discard them (1 Cor 15:35–37; 1 Thess 5:23; Rev 3:12).[607] They do not imprison our souls. However, when Jesus rose from the dead, his glorified body received freedom from the limitations of the flesh.[608]

The New Testament never describes the nature of Christ's new body, but it does give some tantalizing hints of what is to come for us. For example, Jesus appeared and disappeared whenever he chose, yet he could eat fish and allow his disciples to feel his wounds (Luke 24:30–43).[609] Therefore, Paul called the resurrected bodies of believers "spiritual bodies" (*sōma pneumatikos*) because he will imbue them with heavenly glory and power, not because they will be immaterial (1 Cor 15:42–52).[610]

Jesus shall do this "by the working of his ability even to subject to himself all things." In this era of the "now and not yet," Christ rules over all authorities, powers, and dominions (Col 1:15–20; Col 2:15). This included the emperor and those persecuting the believers in Philippi (Phil 1:12–21).

Since we know how the cosmic story concludes, we can eagerly press on to the end.[611] When all creation has been subjected to Jesus, he shall place everything under the Father, including himself, "in order that God may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:24–28; John 13:31–32; Rev 3:21).

According to Augustine (354–430), due to the unity within the Godhead, whenever one of them is magnified, so are the others. Therefore, he wrote, "When [Christ] shall have delivered up the kingdom to…the Father, Jesus does not take the kingdom from himself; since, when he shall bring believers to the contemplation of God, even the Father, doubtless he will bring them to the contemplation of Himself."[612]

The Greek term *perichoresis* best captures the essence of the Godhead. As in a perfectly choreographed dance, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit so interpenetrate one another that their wills are unified.[613] Where there is one, the other two are also, without one being greater than the others.[614] Theirs forms a community of perfect love.[615] Philippians 3:21 contains strong verbal links with the hymn in Phil 2:6–11, as we can see in this table:

Http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0178%3Atext%3DGorg.%3Asection%3D493a.

[607]M. H. Cressey, "Dualism" in *New Bible Dictionary, 3rd Ed.* (*NBD*) D. R.W Wood, et al., Eds. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 284.

[608]Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 233.

[609]Larry J. Kreitzer, "Body," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters (DPL)* (ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 71–4, 74.

[610]Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 233–4.

[611]Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 384.

[612]Augustine, "On the Trinity," in *NPNF1–03* (ed. Philip Schaff; trans. Arthur West Haddan, revised by William G. T. Shedd; Edinburgh; Grand Rapids: T & T Clark; Eerdmans, 1887), 1.9, 27, https://archive.org/stream/aselectlibrary03unknuoft#page/26/mode/2up.

[613]Kevin Giles, The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 113.

[614]William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology, 3rd Ed.* (ed. Alan W. Gomes; Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 250.

[615]David S. Cunningham, "What Do We Mean by 'God'?" in *Essentials of Christian Theology* (ed. William C. Placher; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 59.

Verse in Phil 2	Greek word	English Translation	Greek word in 3:21	English Translation
6, 7	*morphē*	form	*symmorphon*	*similar in form*
6, 7	*morphē*	form	*metaschēmatisei*	shall be transformed
8	*etapeinōsen*	he humbled	*tapeinōseōs*	lowly
11	*doxan*	glory	*doxēs*	glory

Furthermore, Phil 2:9–11 portrays the subjection of all things to Christ, while Phil 3:21 explicitly states that all things shall be subject to him. Thus, Paul asserted that the reward to believers for our humility shall parallel the exaltation due to Jesus for his obedience.[616]

Regarding this topic, Augustine wrote:

"It is recorded of Cain that he built a city, but Abel being a sojourner, built none. For the city of the saints is above, although here below it begets citizens, in whom it sojourns till the time of its reign arrives, when it shall gather together all in the day of the resurrection; and then shall the promised kingdom be given to them, in which they shall reign with their Prince, the King of the ages, time without end."[617]

Nevertheless, while we remain in this age, we can enter the life of the Trinity by the presence of the Holy Spirit (John 16:13–15; Rom 8:9–17, 26–30). As a result, we experience transformed lives, which lead us to actively seek fellowship with God, pursue justice for our neighbors and the world around us, and spread the good news of the gospel (Eph 1:3–23; Matt 22:34–40; Matt 28:18–20). As we devote ourselves to these aspects of life, we experience the unity of the Trinity and anticipate the age to come.[618]

The theologian John Cassian (ca. 360–435 AD) wrote:

"No one will arrive at the fullness of this measure in the world to come except the person who has reflected on it and been initiated it in the present and who has tasted it while still living in this world; who, having been designated a most precious member of Christ, possesses in this flesh the pledge of that union through which he is able to be joined to Christ's body; who desires only one thing, thirsts for one thing, and always directs not only every deed but even every thought to this one thing, so that he may already possess in the present what has been pledged him and what is spoken of with regard to the blessed way of life of the holy in the future—that is, that "God may be all in all" to him.[619]

Read Phil 3:21. How shall we be like Christ in the age to come? Why do we have this hope? How do you experience life in the Trinity?

[616]Schreiner, *Paul Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology*, 170.
[617]Augustine, *The City of God, 2 Vols.* (ed. Philip Schaff; trans. J. F. Shaw and Marcus Dods; NPNF2; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1871), 15, 2:51, https://archive.org/stream/TheCityOfGodV2#page/n61/mode/2up.
[618]Donald Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 230–1.
[619]Cassian John, Boniface Ramsey, trans., in *John Cassian: The Conferences* (ACW; Costa Mesa, CA: Paulist Press, 1997), 253–4.

Two Wives

3) Gen 4:18–19: Moses provided descriptive information for only three of the six generations produced from Cain's line. He mentioned the others only as early descendants of Adam who assisted in populating the earth.[620] As in other Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) traditions, Hebrew genealogies can represent actual father to son records. However, they may condense the ancestral record by omitting some generations or by listing grandsons as sons (compare Gen 35:25 with Gen 46:18).

This also occurs in the New Testament. For example, Matt 1:8 asserts "Jehoram fathered Uzziah," although he appeared to be Uzziah's great-great-grandfather (2 Chron 22:1, 8–12; 2 Chron 24:1, 24, 27; 2 Chron 26:1).[621] As a result, we cannot ascertain whether more direct descendants in the Adam to Lamech line existed than Moses cited.

This family line tragically depicts how sin distorts the image of God, leaving destruction in its wake.[622] Lamech's violent temperament reflects that of his ancestor Cain, which is likely why the text focuses upon him (Gen 4:23–24).[623] Cain and his descendants exhibited increasing depravity. However, they also practiced and expanded the cultural mandate of Gen 1:28. They domesticated and bred animals, developed musical arts, and fashioned metal (Gen 4:20–22).[624]

Moses reported, "And Lamech took to himself two wives." This directly contradicted his previous editorial comment regarding the Lord's design for marriage, an arrangement which Jesus also validated (Gen 2:24; Mark 10:2–12).[625] In ancient Israel, harmony and intimacy characterized the ideal marriage (Gen 2:21–23).[626] Scripture does not report God rebuking Lamech or the patriarchs who practiced polygamy for their multiple wives. Nevertheless, Genesis freely records the devastating impact of bigamy upon family life (Gen 16:1–6; Gen 21:9–10; Gen 30:1–15).[627]

a) Read Gen 4:18–19. Why would Lamech's decision have made the harmony and intimacy which God intended for marriage impossible?

Advancements in Civilization

b) Gen 4:20–22: Here Moses focused upon three sons of Lamech (Gen 4:18–19), rather than identifying one son per generation. Each of these men originated a new facet of human culture.[628] Moses began by writing, "And Adah bore Yabal. He was the father of the ones dwelling in tents and [raising] livestock."

Abel appears to have remained in one area while tending his flocks (Gen 4:2–5). In contrast, Yabal established a nomadic lifestyle like that practiced by some Bedouins even

[620]Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 238.
[621]Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 440.
[622]Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 100.
[623]Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 112.
[624]Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 100.
[625]Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 238.
[626] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 69.
[627]Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 238.
[628]Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 239.

today.[629] Furthermore, Yabal bred more kinds of animals.[630] Abel's flocks consisted of only sheep and goats (*tson*).[631] However, the word used to describe the types of animals domesticated by Yabal (*miqneh*) expands to include cattle, donkeys, and even camels. As a professional livestock breeder, Yabal may have engaged in trade.[632] Perhaps he even cared for the animals of nearby city dwellers (Gen 4:17).[633]

The earliest archaeological evidence for the breeding and control of sheep and goats dates back ten thousand years.[634] Mitochondrial research confirms it.[635] Inhabitants of the Ancient Near East (ANE) domesticated cattle beginning in the mid-ninth century BC.[636]

Moses also wrote, "And the name of his brother [was] Yubal. He was the father of all of those who skillfully use a lyre and a flute." Yubal's name appropriately sounds like the word used to designate the ram's horn played in Israel's religious festivals, a *yobēl*.[637]

Moses ranked musical instruments among the oldest inventions of early humanity.[638] Aside from simple drums and rattles, the most common excavated instruments in the ANE are harps and lyres.[639] People constructed early flutes from bone or pottery.[640] Music comprised an important aspect of ritual performances, religious processions, and dances (2 Sam 6:5, 14–15). It invoked deities, soothed a person's spirit, and provided the cadence for a marching army (1 Sam 16:23; Josh 6:13). As members of a highly respected profession, early musicians even formed guilds.[641]

In a Hittite invocation to the gods, the priest implored, "Let the soothing effect of the cedar, the music of the lyres (and) the words of the diviner be such an [alluring] inducement to the gods that they will get them called here! Wherever else ye may be, come (ye) here!"[642]

Concerning Lamech's second wife, Moses wrote, "And Zillah also gave birth to Tubal-Cain, the hammerer of all copper and iron." Four distinct eras characterize ancient human civilizations, although their dates vary by location: the Stone Age (ca. 100,000–4000 BC); the Chalcolithic Period ("copper stone," ca. 4000–3200BC); the Bronze Age (ca. 3200–1200 BC); and the Iron Age (ca. 1200–330 BC).[643] Copper tools and weapons first appeared in the fourth millennium BC.[644]

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[629] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 113.
[630]Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 239.
[631]Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "צאן" (*tson*), *BDB*, 838, https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/838/mode/2up.
[632] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 113.
[633]Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 240.
[634]Walton, *Genesis*, 276.
[635]Koh Nomura et. al., "Domestication Process of the Goat Revealed by an Analysis of the Nearly Complete Mitochondrial Protein-Encoding Genes," *PLOS ONE* 8, no. 8 (1 August 2013): 1, Http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article/file?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0067775&type=printable.
[636]Amelie Scheu et. al. "The Genetic Prehistory of Domesticated Cattle from Their Origin to the Spread Across Europe," *BMC Genet* 16, no. 54 (2015):1–11, 9, https://bmcgenomdata.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12863-015-0203-2.
[637]Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 113.
[638]Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Ge*n* 4:21.
[639]Walton, *Genesis*, 276.
[640]Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 4:21.
[641]Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 4:21.
[642]Albrecht Goetze, trans., "Evocatio" in *ANET*, 351–3, 353.
[643]Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 239.
[644]Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Ge*n* 4:22.

The inclusion of iron—a metal which requires much higher temperatures than copper and its alloys—[645] seems out of place in the text. However, archaeologists have discovered amulets crafted from cold-forged meteoritic iron which predate the Iron Age.[646] A Ugaritic text attributes the first ironwork to the god Kothar.[647]

The names of these three sons of Lamech all derive from the Hebrew word which means "produce" (*yebul*) alluding to their fruitful creativity.[648] Consequently, Moses asserted that the disobedient line of Cain developed many important cultural advancements. God's grace appears even here.[649] On the other hand, Tubal-Cain may have introduced swords into society.[650]

In contrast, ANE literature credits these discoveries to the gods, such as Kothar.[651] According to one myth, Inanna, the patron goddess of Uruk procures the arts of civilization from Enki, one of the greatest gods in the Mesopotamian pantheon.[652] Among these are shepherding, the creation of musical instruments, and metal-working.[653] The tablets state, "O name of my power, O name of my power, to the bright Inanna, my daughter, I shall present...the arts of woodworking, metalworking, writing, toolmaking, leatherworking...building, basketweaving... shepherdship, kingship."[654]

An interesting omission occurs not only in Gen 4:20–22, but in all of Gen 1–11. Other ANE texts emphasize the development of royal rule. Building cities, acquiring multiple wives, and initiating warfare commonly appear in the records of these monarchs. Yet, in Moses's primeval history, we have no record of kings. This may occur because most ANE literature portrayed rulers positively as the initiators and preservers of advancements in civilization. However, Moses focused upon the increasing depravity of early peoples.[655]

Moses concluded this genealogy by writing, "And the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah." Lamech's fourth child, a daughter, was named "pleasant."[656]

Read Gen 4:20–22. How do we see the grace of God at work even through the disobedient lineage of Cain? In what ways were these great achievements of civilization tainted by sin? How does this account differ from others from the ANE?

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[645]Walton, *Genesis*, 276–7.
[646]Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 113.
[647]Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 99 n66.
[648] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 112.
[649]Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 239.
[650]Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 183.
[651]Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 99 n66.
[652]Walton, *Genesis*, 277.
[653]Samuel Noah Kramer, trans., "Inanna and Enki: The Transfer of the Arts of Civilization from Eridu to Erech," http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/sumer_anunnaki/esp_sumer_annunaki16.htm.
[654]Samuel Noah Kramer, trans., "Inanna and Enki: The Transfer of the Arts of Civilization from Eridu to Erech," http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/sumer_anunnaki/esp_sumer_annunaki16.htm.
[655]Walton, *Genesis*, 278.
[656]Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 238–9.

Lamech's Ode to Himself

b) Gen 4:23–24: Sandwiched between two birth announcements (Gen 4:19–22, 25),[657] Moses recorded one of the earliest examples of poetry.[658] In this savage and vicious composition,[659] Lamech employed a variety of Hebrew literary devices, such as parallelism, meter, and rhyme to emphasize his cruel egotism.[660]

"And Lamech said to his wives,
'Adah and Zillah, listen to my voice.
Wives of Lamech, give ear to my speech,
because a man I have slain for wounding me,
and a youth for striking me.
If seven-fold is Cain avenged,
then Lamech seventy and seven.'"

People rarely commit single sins. Pride, mockery, and assault cluster together like grapes and continue to replicate. These distorted relational patterns pass down from parent to child, resulting in dysfunctional family systems.[661]

Without intervention, family violence often continues for generation after generation. Parents beat their children, who attack younger siblings, who beat the family pets. Victims victimize others, causing vengeance to ricochet through their communities. No one carries more potential for violence than a victim.[662]

Since this song appears in a section which focuses upon various developments in human civilization, Lamech's taunt may signify the initiation of warfare (Gen 4:19–22).[663] Adah and Zillah had proudly watched their sons develop animal husbandry, music, and metallurgy. In contrast, Lamech's violent boasting must have filled them with horror.[664] By embracing such great vindictiveness,[665] Lamech indicated that his depravity exceeded that of Cain, his ancestor (Gen 4:9–10).[666]

The parallelism in this song suggests that the "man" (*ish*) and the "youth" (*yeled*) are the same person.[667] Similarly, the wounding and striking refer to one incident.[668] In Hebrew, *yeled* covers a range from premature infants to early manhood (Exod 21:22; 1 Ki 14:21; 1 Ki 12:6–8).[669] Cain had felt incapable of self-defense (Gen 4:13–15). His descendant Lamech had no qualms about handling any mistreatment by others on his own.[670] In fact, he appointed himself to perform a function reserved for kings (2 Sam 8:15; 1 Sam 15:1–4).

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[657]Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 240.
[658]Walton, *Genesis*, 277.
[659]Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 240.
[660]Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 114.
[661]Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 54–5.
[662]Plantinga Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, 57.
[663]Walton, *Genesis*, 278.
[664]Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 114.
[665]Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 100.
[666]Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 114.
[667]Walton, *Genesis*, 277–8.
[668]Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 114.
[669]Holladay, "*yeledh*," *CHALOT*, 135.
[670]Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 241.

Lamech made a travesty of the office of a ruler by seeking personal vengeance, rather than maintaining justice.[671] Taking the law into his hands served as a point of pride. While Cain sought to hide Abel's murder (Gen 4:9), Lamech exulted in his vindictiveness.[672]

One of the first portions of Scripture recorded included the phrase, "a wound for a wound and a strike for a strike" (Exod 21:23–25). Therefore, Moses's original audience recognized that Lamech violated the law of retaliation (*lex talionis*).[673] God commanded this principle to prevent the escalation of violence.[674] The young man's execution would have been just only if his action resulted in Lamech's death (Exod 21:12).

In Scripture, the number seven signifies completeness. Therefore, seventy-seven represents an unrestricted fullness which one cannot surpass.[675] This intensification of violence could easily erupt into warfare aided by the technological advancements of Lamech's son Tubal-Cain (Gen 4:22).[676] Sin acts as a plague which spreads by contagion, like a polluted river which keeps branching into tributaries. It contaminates parents, children, and grandchildren (Exod 34:6–7).[677]

By highlighting this vignette, Moses hinted that all of Cain's descendants would face God's judgment.[678] Not only did this intimate the disaster to come (Gen 6:11–13, 17), it served as a warning to Moses's readers. One cannot disregard God's laws and expect to emerge unscathed.[679]

Read Gen 4:23–24: Why would Moses's original readers have been shocked by this passage? How does it portray the increasing depravity of Cain's descendants? What does revenge do to us?

The National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence produced an Equality Wheel and a Power and Control Wheel to help people differentiate between healthy and abusive relationships.[680] If your family of origin practiced violence, what can you do to break that cycle?

[671]Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 183.
[672]Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 241.
[673]Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 114.
[674]H. B. Huffmon, "Lex Talionis," *ABD* 4:321–2, 321.
[675]Ryken et. al., "Seven," in *DBI*, 775.
[676]Walton, *Genesis*, 278.
[677]Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, 53.
[678]Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 114.
[679]Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 117.
[680] http://www.ncdsv.org/publications_wheel.html. Used with the permission of the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence.

A Lesson on Forgiveness

4) Matt 18:21–22: In this passage, Jesus reversed Lamech's concept of seventy-fold vengeance for God's people to respond to those who sin against us (Cf. Gen 4:22–23).[681] Christ had just instructed his disciples regarding the proper practices for church discipline (Matt 18:15–20).[682] Then Peter went to him with a related question concerning personal animosity:[683] "Lord, how many times shall my brother against me sin and I shall forgive him? As many as seven?"

In the earlier case, the person had failed to repent, necessitating the involvement of church leaders. However, here Peter asked about dealing with a person who requests forgiveness (Luke 17:3–4).[684] Pastoral concern for another believer's spiritual life does not conflict with a willingness to forgive offenses against us (cf. 1 Cor 5:1–13 and its result in 2 Cor 2:5–11).[685]

Peter's question does not revolve around whether to forgive at all but how often to do so (Matt 6:12–15).[686] After all, manipulative people can exploit easy forgiveness to achieve their own ends.[687] Knowing that Jesus held to a high standard for righteousness (Matt 5:17–20), Peter likely selected the number seven because it represented complete fullness.[688]

According to contemporary Jewish thought, righteous people forgave an offender.[689] The apocryphal Testament of Gad states, "Love ye one another from the heart; and if a man sin against thee, speak peaceably to him, and in thy soul hold not guile; and if he repent and confess, forgive him."[690]

However, based upon Amos 1:3 and Amos 2:6,[691] rabbis considered forgiving premeditated sins three times sufficient (*b.* Yoma 86b).[692] When a perpetrator exceeded that number, rabbis regarded their claims of repentance as false,[693] for "One who asks pardon of his neighbor need do so no more than three times" (b. Yoma 87a).[694]

After all, true repentance involves turning away from sin.[695] Most of Peter's contemporaries would have viewed his suggestion of forgiving seven times as more than generous.[696]

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[681]Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 457.
[682]Jesus promised to provide guidance for church leaders who make decisions pertaining to the discipline of a member whose life is characterized by sin. He did not say that the prayers of a group of believers who gather together are more effective than those of individuals praying separately.
[683]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 700.
[684]Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 537.
[685]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 700. Most commentators believe that the second passage refers to the same person as the one discussed in Paul's first letter to Corinth.
[686]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 537.
[687]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 700.
[688]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 537.
[689]Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 456–7.
[690]Rutherford H. Platt Jr., trans., "The Testament of Gad," in *The Forgotten Books of Eden* (New York: Alpha House, 1926), 2.3, http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/fbe/fbe290.htm.
[691]Talmudist, *English Babylonian Talmud*, Yoma 86b, Http://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Yoma.pdf.
[692]Wilkins, *Matthew*, 622.
[693]Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 456–7.
[694]Talmudist, "English Babylonian Talmud," Yoma 87a, Http://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Yoma.pdf.
[695]Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 18:21–2.
[696]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 700.

Going against conventional wisdom,[697] "Jesus said to him, 'I say to you, not as many as seven times, but as many as seventy times seven" (*ebdomēkontakis hepta*)." The Greek translation of Gen 4:24 employs the same phrase, rather than seventy-seven.[698]

Nevertheless, both terms have a virtually identical meaning, for seventy-seven also represents an unrestrained and unsurpassable fullness.[699] Christ's followers must forgive as extravagantly as Lamech exacted vengeance.[700]

Jesus used figurative—not calculating—language.[701] He employed a typically Jewish way of commanding, "Never hold grudges."[702] Anyone who stresses over whether the actual number is seventy-seven or 490 misses the point. If we are keeping count, we are not really forgiving.[703]

Read Matt 18:21–22. Why do matters which require church discipline differ from those in which people have committed sins against us? Do you think that Jesus had Lamech's poem in mind when he said these words? Why or why not? What did Christ command his people to do?

A King Settling Accounts

b) Matt 18:23–27: Jesus illustrated why we must forgive others through this parable (Matt 18:21–35).[704] No one can come close to offending us to the extent that our sins provoke our holy God.[705] Therefore, a community of forgiven people who internalize the depth of our pardon can freely extend grace and mercy to others.[706] To explain to Peter how the kingdom of God operates, Jesus told a story about a Gentile king and his slaves, using "debt" as a metaphor for sin.[707] In Jewish thought, sins were debts to God (Cf. Col 1:13–14). Indeed, the same Aramaic word applies to both.[708]

Christ began by saying, "For this reason, the kingdom of heaven is like [the case of] a king who desired to settle accounts with his slaves." Rulers performed this reckoning at a certain time each year.[709] Unlike in American society, slaves in the ancient world could serve in

[697]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 704–5.
[698]Rick Brannan, et al., *The Lexham English Septuagint (LES)* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2012), Gen 4:24.
[699]Ryken, Wilhoit, and Reid, "Seven," *DBI*, 775.
[700]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 705.
[701]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 705.
[702]Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 18:21–2.
[703]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 705.
[704]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 537.
[705]Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 458.
[706]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 702.
[707]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 703.
[708]Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 6:12.
[709]Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 458.

positions of authority,[710] even as provincial governors (Dan 1:1–5; Dan 3:1–2, 12).[711] Most likely, these slaves worked as tax collectors—also known as tax farmers—working for a Gentile king.[712]

The Roman historian Livy (59 BC–17 AD) wrote this:

"A great many men were slain or captured there, an ill-organized mass, however, of rustics and slaves. It was the smallest part of the loss that, along with the rest, the prefect was captured, who was responsible at that time for a reckless battle and had previously been a tax-farmer possessed of all the dishonest devices, faithless and ruinous both to the state and to the companies."[713]

Jesus said, "And when he began to settle [the accounts], there was brought to him one debtor of ten thousand talents." A talent was a unit of weight, rather than an amount of money.[714] It usually referred to silver.[715] Ten thousand talents weighed 665,797 pounds.[716] An Israeli laborer could expect to earn a denarius for a day's wages (Matt 20:1–2).[717] Ten thousand talents equaled 60 million denarii,[718] five hundred times more than the average person earned in a lifetime.[719]

Josephus (37–100 AD) reported that Caesar Augustus (27 BC–14 AD) appointed Herod's son over the territories of Judea, Idumea, and Samaria in 4 BC.[720] He wrote, "The tribute-money that came to Archelaus every year from his own dominions amounted to six hundred talents."[721]

On the other hand, ten thousand served as the largest numeral in typical Koine Greek,[722] while a talent consisted of the greatest unit of currency.[723] Therefore, Jesus may have meant that no one could calculate such an astronomical debt,[724] akin to saying, "a gazillion dollars."[725]

This larger-than-life imagery would have elicited gasps of astonishment from those listening to this parable.[726] The debtor owed more money than the amount circulated in the entire country. How could a man foolishly incur such debt?[727]

Jesus continued, saying, "But not having it to repay, the king commanded him to be sold, and [also] his wife and his children and all that he had, and to be repaid." In the Old Testament era, slavery often resulted from owing money (Exod 22:2; 2 Ki 4:1; Neh 5:3–5; Isa 50:1).[728]

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[710]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 705.
[711]Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 458.
[712]Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 18:23.
[713]Titus Livy, *History of Rome, Books 23–25* (trans. Frank Gardner Moore; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940), 25.1.4, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3atext%3a1999.02.0157%3abook%3d25.
[714]Wilkins, *Matthew*, 623.
[715]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 706.
[716]Logos 7 Bible Software, Weights and Measures Converter.
[717]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 706.
[718]Marvin A. Powell, "Weights and Measures," *ABD* 6:897–908, 907.
[719]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 706.
[720]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 538.
[721]Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 17.1.4, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D17%3Awhiston+chapter%3D11%3Awhiston+section%3D4.
[722]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 706.
[723]Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 458.
[724]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 538.
[725]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 706.
[726]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 704.
[727]Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 459.
[728]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 538.

Since the Roman Empire remained at peace during Christ's ministry, most slavery ensued from being unable to pay a debt, rather than due to war.[729] By Christ's lifetime, Jewish rabbis forbade the sale of women and children to repay debts incurred by theft (*m.* Sotah 3:8).[730] While Jews abhorred the practice,[731] a Gentile king could act with impunity.[732]

Indeed, Livy reported this senate declaration: "For the Capuans, family by family, decrees were passed...the property of some of them was to be confiscated, themselves and their children and wives sold, except the daughters who, before they became subject to the authority of the Roman people, had married into other communities."[733]

The amount of money raised by the sale of the family in this parable would amount to a minuscule fraction of what the slave owed his master.[734] During that era, a person could purchase a young male with average skills for about four tons of wheat.[735]

Josephus recorded that a century earlier, "Hyrcanus...came to the merchants privately, and bought a hundred boys that had learning, and were in the flower of their ages, each at a talent apiece; as also he bought a hundred maidens, each at the same price as the other."[736] Consequently, people typically considered being sold into slavery as a punishment, rather than a means of repayment.[737]

Jesus said, "Falling, therefore, the slave prostrated (*proskuneō*) himself to him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and all I shall repay to you.'" In the New Testament (NT), to fall prostrate implies worship. The object of that obeisance is always divine (Matt 8:2; Matt 9:18). Here we see a hint that the earthly king in this parable represents the Lord.[738]

The slave made a ridiculous appeal to the king for extra time to repay his debt.[739] The phrase "I shall repay" (*apodidōmi*) frequently appeared in Greco-Roman business documents.[740]

Appian of Alexandria, a Greco-Roman historian (95–165 AD), wrote, "Now that Antony is vanquished and Hirtius dead...I am about to pay the debt of nature...The army that you yourself gave to us should most properly be given back (*apodidōmi*) to you, and I do give it. If you can take and hold the new levies, I will give you those also."[741]

The great Athenian orator Demosthenes (384–322 BC) recorded this speech concerning a loan to ransom some slaves:

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[729]Osborne, *Matthew* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 695.
[730]Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 459.
[731]Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 18:25.
[732]Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 459.
[733]Titus Livy, *History of Rome, Books 26–27* (trans. Frank Gardner Moore; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1943), 26.34.3, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0158%3Abook%3D26%3Achapter%3D34.
[734]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 706.
[735]Walter Scheidel, "The Roman Slave Supply," in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery: Volume 1, the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Keith Bradley and Paul Cartledge; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 300.
[736]Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 12.6.9, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D12%3Awhiston%20chapter%3D6%3Awhiston%20section%3D9.
[737]Wilkins, *Matthew*, 623.
[738]Heinrich Greeven, "προσκυνέω" (*proskuneō*), *TDNT* 6:758–66, 763.
[739]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 538.
[740]Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 18:26.
[741]Appian, *The Civil Wars* (trans. Horace White; London: MacMillian, 1899), 3.10.76, Http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0232%3Abook%3D3%3Achapter%3D10%3Asection%3D76.

"'Do you, therefore,' he said, 'provide for me the amount which is lacking before the thirty days have passed, in order that what I have already paid, the thousand drachmae, may not be lost, and that I myself be not liable to seizure. I shall make a collection from my friends,' he said, 'and when I have got rid of the strangers, I shall pay you in full whatever you shall have lent me. You know,' he said, 'that the laws enact that a person ransomed from the enemy shall be the property of the ransomer, if he fail to pay the redemption money.'"[742]

Failure to repay the loan to release people from slavery in a timely fashion would result in his own enslavement.

Despite the outrageous nature of the debtor's request in this parable, "Moved with compassion [was] the lord of that slave. He released him and the loan forgave him." Originally, the noun form of "moved with compassion" (*splanchnizomai*) referred to the inward parts of a sacrificed animal.[743] The term evokes images of deep emotion coming from one's spleen (Matt 9:35–38). Whenever this word appears elsewhere in Matthew's gospel, it always applied to Jesus (Matt 14:14; Matt 15:32; Matt 20:29–34).[744]

The king's overwhelming pity moved him to give the unworthy slave far more than he requested. He canceled his debt and set him free,[745] exceedingly more than the slave could do for himself.[746] Ancient Near Eastern kings were notoriously ruthless. Therefore, the original audience would have found this act of mercy just as unbelievable as the size of the debt.[747]

For example, the Assyrian king Sargon II (722–705 BC) besieged Samaria for three years after Israel's king refused to pay the tribute exacted by his predecessor (2 Ki 17:1–6). Sargon boasted:

"I besieged and conquered Samaria (*Sa-me-ri-na*), led away as booty 27,290 inhabitants of it. I formed from among them a contingent of 50 chariots and made remaining (inhabitants) assume their (social) positions. I installed over them an officer of mine and imposed upon them the tribute of the former king...I received the tribute from Pir'u of Musuru, from Samsi, queen of Arabia (and) It'amar the Sabaean, gold in dust-form, horses (and) camels."[748]

Greco-Roman emperors behaved no better. Suetonius (71–135 AD) described Tiberius, who ruled the empire at the time of Christ (14–37 AD), as "guilty of many barbarous actions, under the pretense of strictness and reformation of manners, but more to gratify his own savage disposition."[749] For rulers like Sargon and Tiberius, compassion remained a foreign concept.

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[742]Demosthenes, "Oration 53: Apollodorus Against Nicostratus in the Matter of the Slaves of Arethusias," in *Demosthenes with an English Translation* (trans. Norman W. DeWitt and Norman J. DeWitt; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1941), 53.11, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0080%3Aspeech%3D53%3Asection%3D11.

[743]Helmut Köster, "σπλαγχνίζομαι" (*splanchnizomai*) *TDNT* 7:548–59, 748.

[744]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 539.

[745]Wilkins, *Matthew*, 624.

[746]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 706.

[747]Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 18:27.

[748]Sargon II, "The Fall of Samaria," in *ANET* trans. Daniel D. Luckenbill, 23–6, 284–5, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n309/mode/2up.

[749]C. Suetonius Tranquillus, "Tiberius," in *Suetonius: The Lives of the Twelve Caesars; An English Translation, Augmented with the Biographies of Contemporary Statesmen, Orators, Poets, and Other Associates.* (ed. J. Eugene Reed; trans. Alexander Thomson; Philadelphia: Gebbie, 1883), 59, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0132%3Alife%3Dtib.%3Achapter%3D59.

In the NT, the predominant usage of the word translated as "forgave" (*aphiēmi*)—in which one is released from a moral or legal obligation—indicates that this absolution comes from God (Matt 9:1–8).[750] He forgives lawlessness, sins, and offenses (Rom 4:7–8; Matt 6:14).[751]

Read Matt 18:23–27. How did Jesus depict sin in this section of the parable? Why would this story have shocked those who first heard it? In what ways are the king and God alike? What effect does an attempt to earn our salvation have?

Astounding Hypocrisy

c) Matt 18:28–30: Jesus continued the parable of Matt 18:21–35, saying, "But that slave went out [and] found one of his fellow slaves who was indebted to him [for] one hundred denarii." A much more plausible figure than 10,000 talents,[752] one hundred denarii consists of one hundred days' wages.[753] The second slave owed his colleague one six-hundred thousandth the amount forgiven by the ruler.[754]

"And he seized him and he began to strangle him, saying, 'Repay everything that you owe.'" The first slave resorted to physical violence,[755] rather than emulating the forgiving nature of the king:[756] an exhibition of incredible hypocrisy.[757] Some Greco-Roman creditors did indeed seize their debtors by the throat to forcefully drag them to a governing official.[758] The playwright Plautus (254–184 BC) wrote a scene in which a man caught with dishonest gain contemplated suicide, saying, "But why do I hesitate to betake me hence to utter perdition, before I'm dragged off to the Prætor by the throat?"[759]

Jesus stated, "After falling, therefore, his fellow slave began to implore him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay [it] to you.'" His entreaty closely parallels that of the one assaulting him, with only the word "all" missing (Cf. Matt 18:26).[760] This highlights the extravagance of the first slave's promise to his creditor.[761]

"But he was not willing. Instead, after departing he cast him into prison until he should repay the sum that was owed." Unlike the king, the first slave showed no compassion. Since he could not sell a slave belonging to the ruler, he capitalized upon his rights and committed the

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[750]Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, "ἀφίημι" (*aphiēmi*), *BDAG*, 156.
[751]Rudolf Bultmann, "ἀφίημι" (*aphiēmi*), *TDNT*, 1:509–12.
[752]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 704.
[753]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 539.
[754]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 707.
[755]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 539.
[756]Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 18:28.
[757]W. D Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew 8–18* (ICC; New York: T & T Clark, 1991), 801.
[758]Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 459–60.
[759]T. Maccius Plautus, "Poenulus," in *The Comedies of Plautus* (trans. Henry Thomas Riley; London: G. Bell & Sons, 1912), 3.5.45, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0106%3Aact%3D3%3Ascene%3D5.
[760]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 707.
[761]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 539.

man to a debtor's prison (Matt 5:25–26).[762] Incarcerated people could not repay their debts.[763] They could only hope that their family members or friends remitted what they owed.[764] Plutarch (46–122 AD) noted that "Miltiades, who had been condemned to pay a fine of fifty talents and confined till payment should be made, died in prison."[765]

Read Matt 18:28–30. Were the actions of the first slave toward his colleague a reasonable response to the amount of debt owed? Why or why not? What do they reveal about his heart?

Having Mercy on our Fellow Debtors

d) Matt 18:31–34: Christ continued the parable in Matt 18:22–35, saying, "After his fellow slaves saw what occurred, they were highly distressed (*lupeō*). And they came and reported to their lord all that happened." Matthew employed the same word to express what the disciples felt upon learning that Jesus would die (Matt 17:22–23).[766] Although the slaves had no money to rescue their colleague, they acted.[767] They went to the king. Jesus did not speak of their motivation.[768] Yet, we can assume that they knew the king had cancelled the debt of the first slave.[769] After all, who wouldn't have shouted that news to all who could hear?

"Then he summoned him, [and] his lord said to him, 'You evil slave, all that debt I forgave you because you entreated me. Was it not necessary for you to also show mercy to your fellow slave as I to you showed mercy?'" As a result of this incident, the king easily discerned his slave's true nature: wickedness.[770] This speech forms the heart of the parable.[771] Just as the lord extended mercy rather than insisting on his right to be repaid, he expected the same of the one who received his forgiveness.[772] The impact of the king's unexpected act should have caused the slave to respond by showering others with that same mercy.[773]

God's forgiveness toward us overflows into forgiving those who sin against us. As a result, the Lord blesses us, delivering more mercy (Matt 6:12, 14–15; Matt 5:7).[774] In fact, granting mercy characterizes the people of God (Luke 6:35–36; 1 John 4:11–12).[775] Compared to the immeasurable mercy the Lord extends to us, how can we refuse to forgive those whose transgressions pale in significance?[776] As we treat others, so shall God treat us (James 2:13).[777]

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[762]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 707.
[763]Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 18:29–30.
[764]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 539.
[765]Plutarch, "Cimon," in *Plutarch's Lives* (LCL; trans. Bernadotte Perrin; London; Cambridge, MA: Heinemann; Harvard University Press, 1959), 4.3, 413, https://archive.org/stream/plutarchslives02plutuoft#page/412/mode/2up.
[766]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 539.
[767]Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 460.
[768]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 707.
[769]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 539.
[770]Wilkins, *Matthew*, 624.
[771]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 540.
[772]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 707.
[773]Wilkins, *Matthew*, 624.
[774]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 540.
[775]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 707.
[776]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 703.
[777]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 540.

Jesus concluded the parable, proclaiming, "And, full of wrath, his lord handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed." Due to the first slave's unwillingness to forgive another debtor, the king revoked the cancellation of his financial obligation.[778] This had nothing to do with his ability to pay. Instead, he proved himself unworthy of the king's mercy. God will not forgive those who prove unwilling to extend pardon.[779] A lack of love for others indicates a failure to experience the repentance which results in eternal life.[780]

This scenario would have been familiar to the original audience. An ancient papyrus from Greco-Roman Egypt indicates that the governor of Egypt incarcerated a man because he had "of his own authority imprisoned a worthy man [his alleged debtor] and also women."[781]

As a result of his sin, the first slave received treatment far worse than sale to another master.[782] People expected jailers who ran debtor's prisons to inflict torture upon the detainees.[783] The slave's destiny consisted of excruciating punishment, not mere detention.[784] Only with full repayment—an impossibility—could he be freed.[785] Since he fell from political favor, no allies would dare come to his aid. He would never be released.[786]

Herod (73–4 BC) practiced torture,[787] although Jewish law prohibited it (Exod 21:26–27).[788] Gentile kings had no such impediments. A Roman inscription cites the job description of a public official who tortured and executed slaves at the demand of their owners. The services of such men allowed slave masters to avoid purchasing devices to inflict extreme pain and carrying out the deed themselves.[789]

Plautus (254–184 BC) wrote a play in which a master ordered the following punishment for the slave who had harmed his financial status:

"'Take him where he may receive weighty and thick fetters, thence, after that, you shall go to the quarries for cutting stone. There, while the others are digging out eight stones, unless you daily do half as much work again, you shall have the name of the six-hundred-stripe man.'" [The torturer said], "'He shall be taken all care of. For at night, fastened with chains, he shall be watched; in the daytime, beneath the ground, he shall be getting out stone. For many a day will I torture him; I'll not respite him for a single day.'"[790]

Since people in the Greco-Roman world knew the horrors of debt slavery and torture, this parable would have captured Peter's attention, as well that of as Matthew's original readers.[791] With a Gentile king, the evil slave could not expect to be freed after seven years (Exod 21:2; Lev

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[778]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 540.
[779]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 708.
[780]Gustav Stählin, "ὀργίζω" (*orgizō*), *TDNT* 5:382–447, 442.
[781]Deissman, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*, 267, https://archive.org/stream/lightfromancient00deis#page/n385/mode/2up.
[782]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 708.
[783]Wilkins, *Matthew*, 624.
[784]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 708.
[785]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 540.
[786]Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 18:34.
[787]Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 1.485, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0148:book=1:section=485.
[788]Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 18:34.
[789]Jennifer A. Glancy, "Slaves and Slavery in the Matthean Parables," *JBL* 119, no. 1 (1 January 2000): 67–90, 67, https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3267969.pdf.
[790]T. Maccius Plautus, "The Captives," in *The Comedies of Plautus* (trans. Henry Thomas Riley; London: G. Bell & Sons, 1912), 3.5, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0096:act=3:scene=5.
[791]Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 18:35.

25:39–41).[792] Thus, Jesus alluded to a destiny of harsh judgment in the afterlife (Matt 10:28; Matt 13:41–42).[793]

Read Matt 18:31–34. What about this situation highly distressed the imprisoned slave's colleagues? Why did the king hand the first slave over to torturers? How do we know that he would never be released? What impact does this parable have as you consider your own willingness to forgive others?

The Tragedy of Mercilessness

e) Matt 18:35: Jesus immediately made the meaning of this parable in Matt 18:21–35 clear to Peter by providing its application (Cf. Matt 13:1–2, 10–11). Christ concluded by saying, "This also my heavenly Father shall do to you, if each of you will not forgive their brother [or sister] from your hearts." At last, Jesus confirmed that the king in the parable represents the Lord.[794]

The Greek construction of "will not forgive" (*mē aphēte*) forms a strong negation, indicating an unwillingness to extend forgiveness to another person.[795] It does not mean that we struggle to quench bitterness and find ourselves repeatedly needing to forgive the offender for the same incident. The phrase "from your hearts" refers to sincerity, rather than merely saying that we forgive someone.[796]

As Christians, God has absolved the enormous debt of our sin (Col 2:13–14). Surely, we can extend that same mercy to people whose transgressions against us trifle in comparison,[797] especially when they express repentance.[798] Experiencing the mercy and grace of God transforms our hearts. Thus, we can extend to others what we have already received (Luke 7:36–50).[799] God exempts none of us from the command to reflect divine forgiveness.[800] Mercy received reproduces mercy.[801] A refusal to forgive someone who expresses repentance casts doubt upon our citizenship in the kingdom of God.[802]

Those who do not know God's forgiveness can imitate his disciples on a superficial level. However, their words and actions will ultimately reveal their true allegiance (Matt 12:33–37; Matt 15:18–19). People who hold onto bitterness like a treasure will experience eternal damnation.[803] God will not forgive the unforgiving (Matt 7:1–5; James 2:13; Rev 20:11–15).[804]

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote:

"No one should be surprised that they cannot come to believe so long as, in deliberate disobedience, they flee or reject some aspect of Jesus's commandment. You do not want to subject some sinful passion, an enmity, a hope, your life plans, or your reason to Jesus's

[792]Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 459.
[793]Wilkins, *Matthew*, 624.
[794]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 540.
[795]Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek, 3rd Ed.*, 314.
[796]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 540.
[797]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 703.
[798]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 540–1.
[799]Wilkins, *Matthew*, 625.
[800]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 703.
[801]Wilkins, *Matthew*, 629.
[802]Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 541.
[803]Wilkins, *Matthew*, 625.
[804]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 708.

commandment? Do not be surprised that you do not receive the Holy Spirit, that you cannot pray, that your prayer for faith remains empty! Instead, go and be reconciled with your sister or brother; let go of the sin which keeps you captive; and you will be able to believe again! If you reject God's commanding word, you will not receive God's gracious word. How would you expect to find community while you intentionally withdraw from it at some point? The disobedient cannot believe."[805]

Particularly where trauma has occurred, the concept of extending forgiveness contains some pitfalls. Finding a wise counselor, taking time to process the wounds, and even medical intervention may be required to experience healing and gain the ability to forgive the offender.[806] In such cases, no one should be pressured to forgive.[807]

Where abuse has occurred, real change requires a long-term process, even with third party intervention.[808] We must recognize that abusers often appear genuinely repentant and promise to change. However, this does not last (Prov 19:19).[809] God never calls us to passively accept violence perpetrated against us.[810] Therefore, we must not counsel the recipients of abuse to simply accept an apology and give the perpetrator another chance. Abusers will often portray themselves as the true victims. Such advice can be equivalent to a death warrant.[811]

The Presbyterian Church of America, a conservative evangelical denomination, published the following official statement on this topic:

"The Committee believes that when there are words and actions on the part of one spouse that threaten the life of the other spouse and/or children, that the one(s) threatened should be counseled by the [elders], or representative thereof, to remove themselves from the threatening situation and the abuser should be urged to seek counsel. Such a procedure will protect those threatened. When the abuser does not cease these words and actions, the Session (elders) should investigate whether these words and actions are in effect breaking the one-flesh relationship by 'hating' the abused spouse and not 'nourishing and cherishing' this one (Eph 5:28–29). In counseling the abuser, the reality of his Christian faith should be ascertained [1 Cor 6:9–10 includes the term 'abusive person' (*loidoros*)]. When it is determined by the [elders] that the abuser does not appear to them to be Christian and the abuse continues, the Pauline teaching about an unbeliever leaving a believer should be applied [1 Cor 7:15]."[812]

Forgiveness does not consist of denying, pardoning, or condoning the sin of another. It may neither result in reconciliation nor in forgetting the offense.[813] God does not expect us to

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[805]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship* (ed. Martin Kuske, et al.; vol. 4 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*; trans. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), 66.

[806]Jeffrey M. Brandsma, "Forgiveness," in *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology and Counseling, 2nd Ed.* (*BEPC*) (ed. David G. Benner and Peter C. Hill; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999), 468–71, 470.

[807]Walter Elwell, ed., *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, 2 Vols. (BEB)* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 87.

[808]Paul Hegstrom, *Angry Men and the Women Who Love Them: Breaking the Cycle of Physical and Emotional Abuse, Rev. Ed.* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2004), 131.

[809]Detective Sgt Donald Stewart, *Refuge: A Pathway Out of Domestic Violence and Abuse* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope, 2004), 44–5.

[810]Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb, *Is It My Fault? Hope and Healing for Those Suffering Domestic Violence* (Chicago: Moody, 2014), 128.

[811]Catherine Clark Kroeger and James R. Beck, eds., *Women, Abuse, and the Bible: How Scripture Can Be Used to Hurt or Heal* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 234.

[812]20th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America, *"Report of the Ad-Interim Committee on Divorce and Remarriage* (1992), 290–1, Http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/divorce-remarriage.pdf.

[813]Brandsma, "Forgiveness," *BEPC*, 468.

restore a toxic relationship.[814] Nevertheless, only by releasing grudges can a victim sever harmful emotional ties to the offender. We must confess and forsake hatred more for our own sakes than for the benefit of those who sin against us.[815] Fostering bitterness has the same effect as drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.[816]

Read Matt 18:35. Why can people who refuse to forgive those who repent expect a destiny like that of the evil slave? What does forgiveness look like? How should we counsel people in abusive relationships? Based upon this parable, what can we deduce about Lamech's fate (Gen 4:23–24)?

[814]Hegstrom, *Angry Men and the Women Who Love Them: Breaking the Cycle of Physical and Emotional Abuse, Rev. Ed.*, 104.
[815]Dr. Henry Cloud, *Changes That Heal: How to Understand Your Past to Ensure a Healthier Future* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 257.
[816] This concept is attributed to Alcoholics Anonymous.