

# **In the Beginning**

Message 7

## ***The Beginning of the Church***

Genesis 5:1-32

### ***Two Cultures***

Last week we studied chapter four of Genesis, where we saw the heart-breaking story of Cain. Cain was Adam and Eve's first son, the one they hoped would be the seed who would rescue them from death according to God's promise. Not only did Cain fail to deliver man from death, he became a murderer himself. Adam and Eve suffered terrible agony as they saw their first child kill their second, then leave them forever. The only hope in this story was the birth of a third child, Seth, whom God gave to Adam and Eve to replace Abel whom Cain killed.

Cain left the area of Eden and moved away from his parents. In a land far way from their godly influence and the bad memories of God, Cain had children and established a whole culture. It was an evil violent culture, but a beautiful and productive one. Chapter four describes the remarkable advancements in agriculture, music, and industry which the Cainites achieved. It was an attractive, appealing culture – the sort of place where ambitious people would want to live.

By contrast chapter five describes the descendants of Seth, the godly son of Adam and Eve. What do we learn about the culture of the Sethites? What does this chapter say they accomplished? Well, they had children! When I brought up this chapter at church and asked what there is to learn here, Pastor Stone and two campus staff all agreed that the lesson from this chapter is that the godly are blessed with sex! Beyond that, it seems that the godly line accomplished nothing of importance. This chapter does nothing but list a string of musty old names. However, this list of names contains some amazing other lessons about living for God in a wicked culture.

### ***A Son After His Image***

Chapter five begins the story of Adam's family. The phrase "This is the book of the genealogy of..." is the way Genesis indicates new chapter in the story of beginnings. It showed up first in Genesis 2:4, "This is the genealogy of the heavens and the earth," and next in 10:1, "This is the genealogy of the sons of Noah." Chapter one is the introduction to the book, and from 2:4 to the end of chapter 4 is the story of how the earth and the human race was established. Now we take up the story of Adam's family and its accomplishments. Here God repeats the single most significant fact about Adam – he was made in God's image. We cannot emphasize this point too much. Man is vastly different from all other animals. In fact, he is more like God than he is like the animals. Man was made to talk with God, not animals – and when he refuses to hear God's voice, he becomes an animal – particularly, a serpent. Man was made to rule the earth, but when He submitted to the serpent, he became enslaved to him and unable to rule the earth. The earth will now resist him and make earning a living hard. That was the point of chapter four. But now God reminds us of the original intention in making man. He also reminds us that He made man sexual and blessed him. This brief phrase points us to God's mandate when He made man – the mandate of chapter 1. There God's blessing included the command to multiply and fill the earth. So here we see Adam obeying God in having yet more children.

Verse three tells us that Adam "begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth." On one level this simply means that Seth also was made in God's image. He was made to hear God's voice and talk with Him. He was made to rule the earth. He was made to be God's presence on earth. But on another level, this phrase now tells us that the offspring of Adam possess a corrupted image of God. Adam has been corrupted by sin, and he will pass on this corruption to his children. But all this was true also of Cain and Abel. The mention here that Seth is in Adam's image also indicates that he is a true child, the

genuine seed of the woman – the child who will deliver man from death.

Seth had a son, named Enosh. Chapter 5, verse 26 tells us, “Then men began to call on the name of the LORD.” Now what does that mean? When you encounter a puzzling verse like this you naturally want to consult a commentary to find out what it means, and there you find that some commentators judiciously avoid the question and others provide lame explanations. I plan to do neither. I am going to assert boldly that I do not know what this means. I will make a suggestion, however. In light of the rapidly developing influence of Cain’s violent culture, I think this means that by the third generation, godly people began to cry out to God for help. They were likely persecuted by the Cainites and longing for relief from their oppressors. This is a constant refrain of the writers of the psalms. Listen to the cry of the righteous in several psalms

Psalm 3:1-4

- 1 LORD, how they have increased who trouble me!  
Many are they who rise up against me.
- 2 Many are they who say of me,  
“There is no help for him in God.” Selah
- 3 But You, O LORD, are a shield for me,  
My glory and the One who lifts up my head.
- 4 I cried to the LORD with my voice,  
And He heard me from His holy hill. Selah

Psalm 7:1-2

- 1 O LORD my God, in You I put my trust;  
Save me from all those who persecute me; and deliver me,
- 2 Lest they tear me like a lion,  
Rending me in pieces, while there is none to deliver.

Psalm 13:1-6

- 1 How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?  
How long will You hide Your face from me?
- 2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?  
How long will my enemy be exalted over me?
- 3 Consider and hear me, O LORD my God;  
Enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;
- 4 Lest my enemy say, “I have prevailed against him”;  
Lest those who trouble me rejoice when I am moved.
- 5 But I have trusted in Your mercy;  
My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.
- 6 I will sing to the LORD,  
Because He has dealt bountifully with me.

And this is just a sample from the first 13 psalms. God’s people are always persecuted by the wicked, but God always hears their cry and delivers them.

The rest of the chapter proceeds to list the descendants of Seth, and this list shows several things. First, the Sethites were faithful to God’s first command. It is easy to compare the magnificent accomplishments of the Cainites and conclude that the Sethites were rather worthless. All they did was have children. But this is thinking like Cain. Surely God expected man to subdue the earth, which means making good use of the minerals and animals on it. But multiplying on the earth was the first step. In our day we either forget this, or even reject it entirely. Let me be clear about this. God’s will for you is to have many

children, unless He makes you barren. Now I am not going to say how many that means, but if two people have two children, that is hardly multiplying. We should imitate the godly Sethites and have lots of children. If that is all we do, at least it is the first step of obedience.

Second, we notice the incredible length of their lives. Adam lived 930 years. Methuselah lived 969 years. That is almost a millennium. If Methuselah died this year, he would have been born in 1035 – in the middle of the dark ages, 31 years before the Norman invasion of England! England was still a Saxon kingdom speaking old English. The enormous length of life indicates the astonishing strength and energy of Adam. We said earlier, when he was made, he was a magnificent creature. Adam was supremely intelligent and incredibly strong. Adam's descendants were supermen – as God intended. After all, they were made in God's image.

Third, there is the constant refrain, “and he died.” God will not be mocked. God warned Adam that the penalty for rebellion was death. Eve believed the serpent instead, who claimed that God was lying. For all the amazing strength these ancient people possessed, all but one died. None escaped God's judgment for sin.

Fourth, this list shows us God's attention to individuals. God does not lose track of people, but He is concerned for each person he makes. If God thought Enosh was important enough to include in holy scripture, you can be sure He thinks you are important, too. God is a God who is intimately interested in everyone, including each of you here tonight.

### ***Ancient Patriarchs***

As we read through the list of Seth's descendants, God pauses to call our attention to a few people in particular. First is Enoch, a mysterious person if there ever was one. The text says simply, “And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.” That's all! Judging by the rest of scripture, walking with God must mean living in obedience to God's commands. All through both old and new testaments, walking is used as a metaphor for the way you live. A road or path is used as a metaphor for the direction of your life. Psalm one is a typical example, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners...” In Amos God addresses disobedient Israel and asks, “Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” (Amos 3:3) And Micah says, “He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?” So Enoch was obedient to God's commands. But there's more.

The New Testament book of Jude gives us more information about Enoch. Speaking of rebellious people in his own day, Jude said,

Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”

Jude 1:14-15

From this we can see that Enoch was more than just a good guy. He was a prophet and a preacher as well. Apparently he spoke out against the wickedness in his own day, no doubt incurring the wrath of his neighbors. This passage in Jude highlights that Enoch was the seventh from Adam, which should remind us that Lamech was also the seventh from Adam – by Cain. And Lamech was the criminal who killed a boy for insulting him and then sang praise songs to his wives about it. Here in the seventh generation the divergence of the godly and the ungodly lines has reached its crisis point in Lamech the murderer and Enoch the preacher. It makes us wonder if Lamech might have exterminated Enoch had God not taken him.

Enoch is a sign for us. He is a sign of true piety. Here is a man who truly walked with God. He was not a success. There is no indication anyone converted through his preaching. In fact within three more generations there was only one faithful family left on the earth. He did not build a great ministry or receive praise from men. His message was biting insensitive to sinful men. He just waled with God. Hearing God's word and doing God's work is the recipe for faithfulness. Some eras see success, and others do not. But the faithful persevere regardless of the results. How about you? Do you persevere if God doesn't come through in a hurry? Have you been praying for deliverance from some sin? How long has it been? A week? A month? A year? Are you ready to give up? Have you been praying for your friend or family to believe in Jesus? Is God not answering your prayers? How long will it be until you give up? Can you persevere for a decade? Or two? How about a lifetime? Enoch was faithful for 365years. How long until you get tired of God and find someone more interesting to hang out with? True piety does not consist in miracles or signs or amazing answers to prayer or powerful preaching. True piety is nothing more or less than following Jesus day by day regardless of what happens. That's all it is. Just following Jesus without giving up.

Enoch is a sign for us. He is a sign of the resurrection. Ignorant people try to claim that eternal life is a creation of the New Testament writers. Don't let yourself be taken in by such nonsense. When Enoch's time on earth was over, God miraculously took him to heaven to be with Him. Eternity with God is an idea that originates right here. If Enoch is with God now, surely you will be with God also when you die – if you walk with God like Enoch did. Enoch is proof that there is life after death for those faithful to God.

Nothing special is said about Methuselah. You should remember him because he is always mentioned in Bible quizzes, for he is the oldest person who ever lived. What is significant about Methuselah is his name, which means "after this, the end". Methuselah's name should cause us to wonder what will happen when he dies.

The other patriarch who is given special mention is Noah. Noah entered the world with a prophecy on him, "This one will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD has cursed." (verse 29) The Hebrew נֹחַ means "rest", and Noah's father Lamech (a different Lamech than Cain's seventh descendant) gave him this name with the prophecy of coming rest. God gave Lamech special insight to know that Noah would play a definitive role in delivering God's people from the toil they were experiencing from sin.

The New Testament tells us more about Noah also. In 2 Peter we find that Noah, like Enoch, was a preacher to his wicked generation.

For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly. 2 Peter 2:4-5

Next week we will take up the story of Noah's ministry.

If you add up all the numbers you find that Adam lived to see every one of these people born except Noah. Can you imagine living to see your great-great-great-great-great-grandchildren? What a family reunion you could have! If everyone had lots of children, the crowd would be in the millions! What a joy it must have been for Adam and Eve to see the earth filling up with all their children. And generation after generation, they kept looking for the seed, the child who would rescue them from death. Then, when Adam was 930 years old, he died. Can you imagine the psychologically devastating impact on the human race? The first man died. The man who kept promising that God would rescue them from death, died. I suspect that from that point on many of Adam's descendants stopped following God. I'm sure they looked at

Adam's dead corpse, and looked at the pleasures of the Cainite culture, and stopped worshiping God. Why worship God if you're going to die anyway? Why not at least have fun while you can?

Everyone died. You also will die, and then you will meet God face to face. Are you ready?

The seed lived on, but none was the true seed. Not Seth, not Enoch, not even Noah. Finally the true seed came, Jesus.

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