

Text: Gen 4.17-5.32

Today we are going to tell a story from the first long genealogy passage in the Bible, Genesis 4.17-5.32.

How do you tell a story from a list of names?

Well, it's a story of a lot of babies, growing up to be men, having children and dying. It's the story of the human race. It's our story.

We can learn some things by comparison. There are two lists here, the line of Cain and the line of Seth.

There are parallels in the lists, and differences.

In the line of Seth, we find very long lives for these men. We presume the lives in Cain's line were similar.

Of course, those who doubt the Bible scoff at the long lives. Nevertheless, the Bible is quite definite about them.

Interestingly, there is an ancient cuneiform document called the "Sumerian Kings List." It also lists long lives for the men in its line, saying some who ruled as long as 1500 years with the shortest being 300 years.

One problem with the list is that the reigns add up to 24,510 years, and this is long before the Akkadian empire, which began around 2300 BC.

The main point is that long lives are not exclusively a Biblical phenomenon.

We won't pause too much on these long lives, believing scientists have suggested reasons why people could have lived a longer time prior to the Flood. The suggestions I've read seem reasonable to me, but that isn't my point today.

The point of this long story of names is to get us to Noah.

Read Gen 4.17-26

Proposition: The generations of Adam speak of human hope and human failing and the need to know God to escape the failing.

I. The story of generations in general

A. The image of God

1. Specifically, Seth (5.3)
2. Really, every man on the list
3. Image of God is that aspect of humanity which distinguishes us from animals
 - a. Animals are living souls
 - b. Men are creative, thinking, reasoning beings

B. The Creation Mandate (Gen 1.28)

1. Be fruitful and multiply (many children)
2. Fill the earth and subdue it: have dominion

The story of man involves all kinds of work, producing the means to sustain life, creating solutions to the problems of life, filling the earth and finding ways to subdue it.

II. The story of Cain's line

A. Cain went out from the Lord, settled "east of Eden"

B. Cain built a city

C. Cain's descendants created a civilization

1. Agriculture
2. Music and arts
3. Maker of tools and machines

D. Cain's line began with a murder and ended with a murder: Lamech, 7th from Adam

III. The story of Seth's line

A. Seth's line began with calling on the Lord (4.26)

B. Seven generations from Adam in Seth's line was Enoch

C. Ten generations total from Adam to Noah

- D. In Noah's father we have a word of hopefulness (we will come back to this)
- E. With every generation, there is birth, there is growth to manhood, there is death

"and he died"

- F. Death comes to every man in Cain's line and Seth's line: except one, Enoch, 7th from Adam through Seth

Gn 5.22-24 Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had *other* sons and daughters. ²³ So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. ²⁴ Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

IV. The religion of the lines

- A. Cain's line: the religion of death

1. We have Cain's refusal to repent after murdering Abel
2. We have Lamech, the 7th from Adam through Cain, boasting of death

Gn 4.23-24 ¶ Lamech said to his wives, "Adah and Zillah, Listen to my voice, You wives of Lamech, Give heed to my speech, For I have killed a man for wounding me; And a boy for striking me; ²⁴ If Cain is avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

- B. Seth's line: the religion of faith

1. Men began to call on the name of the Lord (4.26)
2. The walk of Enoch, 7th from Adam through Seth
3. The words of Lamech, the 9th from Adam through Seth

Gn 5.29 Now he called his name Noah, saying, "This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands *arising* from the ground which the LORD has cursed."

- a. The Cainite Lamech boasted of murder
- b. The Sethite Lamech expressed hope in the Lord

“The genealogy in this chapter is a ‘vertical’ list, showing descendancy from Adam through Seth to Noah. The Cainites’ genealogy in chapter 4 had 7 generations (from Cain to Jubal); this genealogy has 10 (from Adam to Noah). Both lists end with three sons coming from the final name on the list (Jabal, Jubal, Tubal-Cain [4:20–22]; Shem, Ham, Japheth [5:32]). In each list only one man spoke—Lamech in the Cainite list (4:23–24), and a different Lamech in the Sethite list (5:29). The Cainite Lamech was taunting the curse (4:24), whereas the Sethite Lamech was moaning under the curse, looking for comfort from his son Noah (5:29).”¹

Conclusion:

Even though Noah believed God and built the ark, the story of man continued the same after Noah.

There was birth, growth, fatherhood, and death.

There were those who followed the religion of death; and there were those who followed the religion of life.

For us today, the same opportunities lie before us.

The world offers, in the end, death, and nothing after death.

The Lord offers, in the end, the hope of life everlasting.

I know which story I choose to follow!

¹ Allen P. Ross, “Genesis,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 35.