

## **Genesis 5:1-32 A Sermon**

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We are continuing in our study of Genesis, the first 11 chapters, picking up at verse 1 of Chapter 5 and working through to the end of that chapter. Before we begin a detailed look at those verses it will be helpful to make a few background comments by way of introduction.

First of all, I need to say that while the overall scope of our Genesis study stretches from Genesis 1:1-11:9 (which is itself a coherent unit or subset of the whole book) it is also possible to look at even smaller units within this one. So, for example, the first 3 chapters of Genesis form a smaller sub-section within chapters 1-11 as a whole.

Now, in the first 3 chapters, as you will probably remember, we came across a number of significant matters; all within a very short space of time. We saw, for example, the wonder and power of our Creator God as he spoke the universe into being. We saw the design and order of his good and abundant creation. We saw the place and purpose of human beings within God's plans. We saw the beauty and significance of human relationships.

And then things turned sour. We saw the fall of humankind into sin and the corruption of God's perfect world. After that we observed the personal, interpersonal, and cosmic consequences of sin *and*, at the same time, the justice and mercy of God in responding to these things.

Then, after seeing all of that in the first 3 chapters we came to another sub-section of Genesis 1-11: Chapters 4 and 5 which, in fact, we are going to be concluding our study of in this message. In our first couple attempts at understanding this section we saw the further downward progression of Adam and Eve's sin as it manifested itself within their own children, growing as it did in both its breadth and depth.

We also saw in Chapter 4 the emergence and description of the two "seeds" promised in Genesis 3:15: the seed/descendants of the woman and the seed/descendants of the serpent or Satan. In the conflict between Cain and Abel we saw the Seed of the Serpent making a preemptive first strike against the Seed of the Woman in a futile attempt at thwarting the purposes of God. Further, we saw how this

conflict would continue to manifest itself throughout the rest of the Bible's developing storyline; both *within* God's chosen people and then *between* God's chosen people and her godless neighbors.

In our very last look at Genesis (Chapter 4:17-26) we saw, by means of Cain's genealogy, that one of the distinguishing marks between these two lines of humanity was that the descendants of Cain were known by the name and reputation they were building for themselves and the other (the descendants of Seth) by the fact that they were people who "called upon the name of the Lord".

In this message we will be looking at that second genealogy; the genealogy of the descendants of Seth who have distinguished themselves by calling upon the Lord. As we look a little more closely, we will see that Chapter 5, verses 1-32, have been placed in Genesis as a deliberate contrast to the genealogy of Cain and so serve a specific purpose within the context of Genesis 1-11.

Now, before we look at some of the substance of this genealogy, I want to make a couple preliminary statements. First of all, I realize that for some, studying a *genealogy* like this may be a new experience. I mean, let's be honest, this is one of those parts of the Bible that you don't actually *read*, right? This is one of those parts that you just flip through or, at best, skim through until you get to something interesting, isn't it? This ranks right up there with the lists of laws in the Old Testament, or the descriptions of how the temple and tabernacle were built, or even some of Ezekiel's amazing and obtuse visions.

On my shelf at home is a book called, *How to Enjoy the Boring Parts of the Bible* by Philip Rosenbaum. In his book, genealogies are right at the top of the list of "boring" parts of the Bible. Now, of course, Rosenbaum describes these various parts of the bible as "boring" with his tongue planted firmly in his cheek. He doesn't actually believe that these parts of the Bible are boring; which is why he wrote the book. He demonstrates to God's people how every part of the Bible (including genealogies) is valuable and useful for God's people. So, if this is the first time you have looked at a genealogy don't shut down.

The second sort of preliminary thing to say is that you need to understand that this genealogy, like other genealogies in the Bible, is NOT – I repeat NOT – an exhaustive catalogue of every single person that was born from Adam to Noah. Genealogies in the Bible are typically highly structured and stylized and are typically *compressed*. So, for example, if Bob was the father of Joe, who was the father of Larry – the Bible might, in a genealogy, simply say that Bob "fathered" Larry, omitting Joe in the description. And sometimes the compression is even greater, skipping two or more names. The fact that this is the case is confirmed by comparing some duplicate genealogical lists of kings in the OT where this very thing is done.

Now, in doing this, the Bible is not deceiving or attempting to deceive us in any way. The Biblical writers were simply imitating what was, in fact, a common practice in

their day (possibly connected to the scarcity of writing materials). But more importantly, they didn't give us exhaustive genealogies because they didn't *need* to. That wasn't the purpose of the genealogy. That isn't the purpose of *this* genealogy. The purpose of this genealogy wasn't so that we would have an unbroken chain of names that we could use to determine the exact times and date of the creation, or the flood, or whatever – by adding all the right numbers together.

No, the purpose of this genealogy was to show the *connectedness* and *continuity* of God's plan and purposes. The purpose of this genealogy is to show the particular and definite ways in which God's promises *are* working themselves out. It shows us that things are still on track, the ship is still on course, and God is still at the helm.

So, when someone like Archbishop James Ussher takes takes this genealogy and makes a bunch of calculations to determine that the Creation took place in 4004 BC – that is all very interesting but, unfortunately, not true. The reality is, we simply do not and cannot know how many names have been omitted from this genealogy and which would make it much, much longer if it *were* an exhaustive list. But it's not. And that's not why this genealogy was written.

This genealogy, like so many others, was written so that we could see how God's promises and purposes *are* being worked out in particular ways, through particular people, and thus be assured and comforted in the knowledge of that. With those things in mind, let's look briefly *at* the genealogy itself, concentrating on just a few persons in this list, so that we can draw out some of the particulars and in that process see how this genealogy *does* show God's sovereign mercy working itself out in the lives of his chosen people.

First of all, let's look at a name on the top of the list – Adam. Now, if you have read the earlier chapters in Genesis, then you will recognize the language of these first two verses as coming directly from chapter 1. What we have here is essentially a *reaffirmation* of those earlier truths about Adam and Eve; that they were both created in the image of God.

Now, there are at least two reasons why this re-affirmation appears before us at this point in the narrative. One reason is simply to show that *it is still true that* humanity bears the image of its Creator, although disfigured and marred. You see, after the creation accounts in chapters 1 and 2 there comes the story of the fall of humankind into sin and the subsequent consequences of that. And amidst all of that a question that arises is, "What does this do to the human race? Can we say, after the fall, that people still retain the image of God? Does God's original commission to be fruitful and multiply still remain intact?"

And the answer is, "Yes," people do retain the image of God and the commission still remains. We have already seen that once before in an examination of the curses of chapter 3, and here we see it again. Moses recalls the language of chapter 1 at *this* point right before he launches into this genealogy to remind us that we are about to read

the genealogy of people who were made in and still retain the image of God. In spite of their sin in chapter 3, in spite of its ugly manifestation in Cain, in spite of its uglier manifestations in Cain's descendants - in spite of all that, it is still the case that the image of God remains. That's one reason why we have this reaffirmation of chapter 1 going on at the beginning of chapter 5.

Another reason for this reaffirmation coming at this point is simply because by placing it at the head of the description of *Seth's* descendants, and not at the head of a description of *Cain's* descendants, Moses is underscoring the fact that while the image of God may remain upon all humanity, the working out of God's intentions for his creation, especially the implied promise of 3:15, will be accomplished through Seth's line, not Cain's. Indeed, it is part of the judgment upon Cain and his descendants that in this recounting of the connection between the first man – Adam and Noah – Cain and his descendants don't even get a mention. It is as if they don't even exist, such is their judgment.

But it's not all rosy here for Seth and his descendants. Because right after reaffirming the fact that humankind bears the image of its Creator, verse 3 comes along and reminds us that the image, while present, is a distorted one. This is why Moses makes a point of saying that Adam had a son "in his *own* likeness, in his *own* image". He doesn't say this for anyone else after Adam, but he says it for Adam because he is reminding the readers of the on-going consequences for *all* of Adam's descendants that they were fallen creatures; even those in the godly line of Seth.

As we have seen in our study of Chapter 3, this is, in the language of theologians, the doctrine of imputation: that when Adam acted, he did so in a *representative* capacity such that his actions counted for and affected all humanity. This teaching is more clearly explained by Paul in Romans 5:12-21, but we see it right here, in Genesis 5:3, in seminal form. We are reminded, on the one hand, of creation in God's image, and then for the rest of the chapter we are reminded that something has gone wrong with that original picture because these four little words keep popping up in the chapter – "*and then he died*".

Over and over again these words keep coming up, reminding the readers that the consequences of sin and the curse still hold, they still have their reign of terror over all humanity. All people born after Adam's likeness are born with a death penalty on their heads, with a broken heart, in a fractured condition.

Now, we need to move on from here to look at a couple other names in this list, but before we do, let me just say that there are all kinds of things you can draw from verses like this and we couldn't begin to touch on all of them, but let me just suggest a few for you.

One thing is that you ought to spend some time thinking, if you haven't already, about what it means to say that every person on this planet – even persons you absolutely detest – is a person who, in some fractured way, bears the image of God.

What does that mean for you? How you think about them, how you respond to them, etc.? What does it mean for us as a church, in this community, to acknowledge that? What will that look like? Now I'm not going to stand up here and do all your homework for you, but you need to go away and think about that.

And as you do, reflect as well on this reality that it is not just Seth's genealogy, but our own genealogies that reflect the on-going curse of death and which remind us, as a matter of course, that the image we retain is a fallen one and the image that others retain is a fallen one. If we look back on our own histories then we see parents, who died, preceded by grandparents, who died, preceded by great-grandparents, who died. And one day, we will die, unless Jesus returns first.

And so, while we reflect on the reality that we, and everyone around us, retains the image of God that should then affect how we think and respond to people. At the same time, we need to reflect on the reality that everyone *also* has this fundamental process of decay taking place within them then serves as an ever present reminder of the corruption of the human body and soul that came through Adam's sin.

Again, we need to ask ourselves some questions: How does this reality affect and alter the way we think about people, and respond to people? How does it affect the way we *minister* to people and *think* about ministry to people? How does it and *should* it affect the way we as a church think about and respond to people in our community? What does it say about the assumptions we can and ought to make in whatever enterprise we engage in?

In short, what Adam passed on to all his posterity was a mixed bag. And that reality ought to drastically affect the way we approach life and ministry, in and among the people that God brings along our path. And there's a tangential principle in there for parents, I think. Simply the fact that these truths affect us in very real ways such that, parentally speaking, we "beget" our children in the same way, with the same dynamics in operation – simultaneously passing on desirable and un-desirable things. Giving our children both *more* than we realize and, at the same time, *less* than we think. They daily show evidence of catching from us what we *wanted* them to catch, but at the same time they also show evidence of *catching* things we didn't even realize we were *pitching*.

So, anyway, those are just some starter thoughts for you. Please spend some time meditating on these things and asking God to apply them to your own hearts in evidential ways.

The next name I want us to think about, very briefly, is the 7<sup>th</sup> name on the list – the person of Enoch. Between Seth and Enoch are a number of other people mentioned and there is a very repetitive formula used. There is the mention of how many years a person lived before they birthed a certain named individual. Then there is a statement of how long they lived after the birth of this individual. And then there is a kind of summary statement about the whole thing before we move on to the next one and start all over again.

And it is the very repetitiveness of this formula that makes the statements about Enoch stick out so much. In particular, you have an interruption of the “and then he died” formula since, when you get to Enoch, you are told not “and then he died” but rather that “he was no more, because God took him away”.

Now, on the surface, one might argue on the basis of this text only that this is simply another way of saying that Enoch died and that, for some strange reason, the formula was altered here to say it another way. However, the best interpreter of Scripture is always Scripture itself, right? So, when you turn to the other end of the Bible, to the New Testament and look at Hebrews chapter 11, you read these words,

*Hebrews 11:5-6* By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

The writer of Hebrews, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, makes it clear that the words about Enoch in Genesis 5 are not another way of saying that Enoch “died” but are in fact saying the opposite – that Enoch did NOT have to die but was simply “taken” by God from this earth. And, as some of you Bible scholars will know, he is not the only one in the Bible to have experienced this but Elijah as well will undergo the same thing later on.

Now, what are we to make of all this?

Well, at the end of the day, it seems to me that, for starters, we simply have to acknowledge that Enoch was the recipient of a very great and very unique blessing at the hand of God. He was allowed to enter into this world and then depart from it without going through the “portal;” that is death. And so this was, for Enoch, an indescribably great privilege.

But why would God do something like this? Why would God take someone away in such an extraordinary fashion, and why would he do it on such a limited scale?

Well, one thing we have to keep reminding ourselves in these opening chapters of the Bible is simply that fact: *these are the opening chapters of the Bible*. And as we saw in the introduction to this series, the opening chapters of the Bible are in fact the opening chapters of human history, the beginning of the whole story. As a result the accounts in Genesis 1-11 are not so much things that we look at and try to plug into an existing storyline but are, in fact, the explanation for why there is any story line at all. And, as such, there is a certain uniqueness, a certain *un-repeatableness* about the whole thing. Just as with the life of Christ, some things are there for our imitation while others are clearly unique and un-repeatable demonstrations and workings of a sovereign God – this same sort of thing happens in the Old Testament as well. There

are times and places all throughout the Bible and through history where God reserves for himself the right to break into human history and so something remarkable, and which will serve, in some special way, his set purposes.

The assumption of Enoch is one of those things. You see, as you look across this list of people begetting other people, and then living so many years, and then finally dying you see the unmistakable reality of the presence and power of sin and death within the human race. There seems to be a certain inevitableness to the whole thing.

That is, the whole thing seems cyclical and inevitable *until you get to Enoch*. All of the sudden, out of the blue, God steps into the picture and decides – out of sheer mercy – to remove someone from this seemingly inescapable reality and doom. And so, right there, in the midst of this picture of the power and presence of sin and death is a signpost showing, clearly, that sin and death may rule over the race of men and women – but it does not rule over God. We see in the assumption of Enoch that there is a power greater than death and the grave, that there is life beyond the grave, that life with God is still possible.

And to God's people under Moses, receiving these accounts for the first time at his hand, having come through the wilderness after 40 years, these things would have been crucial. The power and reign of sin and death over the human race would have seemed almost overwhelming to them as they watched an entire generation of people die in the wilderness. Dozens and dozens of funerals on an almost daily basis would have branded this reality permanently into their consciousness. Was there any hope for the descendants of Adam? Was there any value in paying attention to Moses in honoring God by keeping His commandments? Would it make any difference in the end?

The account of Enoch, in this sort of context, provides a clear answer to those sorts of questions. Yes, these things do make a difference, they do indeed matter because, as the writer of Hebrews assures us, *faith matters*. The faith, evidenced by Enoch's lifestyle of "walking with God", the faith which manifested itself in a God-directed life was immensely valuable and precious and pleasing in the sight of God.

And so Enoch's life, and God's demonstrated mercy toward him, are quite a contrast coming as they do in the midst of this genealogy, and they are a ground for both faithfulness and hope in God's people from every age. This passage shows us, especially when you compare it to Cain's genealogy, the promised conflict and eventual victory of the woman's seed over the serpent's seed, is a reality.

When you look back at Cain's genealogy, in Genesis 4:17-24, you see that at the end is this monster of a person Lamech, who is an arrogant, godless, murderer who brags about the killing he has done. And, interestingly enough, Lamech is the seventh person in the Cain genealogy. Now, when you compare that to Seth's genealogy you discover that the seventh person in that line is Enoch, a polar opposite to Lamech. The contrast between these two is, I believe, a deliberate one as Moses wants his readers to

see the prophetic truth of Genesis 3:15 working itself out from the very beginning. And as his readers followed this through, they would realize that the connection which started with Adam and went to Seth and to Enoch and to Noah that was a connection that led straight to them.

In short, the life and experience of Enoch would lead them, eventually, to see their own personal connectedness to the seed of the woman, and thus to the promises contained in Genesis 3:15, and so would be a source of hope and encouragement to them.

And, indeed, this is the very thing we see depicted in the words of the last person I want you to take notice of this morning – Lamech – who appears at verse 28. Now this is not the Lamech we just spoke of in Cain's line. This is a different Lamech, in Seth's line, in whose words we hear the hope of God's people encapsulated,

*Genesis 5:28-29* When Lamech had lived 182 years, he fathered a son and called his name Noah, saying, "Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed this one shall bring us relief from<sup>1</sup> our work and from the painful toil of our hands."

Now flip back and re-read Genesis 3:15-17,

*Genesis 3:15-17* I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring<sup>1</sup> and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

When you look at Lamech's words in Genesis 5, you can see that he is clearly aware of the events of Genesis 3. He is obviously leaning on the language found there. He shows by his words that he is aware of the curse that has come as a result of sin's entrance into the world through Adam. And yet, at the same time, he also shows that he understood the hope contained in God's words to his wayward children. The name which he gave to his child – Noah – was an expression of that hope. He saw, quite prophetically, that his son Noah would be a vehicle of God's comfort to his people. He anticipated that the working out of the victory promised in 3:15 would be significantly advanced in and through the person of Noah, a reality that we will be taking a more careful look at in the next few weeks. And since we will be taking a closer look at that, I will reserve comment upon Lamech's prophetic utterance and about Noah himself until we get to those portions of the story. For the remaining few moments, then, I want to think briefly about the significance of Enoch for God's people today.

Now, the temptation in reading these words about Enoch is to read them as if we didn't have a New Testament. In other words, the temptation is to read how Enoch "walked with God" and then sort-of wax eloquent on what it means to walk with God and how we should all do that and how pleasing this would be to God. And, in one sense, that would be alright because these things are absolutely true; there is tremendous worth and value in seeking to be like Enoch in desiring to walk with God as he apparently did. God is, indeed, honored by and pleased with these things.

But I think there is more going on here. Because, on the one hand, you can look at Enoch and see that, yes, he walked with God and that God took him away and, in that, we see that death is not sovereign over God – God is sovereign over death. Death is not the unconquerable foe but can, itself, be overcome by God. We see that it is possible to please God.

And yet, as encouraging and hopeful as the example of Enoch is, if you continue on in Genesis five *after* the account of Enoch, you get to the account of Methuselah who, although he lived a long time, eventually died. And then there is the account of Lamech, who also died. In other words, what happened to Enoch was not the rule, but the exception. Even after this amazing thing happened to him, death still reigned and ruled the day for humankind.

And so, as Enoch is the exception and not the rule, then our relationship to him is less as a model to be imitated – although there is value in that – but Enoch serves for us not so much as a model as he does a *type*, a foreshadowing - as someone that points beyond himself to a greater reality. As a result, when we read this passage we ought to come away asking, in the first instance, NOT – "How can I be like Enoch?" but rather, "Who *else* was like Enoch?" or even better, "Who was Enoch a shadow and pattern of?"

And the short answer to that is: Jesus. Jesus is the one who, like Enoch, but even more so than Enoch, pleased God by his faithful obedience. Jesus is the one about whom God said, "This is my son, in whom I am well pleased". Jesus is the one about whom Paul speaks when he says, "He was obedient, even unto death." And Jesus is the one whom the writer of Hebrews, in chapter 11, after rehearsing the litany of people who were examples of faithfulness – including Enoch – Jesus is the one who, as Hebrews 12:2 makes clear, *perfects* the faith that was *surely*, but *incompletely* and *insufficiently* exemplified by Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, David, etc.

And so, the intersecting point for us is this: It is not as we imitate Enoch that we have gained our salvation in Christ but rather it is through Christ's life and death – *in him* – that our hope is secured. It is *in him* that we are pleasing to God and then, subsequently, through His Spirit's work. He causes us to imitate the faithful obedience of our forefathers, like Enoch.

So, look to Enoch, yes, but to look *through Enoch* to the one to whom he, and so many other Old Testament saints pointed - to Christ. He is your hope and He is your

righteousness.