

# Family Trees

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[ 0 : 00 ]     Genesis chapter 5, if you would open it to page 4. Sophie escaped reading the whole chapter which she should have done with all those names. It was a very clever thing to do, Sophie, somehow.

Now there's a huge business today of making money in family genealogies. In the 90s we were sent this book from some publishing house in the United States.

It's called The World Book of Shorts. It is not a fashion magazine for hot weather but it has lists of names, hundreds and thousands and thousands and thousands of names of shorts from all over the world, something of their family tree and it's absolutely useless.

It's worse than a telephone directory. I can't find where I am, that's the problem. It's just got dates and names and somewhere I'm in there but it's useless really.

I have an uncle, everyone has an uncle like this who's done a vast amount of work on the family tree and he discovered that the first Short to make it to Australia was Benjamin Short who was a London businessman in the early 1800s and I need to confess this and you need to forgive me for this but he was a lifelong card-carrying member of the Mennonite Brethren Assemblies and a well-known lay preacher who I have a little advertisement signed by Charles Spurgeon, the famous Baptist preacher in London and Benjamin Short preached in his, what was it called?

[ 1 : 48 ]     The temple, the tabernacle, that's right. In the early 1800s he moved to Australia and he took up the new business of life insurance, became the first man in the world to sell a million pounds worth of life insurance, appalled at the destitution of the widows and children left in Sydney, particularly in the city around the rocks.

He set up the Sydney City Mission which is now the largest non-denominational city mission in the world. Here is his biography. You can all get a copy of it later.

Now my grandmother's family has a different story. I am descended on my grandmother's side from the Russian Smirnov family.

I'm telling you the truth. In the 1700s my great-great-great-great-grandfather was the Consul General of Russia and he was deputed and sent to Amsterdam where he was assassinated.

And I can tell you this for a certain because there was an eyewitness, an American diplomat happened to watch why this person didn't intervene. That's my deep resentment towards the United States.

[ 3 : 08 ]     Anyway, he was buried in the cathedral in Rotterdam with a magnificent style. There had never been a funeral like it in a huge memorial built to him only to be bombed in the Second World War by the Nazis.

So he's the only member of the family to have been blown up twice. It's true. His daughter Maria Ivanovna Shmironovna moved back to Petersburg and was raised by the Tsarina of Russia.

When she was 21 she married an English lawyer, of all things, who was sent to Madras in India and he became the chief magistrate in the early days of the Raj.

He died young. They'd had sons who went down to Australia, you're almost there when you're in India, to make their fortune. And so Maria joined her sons in Australia.

And we have a letter from Maria to some of her boys when they were young. The boys married into a family which name is Begby. My grandma was a Begby, Scottish family.

[ 4 : 21 ] Alison Begby was the object of Robbie Burns' affections. She turned him down for something better, for someone better, at the age of 22 and she has been immortalised in a poem where he describes his broken heart.

Her cousin was a tall commanding man, six and a half feet tall, who got his masters in law at Cambridge and was moving amongst the legal circles in London when in 1858 he was offered the judgeship of the newly founded colony of British Columbia.

And Matthew Bailey Begby, who is my direct relative, has fairly unfairly got the title of the hanging judge. He wrote in his will, I desire no other monument than a wooden cross erected on my grave and he has three monuments which I'll give you two dollars for if anyone after the service is able to tell me all three of them.

Now the reason I'm telling you this is because when we want to really find out who we are, where we come from and why we are here, we dig into our roots.

We come to understand who we are by looking back. And that is why Genesis 5 is written in the scriptures. And you know that the Bible has a number of genealogies and I've been preaching for about 20 years and I've never, I've been able to avoid them until now.

[ 6 : 00 ] But here we go. This is Genesis 5. Actually, the brilliant thing about the Bible genealogies is they're not like the telephone directories. They don't just list names and numbers. They're always very carefully shaped.

You ever noticed when the New Testament opens? It opens with a genealogy. Very carefully shaped. Three lots of 14. 14 generations, Abraham to David.

14 generations, David to the exile. 14 generations, exile to Jesus Christ. In other words, this Jesus Christ, if you want to understand who he is in the New Testament, you have to understand that he is the fulfilment of God's promises to Abraham.

That he is the David Messiah and he's come to bring us out, bring us back from exile to God. And all the genealogies are like this. They're telescoped and they're microscoped.

And Genesis 5 is exactly the same. It is beautifully sculptured. And it tells us who we are, where we came from, and why we are here.

[ 7 : 07 ] It's very important in the flow from Genesis 1 to 11. Do you know it's one of two genealogies? And each of them cover 10 generations. This one here in chapter 5 moves from Adam to Noah and the flood.

And the next one in chapter 11 goes from Noah to the person of Abraham. In other words, one goes from creation to judgment and the next one from judgment to new creation.

It's wonderful. If you were with us last week, you will remember the disaster of Lamech, of Cain's line in chapter 4, the tragedy.

Cain's line moves from death to murder to the glorifying of revenge and violence in Lamech. You remember Lamech was the seventh and the line in Cain's line from Adam.

And here's the perfection of arrogance, self-justification, self-gratification. And he has three boys, Jabal, Jubal and Tubal, Cain, who are responsible for the arts and technology and science.

[ 8 : 14 ] And we saw last week how all of that rose in defiance against God. And when we come to chapter 5, you have this sense of the rising tide of sin and the spread of death.

But in chapter 5, verse 1, we go right back to Adam again. And this time, this time, we follow the line of Seth. And do you remember at the end of chapter 4, Eve names Seth God's gift because this is how salvation will come.

So we have two lines, you see. The line of Cain and then the line of Seth. And they are in exact contrast to each other. One is carnage, the other is comfort.

One is savagery, the other is salvation. One is revenge and the other is rest. And I think that may be why we have these huge ages in chapter 5.

Just cast your eyes down chapter 5. Most of them live about 900 years. Methuselah lives to 969. And I can tell you for certain we don't know why.

[ 9 : 24 ] I'm sorry about that. Some commentators think the numbers are symbolic. Enoch has 365 years. I'll make a point about that later.

Lamech, the different Lamech, has 7, 7, 7. Some commentators give these great charts of astronomic figures and Sidonian years and calendar years. I just, we don't know really.

I think what we can say is that on the surface all the people in Seth's line have big lives, big blessings, lots of children, lots of family.

And what they're doing is they're spreading all over, they're spreading God's image all over the world. I think we can probably also say that before the flood they lived different lives because the world was a different world.

And this genealogy covers hundreds, even thousands of years. But over a thousand years we only hear really about one person. But it's a picture of life and fruitfulness and I'm not going to answer any questions about the ages of these people.

[ 10 : 29 ] So let's have a look at the first couple of verses. The genealogy goes back to Adam. This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man he made him in the likeness of God.

Male and female he created them and he blessed them and named them Adam when they were created. When Adam had lived 130 years he became the father of a son in his own likeness after his image and named himself.

We go right back to day six of creation when God said let us make man in our own image male and female he created them. Because here is a new beginning.

God hasn't abandoned humanity outside the garden despite the spread of sin and despite the spread of violence God continues to give his image to each child who is born so that every child conceived of human parents bears the image and mark of God in them.

Every human life is immeasurably important. You know Christians sometimes talk about the sanctity of life. We believe in much more than that. It's not really that life is holy it's that life is immeasurably unbelievably different because it's in the image of God which has all sorts of implications for the beginning of life and for the end of life of course.

[ 11 : 56 ] But did you notice in verse 3 there's an ambiguity. It's not just that Seth is made in God's image it's Seth is made in the image of his father Adam. In other words Seth is born with the sinful nature and with the image of God but the image of God is somehow disfigured and diminished and that is the case for all of us.

We all inherit from our parents a sinful nature and we all inherit the image of God somehow marred but I think the emphasis surely here is on the miraculous truth that even outside the garden even on this side of the fall yes we're sinful yes Seth is sinful yes the image is marred but he is still he is still the image of God he still calls upon the name of the Lord.

And as you read through the chapter which I wish Sophie had done well no I do I'm not trying to make Sophie feel bad although she probably should the thing about the chapter is it has this pattern a very careful tenfold pattern let me give you an illustration just look down to well let's take up a verse 12 here we are at the third descendant when Kenan had lived 70 years he became the father of Mahalal Kenan lived after the birth of Mahalal 840 years and had other sons and daughters thus all the days of Kenan were 910 years and he died let me keep going Mahalal lived 65 years he became the father of Jared Mahalal lived after the birth of Jared 830 years and had other sons and daughters thus all the days of Mahalal were 895 years and he died and he died and he died and he died you see there's this pattern of each of the ten generations and at the end of each of the generations like a drumbeat this comes back one word in the Hebrew and he died and he died and he died and he died although this is the line of Seth although they bear the image of God although God's promise attaches to this line they die and that is our human experience although we know the blessing of God and although we bear the image of God we too die every single one of us you may live a hundred years you may live seven hundred years but one day earth will know your name no more and the tombstone erected to you and I if the Lord Jesus doesn't come sooner will be blown smooth by the wind and the sand over the ages as sin entered the world through one man and death spread through sin so death spread to all men because all men sin but if you read the chapter there is one exception one blessed exception to this and he comes perfectly situated in the seventh generation and it's Enoch down in verse 21 when Enoch had lived 65 years he became the father of Methuselah

Enoch walked with God after the birth of Methuselah 300 years he had other sons and daughters thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years again we read Enoch walked with God and he was not for God took him that's amazing back in chapter 4 the seventh generation from Adam and Cain's line is Lamech remember the perfection of revenge and death and here we are in the seventh generation in the Seth line and Enoch is the antithesis he's the opposite of Lamech and what is it to be the opposite of someone who loves violence and self gratification it's not to be a passive pathetic pious looking person it is twice we are told it is to walk with God 365 years you take everything about his life all his achievements you boil it down to this one thing he walked with God it's a great phrase it describes the deepest intimacy and communion and fellowship with God there are only two people who are described as walking with God in Genesis here Enoch and then next chapter

Noah some of the early fathers the patriarchs in Genesis walked before God so God came behind or walked after him as though they were following him but this is deeper this is more intense it is as though God were walking beside Enoch and that every step that Enoch took he took to walk side by side and shoulder to shoulder with God he's living a life in the presence of God moving as God would wish him in his love it's much much more than just being alive it's a lovely thing you know because you remember in the garden of Eden God would come walking in the cool of the day and here we are we're outside of Eden and yes sin is spreading and yes death is spreading but Enoch walks with God and how does he walk with God how does he do it he does it by faith do you know in the New Testament we read this by faith Enoch was taken up so that he shouldn't see death and he was not found because God had taken him now before he was taken he was attested as having pleased God without faith it is impossible to please God for whoever would draw near or we might say whoever would walk with God must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who seek him that is Enoch's faith one he believes that God exists he believes what is absolutely invisible and unprovable and second his faith looks to the future that God rewards those who seek him and then we read these words that almost tear a hole in the paper about Enoch and he was not for God took him in other words

[ 18 : 20 ] Enoch did not experience human death God reached down and took him directly to be with him it's astounding there is something here more powerful than the cycle of violence and revenge there is something more powerful than the spread of sin and even death itself it is God and walking with God and the life of Enoch comes to us today and it says to us that death is not the final say death is not the ultimate reality that God is bigger than death and he is able to break through that barrier which is utterly impenetrable and even terrifying to us doesn't happen by the advance of culture and civilization and science and technology it happens by walking with God and I think there is something beautiful about the fact that Enoch just lives 365 years he is a bit of a youngster in this chapter really he doesn't live 900 years but he lives a full rounded year his life is complete because he has walked with God and what this means for us today is this that going to be with God is much better than living on this planet and living in this life for even 10,000 years that there is a life after this one for those who walk with God where we will be removed from the curse and from the sin and from all the effects of death where faith is turned into sight where we will see God face to face beyond the reach of curse which is far better than anything this world has to offer us and I don't think we really believe it

I think it's so easy I feel it's so easy just to live like Cain to live as though this life is the only really supremely important thing so all my energy and all my anxiety are poured into this life all I pray about is this life all I invest myself in are things that are passing away and the temptation is to think that the greatest tragedy is death but it's not there's a far greater tragedy than death there is a much greater tragedy and it is a life spent not walking with God not walking with God here and we miss out walking with God there this week CBC has shown a documentary called 49 Up it's part of a series of documentaries made by the BBC since 1964 you might have seen it in 1964

BBC director gathered 14 school children in Britain together and sat with them asking them questions about what their hopes were how they understood life it's amazing and they had children from very poor background as well as very privileged background seven years later the director finds the 14 children and interviews them again and they're interviewed at age 7 and then 14 and then 21 28 35 and this year they've turned 49 which I think is a very wonderful age to turn I don't know if you've seen this I've seen them all and it's a remarkable thing to watch people over a period of their lifetime how they change and how they don't change the most privileged and wealthy children at seven say what schools and colleges they're going to what careers they're going into and they do one of the 14 young people develops schizophrenia while at university and become lives on the street for 21 years and only at the age 42 finds himself with some balance in his life the other thing that's really clear is the devastating effects of being abandoned by parents it's remarkable stuff and you develop a huge sympathy for each one of the characters and you can't have watching it and just hoping for them that they find their feet and that they find their way they are now 49 and they're all going grey and they're all getting puffy at the edges most of them are married many of them have several marriages and lots of children and they pontificate on life in this last series and nearly all of them say something like this if you've got your health and if you've got your family you're okay and one of the guys actually says the most important things in life are your health and your family and it's very moving to hear some of them come to the point of even acknowledging that but I want to say for us this morning that if we follow

Jesus Christ that can only be less than half true this genealogy is a wonderful gift to us and it tells us that our family and our health are the amazing gifts of God but they are not the ultimate good that God has given to each of us our families and our days for something far higher so that we would walk with God in this life and walk with him in the life to come so that we would pray for and train our own children and the next generation that they will walk with God in this life and in the life to come and our problem is that we live like Cain we live horizontally we live by sight and not by faith and our hopes and our dreams and our priorities are shaped by this world and this chapter is calling us to something much bigger and much higher something which is eternal and I think we've got to ask ourselves this morning how can I live with my family how can I live my days in such a way that I will walk with

God that I will walk by faith and I'll draw others to walk by faith as well the chapter finishes in the tenth generation with a lovely illustration of this and I just want to show this to you let's look down at verse 28 and 29 now this Lamech as you know is different from the one in chapter 4 when Lamech had lived 182 years he became the father of his son that would be tough and he called his name Noah saying out of the ground which the Lord has cursed this one shall bring us relief comfort from our work and from the toil of our hands he sees the world he sees the world differently than the Lamech in chapter 7 Lamech in chapter 7 saw life in terms of his own self-justification but this Lamech looks at the world and he sees the sin and the wickedness and he doesn't despair he looks it in the face and he sees it as the result of God's curse and he remembers God's promise back in chapter 3 15 and 16 that God would send a child a seed who would reverse the curse and so he names his own son Noah which means rest it's a wonderful act of faith he calls his son the gospel if you will he looks at evil in the world and he proclaims the world needs a savior and he says the savior is going to come out of the ground he says isn't that a lovely picture and a salvation this is teaching the salvation that God brings us it's an earthy salvation as

[ 26 : 52 ] Sean prayed with the children thank you Lord Jesus that you came in human skin it's an earthy salvation God had to come to earth to be made of dust like one of us and that's what we celebrate of course at this advent time and Lamech through Noah is pointing to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and to his death on the cross this strange reversal where out of his death life comes out of his giving over we are saved out of his poverty we become rich that's why the New Testament says that the son of God came going to destroy the works of the devil and if you read through one of the gospels you'll see how Jesus does that he deals the crushing blow to serpent's head when he comes you remember the demons they arise he goes in the desert he battles with Satan and when he dies he crushes Satan's head not just for himself but for us and yet Jesus holds back the final annihilation the final destruction of Satan and he does that for this reason so that many will turn to him in repentance and have life and be able to walk with him so Satan is still alive and prowls around like a roaring lion seeking to devour us but he is mortally wounded he has death working in his bones his teeth have been pulled as it were and we may resist him firm in our faith knowing that one day

Jesus will crush him certainly under our feet that's what Advent is about so Lamech prays for comfort he prays that God will reverse the curse and he hopes that Noah will be the one to do it and Noah does act like a kind of a saviour but he doesn't destroy the serpent and that's where we'll pick it up next week so let's kneel and pray