

The Bible in Context Ep 17: The First Genealogies Gen 4:17-5:32

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Hey, welcome back to the Bible in Context. Welcome back. Last time we went through the Cain and Abel story and tried to kind of figure out some of the

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the tension in that story and what it actually means when you take a deeper look at the narrative. And then we also introduced the Two Goats idea, the Two Goats motif. And I want to run through that one more time because we really covered a lot last time. I feel like it was kind of compressed. So I want to just introduce that idea one more time before we dive into Kane's genealogy and Seth's genealogy. Sounds good. Sounds good.

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these eight steps.

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It's a younger brother is elected as firstborn or the bearer of the promises. An older brother is jealous about the elect. The older brother is given some sort of protection. Then the older brother is exiled out into the wilderness because of what he does from that jealousy. The older brother is then multiplied into a nation and that nation at some point in Israel's history becomes hostile. The elect brother, on the other hand, is brought to Yahweh's dwelling or exalted in some way

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then he is sometimes associated with a offering. So we're going to look this time at Cain's genealogy so we're going to see how his nation that he turns into becomes a people who are enemies of God's people.

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There's some really cool stuff going on in this genealogy. And the first thing is just, I think we should take a look at where this takes the narrative. We should remember that these genealogies, they're not lists of names that are separate from the narrative. They are an integral part of the narrative. So where does this genealogy take us? Well, in the...

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In these first genealogies we see the seventh from Adam is very important. We'll see that in the genealogy for Seth as well. Here the seventh from Adam in Cain's genealogy is Lamech and we see that Lamech he's a polygamist. He is killing people for relatively small things. So he's a polygamist and a murderer, very vengeful, and this is where Cain's city leads.

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and this is going to lead us into chapter six, where we just have more violence and killing and not the ideal city in God's eyes, I think. There is something cool still in this city, something kind of good coming out of it. We do see that there's all this technology coming out of the city. There's instruments, there's metalworking and farming techniques, and those are all things that are used later in Israel's history.

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I think that some people will read this and say, since these came out of such a bad city, these must be bad things. But that's not necessarily the case. These are things that will be used in a good way in the service of Yahweh's temple later in the biblical story. So even in the midst of humanity's rebellion, they still are image bearers. Right. And because of that, there is still good that can come from them.

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Right, yeah, there were still God's image, his representatives meant to expand the goodness of the garden. So Cain, he gets banished out into the wilderness, this place that is dead and has nothing. Well, what does he do? His family starts making stuff, starts making things good. Even though they misuse it, or it can be misused.

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They're taking the bad and making it good. They're taking a place that is hostile to Yahweh's imagers and making it into a place where they can live. Yeah, you see the irony here too. So they are bringing order to the chaos, but in the midst of that they're also creating chaos. Yeah. Yeah, they're multiplying it, probably more so than they're subduing it. Right. Yeah. I just think that's a really cool something to bring up.

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A lot of, well, the Mesopotamian version of how this kind of technology developed was by basically the gods coming down and taking women and producing children that are these demigods that are giving knowledge to humans. A lot of it is mystic knowledge, priestly knowledge.

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ways of divination, but also you see things like music and metalworking, things like that. So here, instead of having the gods coming down and these demi-gods giving this knowledge, we have humans who are doing this. So this really speaks highly in this culture of humans and who they are, what they're meant to be and made to be. They're the image of God who, by themselves, without the help of rebel deities, turned bad into good. And these rebel deities, in the Mesopotamian version at least, they're called the Apatu,

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we're going to run into them again when we talk about the flood. So just want to bring them up. But I mean, really just the story, even though Cane City devolves so rapidly.

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There is at least a little flicker of hope, I guess, in just looking at the way Yahweh has made humans and what these people are doing. Isn't there something significant about the name Lamech also? Like it's spelled backwards? Yeah. Yeah, there's a few different proposals, but I think one that I don't think anybody lands real hard on this, but the most popular consideration for his name is to see it as the word King spelled backwards, which is Melek, so Lamech.

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And there's some actually really cool parallels between this genealogy and the next genealogy.

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Like I mentioned last time, some people have tried to translate these names and put them in order in these genealogies and come up with a very explicit gospel presentation in the first couple chapters of the Bible. That's really not there. I'm not going to go and venture a meaning of all the names. I don't think I have the expertise to ferret out all the varied ways that you could translate these names. If you do want to look at something like this, there's a guy named Moshe Garciael and he

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names. And this is actually a rigorous scholarly work on names with Hebrew word place in them. I don't know if he captures all the names in these genealogies, but it's a really cool book.

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Let me just read in Hebrew these names between Cain's genealogy and the genealogy in chapter five of Seth. And just keep your ears open for repeated sounds. All these are probably going to sound like gibberish if you don't know Hebrew. So first this genealogy starts off with Cain, which is Cain. Then Chanuk, Erad, Machiel, Methusael, Lamech. Now listen to some of the repeated sounds in this next genealogy, which starts with

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Inosh, Kainan, Mahalalel, Yered, Chanok, Batushael, Lamech, and then Noach. So just to point out some of this, because that might have just sounded like a bunch of...

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gibberish is so you got the you got two lamex there at the end of these genealogies. The first lamex is you know if his name is backwards for king you've got this twisted king in this violent city and then you've got this guy here who gives birth to Noah the the seed of the woman the hope of humanity. You've also got Erad in Cain's genealogy that's literally the word ear city with a D on the end so he builds a city.

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dedicated and so here possibly it's that Cain is dedicated to his city whereas the the Hanuk the Enoch in Seth's genealogy he's the seventh from Adam and he seems devoted to God. Now

there's actually something really cool going on with Enoch as well in Seth's genealogy and that's that he's the seventh from Adam and he goes up to heaven and stays there goes up to God in the skies. In the

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Sumerian king list there's a guy named Enma Durinke and he's the seventh King in that king list and he meets with the gods and then comes back with all of this Knowledge kind of like what we saw in the last genealogy. He gives all this Divinatory knowledge to humanity the seventh from Adam in Genesis is not one that goes up and brings back knowledge from rebel gods. He actually just

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is devoted to him and goes up to be with him. So again, the progression of civilization comes from God's imagers doing what they do, not from divination.

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You've also got in this genealogy, in Seth's genealogy you've got Canaan, which is just Cane with an extra N on the end. And then you've got Mahalalel and Mahujayel, which they're both these words that begin with M-H. And then you've got Mathushayel and Mathushala in these two genealogies, which these M-T words. So just a lot of repetition. That's all I'm trying to get at. They're meant to mirror each other, and you can see that. Now what about the differences between the two genealogies?

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But are we supposed to kind of see some of the differences too? I mean the biggest difference that I see is one in Seth's genealogy, you have the specific number of years that they live, that there's an emphasis on the length of life that they live, that they were... Yes. ...they seem to be blessed with extra long lives. Well, there's something going on there too. Well first of all, in the way that these mirror each other, we're supposed to kind of see

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lines going in different directions very clearly. And so they're supposed to contrast each other, the seat of the serpent line and the seat of the woman line. And just look at where they go, violence versus the hope in Noah and people who are devoted to God instead of violent Adolphus Kings. So now as far as the ages and things that we see.

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There's an article by John Walton called The Antediluvian Section of the Sumerian King List in Genesis 5. That sounds like a wonderful article. Yes, it's actually only three pages, so it's not that bad. The title is as long as the article. It's just about. So, in this article.

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Walton makes clear that this is mostly a proposal. There's no concrete evidence to be found on this, but it's very compelling that the Sumerian King List that I mentioned, it's essentially, I mean

it is what it sounds like. It's a list of Sumerian kings when kingship, quote, fell from heaven, came down from heaven, and they all live like really long times, like 28,000 years, give or take. And those who wrote this Sumerian King List, they use what's called a sexagesimal, a

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number system which we uh... we have a decimal system we count by tens they count by sixes if you essentially convert all these really long ages and add them up into decimal

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they come out to about the same number as adding up all the ages in Genesis 5. So there's a possibility that all these ages are part of some kind of ancient number game going on here. We don't really know what's going on, but that may be the reason for these ages being what they are. Yeah. Well, and there are some interesting things even within the numbers. Like you've got Enoch who was...

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Earth it was like 365 same number of how many days in a year and then at the very end of the you know the second limbic not the evil limbic but the limbic that is Noah's father was he was on earth for 777 years and so that number seven obviously is a significant number too.

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the angelic choir motif that you see in our stories and movies. So it's like, you know, the lights come on, the angels start singing, and then Noah's born at 777. Yeah, yeah, yeah. We're meant to recognize, okay, something amazing is about to happen. Yeah. So yeah, that's good. I think one more thing we should mention in this is that being God's people, neither in the Old Testament nor New Testament, follows genealogical lines. This is a...

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a styled narrative showing that there's one line who really went a bad way and one line that followed God throughout. So I don't think we should read this. That question comes up from time to time. This is not about...

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you know, you being a cursed genealogy or a blessed genealogy, your entire family is apart from God or with God. But rather there's these two genealogies that are mirrored to kind of show, first of all, they're countering a lot of the ancient myths. That's what a lot of Genesis 1-11 is doing is they're, you know, jabbing their neighbors in the eye when they're talking about their gods being so great and doing all this stuff. They're saying, no, this is how it, you know... It actually happened, yeah. Yeah. This is how it happens when Yahweh is on top, and he is.

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So that's how we need to read this story as a comparison between these two typological families, not as the way in which families are cursed or blessed from generation to generation. Right, right. Well, and I think it's significant too at the very end of Chapter 5, the genealogy

actually does not end with Noah, it ends with Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham, and Jephah, and doesn't say anything about them or how old they are or anything, and I think that's probably...

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on purpose, leaving you wondering, okay, what about these kids? What's going to happen with these kids? And they do come back into the story. And we'll see them again. And so I think we're meant to kind of be left hanging there for a minute. Yeah, definitely. Yeah, and I think all these ages too, they're...

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We're not supposed to be trying to find number codes in them, just like everything else we've looked at so far. All the things that are in the background in the text are there to support the narrative. They reinforce the meaning that's already there, kind of on the surface. So even if there is some kind of hidden meaning that we can't understand, that's not the main point of the text. If there is some ancient Sumerian number game going on, they're playing along with the game to support what the text actually means.

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Esoteric meaning of right put these numbers together and find out who the evil You know the president or I don't know anybody that wants to communicate in a way that we can understand. He's not trying to Be coded. Yeah to the point where nobody can really understand what's going on There's not this huge hidden message. That's the main point. Yeah

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Well, I hope everybody made it through us talking about genealogies for several minutes now. Yeah, it's been good. It's been good. I appreciate the genealogies are significant. That's often I think we kind of skim through them and don't pay attention to what they're saying but if you dive down into them a little bit, there's some significant things that are really helpful. Absolutely. So it's worth spending some time talking about it. Yeah. And yeah, just continue reflecting on how these two lines mirror each other and what it looks like to be part of Yahweh.

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family. What we talked about may not, you know, help you sit down and get the warm and fuzzies immediately when reading a genealogy, but at least this section of scripture can be something you can meditate on and hopefully it's a little less confusing and a little less foreign. Sounds good. Cool. Alright, well we'll pick up and talk about the flood next. It's gonna be a fun one. Yes, let's go.