

Have you ever been stuck in what felt like a repetitious cycle?

Get up, go to work, or do what needed to be done at home, have dinner, read a book, watch tv, go to bed, get up, go to work or do what needed to be done at home.... Rinse and repeat.

Just walking through the same old, same old, can feel so hopeless. The sun rises, the sun sets, the sun rises, the sun sets.

The passage we're looking at this morning looks like one big cycle repeating itself over and over again. Someone lived x number of years, he had a son, he had other children, then he died. On to the next one.

In that cycle which we just heard repeated across ten generations it feels like all that changed were some very tricky names, and some ages. The cycle of life and death just rolled on. But in this cycle, which traces the family line of Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve, there are three departures from that cycle that I want us to look at this morning.

vv. 1-4 – God's intent and promise

vv.21-24 – Enoch's walk in faith

vv.28-32 – a new hope

Pray

i) God's intent and promise

That kind of cycle I've just described is a recipe for hopelessness, we see it in the world around us in the thinking that this life is all there is, and at the end of it you're worm food. Right at the very start of this chapter, which forms a new 'Toldot' or account of Adam's family line, we are reminded of the creation purposes of God.

There is intention behind our life 'God created mankind' and we are made in his image or likeness.

We saw it highlighted in the first couple of chapters of Genesis, and now God's plan for his people, his good purpose is reaffirmed. We are made, with

purpose, to fill the earth and multiply (Gen 1:28), to exercise dominion over the created order.

Male and female, we were created and blessed v.2 given a purpose, provided for. That same mandate rests on all humanity, it was given directly to Adam in those early chapters, but its no accident that the term for 'mankind' here is Adam's name. We are of the same stuff, with the same purpose, and the same blessing. This purpose of God is for all Adam-kind, all humanity.

There is a sense of that continuing clearly through Seth at his birth, v.3, he is in the image of his father. He doesn't just share a family resemblance, he is the same in nature. Created and blessed. God has not withdrawn his blessing, or his purpose from the pinnacle of creation, humanity.

That reminder couldn't come at a better time; its hot on the heels of the horrific descent into self-worship, and violence in the family line of Cain, Seth's older brother, which Jean outlined for us last week at the end of chapter 4. Through Cain's family line we've seen murder – first as Cain killed his brother Abel, and then in the boasts of Lamech who killed a young man for wounding him.

That family has been on a path to ever increasing exile through their rebellion against God despite the technological, and cultural advancements they have made in music, metallurgy, construction, and civil society.

What we might term death from natural causes appears for the first time, v.5 This is a major departure from God's intent. It is part of the judgement he placed on Adam and Eve.

And could anything show more starkly just how empty the lies of the devil were as he tempted Adam and eve? "You will not surely die" were his insipid words in 3:4 but now, the truth of God's word, his clear warning in 2:16-17 is lit up in a powerful beam of light.

We've seen murder, Cain 4:8, and Lamech 4:23, but this is something different. It's the permanent cycle of the new order after the fall of man, and rebellion against God. We call it natural death, but it's not is it?

Even a peaceful death, after a long life well lived hurts. Our minds disbelieve it. We go into shock, and denial, we are confused and stunned. Even when someone we know or love has been in a long decline, maybe in the grip of dementia or terminal illness, when we are expecting them to die, it still knocks us for six when they do.

Death is not part of God's intent for our world, and people who follow the Lord Jesus look forward to a day when death will be no more – where oh death is your sting? (1 Cor 15:55) It has been defeated; it is still something we experience now, and it hurts, but we look forward to that day when it will be replaced by everlasting life. In this deviation from the cycle of life and death we are reminded of God's creation intent, which wasn't for death but blessing.

## ii) Enoch's walk in faith

In this same genealogy, we see something quite different in vv. 21-24. We can be a bit stunned by the length of life in this account, people are living hundreds of years. It's not an unusual trend in the literature of this time. A genealogy of Sumerian kings from what we would call Southern Iraq today has eight kings reigning for a combined period of 241,200 years! Much longer lifespans were a given in the region. They decline after the coming flood in Genesis 6.

We might be stunned by those lifespans, but we are even more stunned by the account of Enoch, who we're told in v. 24 didn't die at all. He was simply taken away to be with God. It's not an entirely unique situation in the Bible. When we read this account Elijah comes to mind, who was taken up in 2 Kings 2 (v.11) .

Enoch has escaped. God has seen fit to translate him to his presence, avoiding the outcome of the fall – death. We have a wonderful description of the closeness of his relationship with God 'he walked faithfully' with the Lord v.22. For 300 years his life was in step with God's desires. His direction and desires with consistent with God's direction and desires. His thoughts and actions were consistent with God's thoughts and actions.

I find that hard enough for five minutes! To stay faithfully on track, to walk in the way God wants, rather than wandering like a lost sheep. But Enoch's trust in God, calls him back into the fold, back to the shepherd when he strays. His desire is to be near God.

The call for followers of the Lord Jesus is to do the same. Col 2:6 '6 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,'

When we walk with the Lord, our wills are bent to his will, our minds are conformed to his mind, when we come to decisions we ask whether they will take us nearer to God or away from him. We consider whether a promotion, or course, or relationship, or purchase, or conversation will help us to be more or less like the Lord Jesus. It means we seek him in every endeavour, wanting to please him, and casting off the things and thoughts which we don't know please him. I don't often ask questions like this in a sermon, but where is your life pleasing to God? Where are you finding joy in your relationship with him? Where is there closeness and growing reliance and love? This week taking time reflect on these elements of walking with him would be of great benefit, as an encouragement to keep walking with him in the ups and downs of real life.

Enoch's faithfulness is picked up in the New testament in both Jude and Hebrews 11 where he is commended for his closeness to God, and held up as an example for us who would pursue closeness with God today.

There are two other links with this event, I want us to touch on.

When the Lord Jesus returns, he will take his people, faithful followers, those walking with God on that day, to be with him. Those Christian people who are alive on the face of the earth will be raised up to the presence of God in the same way as Enoch and Elijah. These Christians will not taste death. As we look back to Enoch, we can also look forward to the future and the return of the Lord Jesus. Not everyone on the face of the earth will taste death.

There will also be a translation for everyone who puts their faith in the Lord Jesus at the day of judgement.

There is nothing popular about focusing in on the Judgement of God, it will be a day of great sadness, as ugly as that day in the garden when Adam and Eve rebelled against God. It will be a day of real misery as those who continue to rebel against God experience something even more awful than death in this life; the second death which we read of in Revelation 20.

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. <sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. <sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. <sup>15</sup> And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

It's horrific isn't it? To think that there is a second death, The final death, where those who reject the saving grace of Jesus will be cast away from the presence of God for all eternity. On that day, the faithful will be translated to life in all its fullness, not by works or deeds, not by being good enough, but because they have put their faith in the saving love of the Lord Jesus who has crucified sin and rebellion, who has paid the price for those who call on him, and make him King of their lives. Because he is just and fair God will judge, but because he is also rich in mercy and grace, full of love and compassion God makes a way for those who are perishing to be saved. (appeal?)

### iii) A new hope

We see a forecast of it in Genesis vv.28-32 where we are shown a new hope.

In v. 29 the words of a different Lamech, not the Lamech of chapter 4 with his violent oppression, and vengeful boast, a Lamech from the family line of Seth, who's grandfather was Enoch, speaks of a bright shining hope, relief from the downward spiral of humanity, and the cycle of life and death.

<sup>28</sup> When Lamech had lived 182 years, he had a son. <sup>29</sup> He named him Noah and said, 'He will comfort us in the labour and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the LORD has cursed.'

Suddenly we are lifted out of that endless cycle; and we dare to hope for things to be different through Noah. Noah doesn't mean comfort, but in Hebrew it sounds like comfort, it sounds like rest. Lamech plays on the words, and makes his ultimate desire known in the name of this child; he wishes for relief from the hard toil of life in these early years. The work is hard, it is cursed, again as a result of the fall, the sin of Adam and Eve against the Word of God.

The world was descending into darkness, that couldn't be clearer when we consider the family line of Cain, in chapter 4 but in the family line of Seth we've seen hope, and anticipation that God will act to bring about a release from the curse.

The release will come, but not in the way Lamech intended when he named his Son. Noah will bring about release from the full judgement of God, against a wicked world which we're going to explore more fully in the flood narrative in the coming weeks. Don't we see again here a foreshadowing, and a pointer to the work of the Lord Jesus?

Who even now, today, gives a world which seems to be descending into an ever deeper darkness, hope of a different future, a future where every tear will be wiped from every eye, where we might live face to face with our God, where we can know him, and walk with him in faith.

Why don't we pray and ask Him to keep that hope alive in us?