

**Walk With Me: The Story of Genealogies**  
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I think that genealogies are boring to us because we don't know how to approach them — we read them like modern genealogical records, intended for one purpose — to demonstrate legal, family relationships. Genealogies in scripture do that, but they also do something more. Rather than including every person in the list, the authors tried to make them balance. They included patterns that emphasize certain people, events and stories. Finally, they used genealogies to teach.

The two genealogies at the beginning of Genesis are great examples of this art. They are crafted in such a way as to beg to be compared to each other. Each traces one line from a son of Adam — first Cain, then Seth. Each lists the names of their children, their accomplishments, and each pauses in the seventh generation to tell a few extra details about the person mentioned there.

It is in the contrasts in these two records that a teaching starts to emerge. First, we join the story of Cain, a few verses before our genealogy in chapter 4:11, right after Cain murders his brother.

“Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield it's crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the face of the earth.”

Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”

But the Lord said to him, “Not so; anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.” Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him.

So Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

What happens when Cain leaves God's presence?

Rather than accept this judgement, Cain immediately settles down. Rather than dependence on God, he builds a city. Rather than wander with God's protection, Cain builds his own version of the garden of Eden, and his descendants fill it with good things, from their perspective.

Music to give beauty and entertainment, tools (the Hebrew word here seems to indicate specifically weapons) for power and protection, and livestock, which were wealth. They can take care of themselves, entertain themselves, provide for themselves. They no longer need God.

Walking away from God can become habit forming.

Genesis tells us how this story ends by pausing at the seventh generation, in verse 23, and we enter into a detailed story about Lamech.

“Lamech said to his wives, “Adah and Zillah, listen to me; wives of Lamech hear my words. I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me. If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech is avenged seventy-seven times.”

Cain stumbled into murder, but after seven generations, vengeance is in the hands of humanity, and the taking of life is justified on the basis of pride and advancement. Lamech’s boast says that what Cain stumbled into, Lamech has fully embraced. He escalates every conflict, from wounding and striking to killing.

God warned Cain about this path right before he murders his brother: “Sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.” By the time we reach Lamech, we see that people are completely under the mastery of sin, rather than mastering sin with discipline.

Violence and murder are not the only effects of sin’s mastery. Back in Genesis chapter 2, God gave the man a helper suitable for him, in verse 18-25. The word used is the same one that describes God’s rescue of Israel in other places in the Old testament. Woman a partner suitable to the man in every way. They were created for each other, and represent the goodness that God offers to humanity — the partnership that fits us completely, right down to our bones, as it were!

Yet, by the time we get to Lamech, things have fallen apart. Rather than embracing the relationship God intended, Lamech has two trophy wives. We can tell this by translating their names. One is named ornament: she is shown as an object, a possession of Lamech. The other is named shadow. Far from being the suitable helper of Genesis 2, her role has been reduced to being her husband’s shadow.

Cain teaches us a hard truth. When we walk away from God, there are some fun things to be had! Entertainment, power, and wealth. But the cost is high. We trade being the image of God to be a shadow of our created intent. We trade true partnership to become possessions of each other. Instead of giving life, we take life. Rather than mastering sin, we are mastered and enslaved by sin.

Our second genealogy begins in an entirely different space. We pick up again in 4:25:

“Adam made love to his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, “God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him.” Seth also had a son, and he named him Enoch. At that time people began to call on the name of the LORD. This is the written account of Adam’s family line. When God created

mankind, he made them in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and blessed them.”

Rather than walking away from God, Seth’s descendants call on the LORD. Rather than cursing, blessing.

The contrasts continue. Rather than technology and wealth, Seth’s descendants are marked by children, and by extreme life. Children were joy, life, and legacy. They were help in the work of life. They were security and provision in old age, which there was a lot of, apparently! Most importantly, these were direct evidence of God’s blessing and presence, the fulfillment of God’s blessing to be fruitful and multiply. Here, we see humanity leaning fully into dependence on God to give them a role, and a purpose.

And here, again, at the seventh generation, the genealogy pauses, and gives us a few details, beginning in verse 21:

“When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked faithfully with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enoch lived a total of 365 years. Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.”

Here we see a man humbly wandering with God in the way that Cain was originally supposed to do. Fully dependent, reliant, recognizing the presence of God wherever he goes.

And he does not die.

This is very surprising. Seth’s descendants are still human, and despite calling on the name of God, still experience the sad results of sin — they may live a ridiculously long time, but they still die.

But not all of them!

We see here the first hint of a way pointing forward to freedom from death. Life lived in walking apart from God is a shadow of life, and it is full of violence, vengeance, and death. Life lived walking with God, on the other hand, is marked by fullness of life, even to not dying! In submitting to God, in wandering according to his invitation, and living life according to God’s terms, there is life so full, so complete, that death, our ultimate doom and evil, has no mastery over us. Here we finally see what it means to master the sin that crouched and Cain’s door, and still crouches at our door.

Sin is mastered in a life lived in lockstep with God, the creator, who gives us all good things.

And all of this is simply foreshadowing for another list that will come along in a few millennia.

## Matthew 1

We left off with a humanity divided. Some, following a path of independence and self-reliance, a path away from the presence of God. This was the line of Cain and his descendants. Some, were wandering with God, and experiencing life. This was the line of Seth, and his descendants.

This is where Matthew begins his story.

His genealogy follows people from the line of Seth. The Israelite nation came from that line, after all, and even in Genesis, there was the hint of what Matthew is about to reveal.

Matthew does a strange thing, and this gets back to my earlier point about how writers at this time were more concerned with making a point than with including every name in the ancestry. Matthew selects people to balance his list into three sections of fourteen. And the reason he does this is in verse 17:

“Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.”

Matthew tells us that he has written his genealogy to highlight what he thinks is crucial to understanding his book. David. Exile. Jesus.

First, David was the holder of a rather remarkable promise from God, that he would never fail to have a descendant on the throne (2 Samuel 7:16). This promise was the result of David's faithfulness to God, in leading as a Godly king. Like Enoch long before him, David, despite his obvious failings, walked with God. And so he received God's blessing. Through his line, the whole world would be blessed.

Matthew's list also shows what kind of kingdom Jesus is establishing — it will include all people, male and female, slave and free, Jew and Gentile. Women are not ornaments and shadows in the Kingdom of God. They are full participants in God's plan for creation's redemption in Jesus!

There is even more to this, given the names that Matthew chooses to include! If he was going to include women's names, we would expect that the list would include the great Jewish matriarchs, Sarah, Abraham's wife. Rebekah, Jacob's wife. Leah, and Rachel, the mothers of the founders of the twelve tribes. But they don't make the cut.

Instead, we have Tamar, who bore a son to his own grandfather after she sold herself to Judah in Genesis 38, and then shamed him into recognizing his heir. Rahab, a Canaanite prostitute who was a traitor to her city, but welcomed the people of God from Joshua 2:1-21. And Bathsheba, the woman whom David seduced, impregnated, and then had her husband murdered so that he could marry her from 2 Samuel 11.

Incest, foreigners, and adultery. Not exactly how you would expect the story of Seth's descendants to go, the ones who have the blessing of God, who are calling on his name, who are pursuing life! In fact, this shows us just how desperate our situation is.

It is so desperate, that Matthew emphasizes the low point of Jewish history — the Babylonian exile. By doing this, he shows that the people of God have become mastered by sin, just like the line of Cain was. They are exiled, just like Cain was from the Garden of Eden. They are wandering in a foreign land, called to faithful submission and dependence on God within that exile, just like Cain was. Scripture speaks truth when it says, "There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God!" All of us, created to reflect the glory of the creator God of heaven as those made in his image, fallen, broken, mastered by sin, and exiled to a shadow of what we are created to be. Matthew takes us to the bottom.

But he doesn't leave us there, because God does not end the story there. Even through the unsavory characters, the plot twists and the exile, God shows us his sovereignty and the power of his will — because at the end of the list is Jesus.

And finally, we come to Jesus. Jesus is at the end of the list, the third set of fourteen. Another way that you could look at that is that Jesus is at the end of the sixth seven.

Seven is a deeply meaningful number to Jews. It represents wholeness, completeness, divinity, and the eternal meeting of creator and created through sabbath. By placing Jesus in the final place, the seventh generation of the sixth set, Matthew artfully tells us that the promise to David is complete. Jesus was the goal of two millennia of God's plan in Israel. The Babylonian exile is completely over, and with it, the mastery of evil and sin has been closed. Jesus is the end of the story, the one who finally masters the sin crouching at the door.

He is also the beginning. Because no Jewish story would end in the sixth repetition. It begs us to follow through, and see the seventh.

And so we see the invitation of Jesus to come with him into the final stage of the story, the Kingdom of God, the fullness of life that was promised to all those who will walk with God as Enoch did, as David did, as Jesus, fully God and fully human, did.

Follow me, Jesus says. The gospels are full of stories of people who accept Jesus's invitation to follow him.

And each one, like Enoch millennia before, experiences life, healing, restoration from the hand of God. The master over sin and death is here, God with us, Messiah, Matthew says.

That's probably enough of genealogies for today. But I want to leave you with one verse, by way of practical application. Micah 6:8 tells us what it looks like to walk with God like Enoch, what it looks like to follow Jesus.

“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”