

Genesis 5

Introduction...courtesy of Kent Hughes (Edited)

Genesis 4 provides a record of human degeneration...first with Cain's personal, cold-blooded, hands-on murder of his younger brother, Abel. Cain showed no remorse, but only fear and self-pity. He left bloodied but unbowed, to wander the earth.

The record of degeneration that began with Cain is rounded out in the second half of Genesis 4 with the account of its flowering among Cain's descendants—especially Lamech and his children Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-cain—the fathers of agribusiness, the arts, and technology.

Lamech's "Sword Song" was a boastful revel in unbridled vengeance... "If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold" (4:24). And so it has been in the succeeding generations. People and nations have answered slights with swords and spears and machine guns and missiles. Civilization per se, with its abundance and arts and technologies, does not save. In fact, these very advances in cultural sophistication can be (and often are) used for exponential evil.

However, this dark picture in Genesis 4 was not devoid of hope because, in contrast to the Cainite line, a new line was raised up, the line of Seth: "And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, 'God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.' To Seth a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD" (vv. 25, 26). **This godly line called on and proclaimed the name of the Lord. They declared the wonders of his name...**

Turning to Genesis 5...

With this bright event, Genesis 5 introduces a new section in the narrative, the second of the ten "toledots"...the ten "These are the generations of" divisions of Genesis. This account runs from 5:1–6:8, and its first part, which makes up chapter 5, is the Sethite genealogy that extends from Adam through Seth on to Moses. How wonderfully different it is from the Cainite genealogy!

The genealogy of Cain does not specify ages, since his line, being cursed by God, would have no eternal history.

But Seth's genealogy not only gives the age of each patriarch at the time of the firstborn (by whom the line would be continued), but the number of years that he lived after the birth, and then the total years of his life. Each individual is important to the outworking of God's redemptive plan.

Richard Phillips on Genesis 5...(Edited)

The account of the early world in Genesis 1–11 contains four chapters that consist largely of such genealogies...chapters 4, 5, 10, and 11. The main purpose of these lists is to show lines of progression between one era and another, linking historically significant events.

The genealogy of Genesis 5 gives important details that sketch the faith of the godly from Adam to Noah.

James Boice writes that these men and women “were pillars of faith in an increasingly godless age. They stood for God with such tenacity and in such a way that their names have been preserved for future generations.”

David Guzik writes... “This is the book of the genealogy of Adam”...There is good reason to believe this is the end of Adam's direct account, which was preserved and passed down to Moses who acted as an editor.

In Genesis 5, we note four emphases in the genealogy of Adam through Seth...

1. The Book of Adam's Legacy

The first is that Adam's true legacy is found in the spiritual heritage he passed on to his descendants through a shared faith.

The chapter begins...“This is the book of the generations of Adam” (Gen. 5:1). The Hebrew word for “generation” is toledot, which marks the main divisions in Genesis. This is the second toledot, which means the history that follows a certain event or person. The first occurred in Genesis 2:4, “the generations of the heavens and the earth,” followed in chapters 2 to 4 by the history that followed the original creation. Now, in Genesis 5:1–6:8, we have “the generations of Adam,” that is, the godly line that flowed from him.

Adam did many inaugural things, including naming the animals and committing the first sin. After the fall, he lived for 930 years, fathering numerous children and undoubtedly accomplishing many interesting things not recorded in Scripture. **Yet according to Genesis 5, Adam's primary legacy consists of the people to whom he passed on faith in the Lord.**

So it is for each of God's people. There are many noteworthy things that we do. But what matters most is the testimony of our faith in Christ that others see and follow. Most significant is the raising of our children in the Lord, although our gospel influence may also be powerfully used in the lives of people outside our families. We may note, for instance, that the record of David's life in 1 and 2 Samuel concludes only in the opening chapter of 1 Kings, in the story of King Solomon. Likewise, **our stories will end not in our deaths but in the lives of those we have touched and have encouraged in their faith and salvation.**

Genesis 5 starts Adam's record with a reference back to Genesis 1... "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 Man when they were created" (Gen. 5:1–2). **Here we see the image of God in which both Adam and Eve were created (1:25–26).**

This language is echoed in Adam's fathering of Seth: "When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth" (5:3). Since Adam was made in God's image, this means that his succeeding generations bore the divine image passed to them by successive parents. **This godly line was fruitful and multiplied, and through an obedient faith they ruled as stewards under God. They had the capacity to know, worship, believe, and glorify the Lord. Implicit in this idea is that Adam's mandate was to perpetuate the calling that God had given him in the lives of his children.**

Boice points out that by being born in the likeness and image of Adam, Seth and his offspring received three things...

- **The first is that like Adam, they were made with a capacity for communion with God.**
- **Second, Adam passed a fallen, sinful, and guilty nature to all his posterity, which is why every person in this list, except one, suffered Adam's punishment of death.**

- ***Third, by the grace of God, the divine image was renewed in Adam by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit as seen in his faith. This is where our emphasis must likewise be as we raise children and other disciples in our spiritual likeness. We may say to others what Paul said to his readers: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). If we are used by God to lead others in following Jesus, we will leave a spiritual legacy that—like Adam’s—will endure even into eternity.***

2. The Remnant of God

The second main theme of this chapter is God’s preservation of his remnant people in the world.

John Calvin writes that “in the great, . . . prodigious multitude of men, there was always a number, though small, who worshipped God; and . . . this number was wonderfully preserved by celestial guardianship, lest the name of God should be entirely obliterated, and the seed of the Church should fail.”

In this genealogy, we see the remnant of God in an increasingly evil world. Though relatively few in number, the significance to history of these fathers in the faith was immense. It was through these people, from Seth to Noah, that God would carry on his great work of salvation and accomplish his great deeds in history...

We notice in this genealogy that God is concerned with individual believers. We know little of Kenan, Mehalalel, and Jared, but their names are recorded with care in God’s Holy Book. ***So also are our names written down by God, and our lives are of great interest to our Creator, even if we are relatively unknown in the wider world. Not one is left out, and none are lost in the crowd...***

It is especially obvious from this genealogy how blessed God’s remnant was. We see this in their exceedingly long lives. Adam lived 930 years, long enough to see eight generations of godly offspring. Along with Seth, “he had other sons and daughters” (Gen. 5:4). It is likely that during his lifetime, Adam witnessed the growth of the human race into the millions. Seth lived 912 years, and Methuselah lived as many as 969 years.

Michael Barrett writes...The possibilities of later generations having direct communication with Adam are striking. Adam was still alive when his son of the eighth generation (Lamech) was a mature man.

David Guzik writes...In this chapter, no one lived less than 365 years (and this was Enoch, who was a special case). Methuselah lived a total of 969 years. It is likely that people did live much longer in the era before the flood. This is because the degenerative effects of the fall on the human gene pool had not yet accumulated greatly and because the environment in the pre-flood world was so different, with the blanket of water vapors surrounding the earth (Genesis 1:6-8). In the post-flood world, lifespans quickly came down to the lifespans we are familiar with today.

3. Enoch's Walk of Faith

When we come to the seventh figure in Seth's line, we encounter one of the Bible's great examples of a living and saving faith, Enoch. This shining figure "walked with God" (Gen. 5:22). Here we see what in Genesis 5 is the hallmark of the godly remnant...communion with God in true faith and obedience.

The biblical metaphor of "walking" signifies an entire lifestyle. To walk with someone is to enjoy fellowship at his side, going in the same direction and pursuing the same goals. Enoch "walked with God," making his aim to please the Lord and become more intimate with him. This does not mean that Enoch was free from the guilt and stain of sin. We know that after Adam, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

Enoch, too, was a sinner saved by God's grace through faith in the gospel. He was not saved merely by walking with God! But having been saved by God's grace, Enoch subsequently dedicated his life in trusting obedience to God's word.

Matthew Henry summarizes that to walk with God is...

To set Him before us, and to act as if we were always under His eye. . . . It is to make God's Word our rule and His glory our end in all our actions. It is to make it our constant care and "endeavor in everything to please God, and in nothing to offend Him.

The New Testament makes clear that walking with God as Enoch did is not a privilege offered only to a select few. Rather, this is the life to which every believer is called in Christ. We are all equipped by the Holy Spirit for this purpose. Paul writes, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit" (Gal. 5:2) "Therefore," he adds, "as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him" (Col. 2:6).

In response to Enoch's zealous lifestyle of faith, the Lord performed an astonishing miracle: "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him" (Gen. 5:24).

Michael Barrett writes...To walk with God is to live in friendship with Him by daily trusting His promises and keeping His commandments (6:9; 17:1; 24:40; 48:15). God took him. God translated him without death to heaven (Heb. 11:5), the only other person to experience this being Elijah (2 Kings 2:9–12). In a chapter full of death, God revealed the hope of eternal life (Ps. 49:15; 73:24; "receive" is the same word as took).

David Guzik writes...Walking with God means walking by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7), walking in the light (1 John 1:5-7), and walking in agreement with God (Amos 3:3). After walking like this with God, it was as if one day God told Enoch, "You don't need to walk home. Why don't you just come home with Me?"

God took him...A very remarkable expression. Perhaps he did it in some visible manner. I should not wonder. Perhaps the whole of the patriarchs saw him depart even as the apostles were present when our Lord was taken up. However that may be, there was some special rapture, some distinct taking up of this choice one to the throne of the Most High." (Spurgeon)

Hebrews 11:5 tells us the foundation of Enoch's walk with God... By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. You can't walk with God or please God apart from faith.

"If men walk contrary to God, he will not walk with them, but contrary to them. Walking together implies amity, friendship, intimacy, love, and these cannot exist between God and the soul unless the man is acceptable unto the Lord." (Spurgeon)

Here we have an apparent exception to the divine rule that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).

Enoch alone, together with the prophet Elijah, among all the men and women who have ever lived, was spared death. Instead, God "took him," which evidently means that God translated Enoch immediately out of this world and into heaven.

We can imagine Enoch's walking with the Lord in sweet conversation when, suddenly, the Lord said, "Why don't you come to join me forever in heaven?" At that moment, Enoch was gone. Hebrews 11:5 asserts, "By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him."

Together with Enoch's faith, this episode reveals God's loving faithfulness. Remember that Enoch was the seventh in the line of Seth, just as Lamech was seventh in the line of Cain. This likely made them contemporaries. So in Enoch's time the worldly line was advancing in culture and power, all for the proud abuses of violent Lamech's boasting (Gen. 4:23-24).

We can imagine that the godly remnant would have grown anxious as sin ripened in the world. Yet through Enoch, God gave an encouraging demonstration of the victory that all the godly will receive through their faith.

Calvin explains God's purpose: "God designed to elevate the minds of his saints with certain faith before their death; and to mitigate, by this consolation, the dread which they might entertain of death, seeing they would "know that a better life was elsewhere laid up for them."

Here we see our great incentive to walk with God in the manner of Enoch. We turn our hearts from the world and evil because we are seeking a foretaste of the eternal blessing that awaits us in the world to come. Enoch's example does not mean "that everyone who walks with God will avoid physical death, but it does mean that everyone who walks with God will experience the same kind of life that Enoch experienced, both in this life and in the next life."

The God who overruled death in translating Enoch to heaven is the same God we trust to raise us up from the grave. Jesus, God's Son, has revealed himself as the life. . . . Everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26).

4. A Judgment to Come

We have discovered from the genealogy of Seth's line that a true spiritual legacy is seen in the faith of those whom we have loved and influenced. These names cite an early stage of God's remnant in the world, the elect people under his care who are instruments of his saving will.

Enoch provides a stirring example of a lifestyle of faith that receives eternal life from God. The final lesson from Seth's genealogy deals with the judgment of God on sin. This line of godly men understood that God would judge sin, and they looked ahead to the Savior's coming as the time of rest for their souls after their striving in a sin-tossed world.

We have noticed the rich blessing on this line through their exceedingly long lives. Yet the curse of death for sin is ever present. Except for Enoch and Noah, each listing concludes: "and he died."

Horatius Bonar referred to these words as "the solemn toll of the patriarchal funeral bell." This same bell tolls for each of us.

Consider how important and how precious to God were the men listed in this genealogy. But God is holy and just, so each of them died as the recompense of sin. So it is for everyone: "it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment" (Heb. 9:27).

The New Testament book of Jude relates additional information about Enoch that describes him as a preacher of God's coming judgment. His prophecy is recorded in Jude 14–15: "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Apparently, part of Enoch's walk with God was his courageous outspokenness in denouncing the ungodliness of his generation. While Jude relates Enoch's prophecy to the second coming of Christ and the final judgment, it is likely that Enoch was immediately looking forward to the great flood that would come through Noah. It seems that there was an awareness among the godly remnant that God would judge the world in a future generation.

Some commentators have connected this insight to the name and longevity of Methuselah....

Michael Barrett writes...Genesis 5:21 Methuselah means "when he is dead it will come," or "his death will bring," possibly a prophecy of the flood.

David Guzik writes...After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God. It seems Enoch began to walk with God in a special way after the birth of Methuselah. The name Methuselah means, when he is dead, it shall come.

At the birth of Methuselah, Enoch had a special awareness from God that judgment was coming, and this was one of the things that got him closer in his walk with God.

Jude 14 tells us Enoch was a prophet; even from his vantage point long ago, he could see the second coming of Jesus (Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly).

“Enoch walked with God after Methuselah had been born, three hundred years, and doubtless he had walked with him before. What a splendid walk! A walk of three hundred years! One might desire a change of company if he walked with anybody else, but to walk with God for three centuries was so sweet that the patriarch kept on with his walk until he walked beyond time and space, and walked into paradise.” (Spurgeon)

So all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years; and he died. Methuselah’s long life was no accident. It was because of the grace of God. When Methuselah died, the flood came. God kept him alive longer than anybody to give people as long as possible to repent.

If this is the case, we also note that Methuselah’s long life ended in the very year that Noah’s flood came, year 1656 after the creation. If we add together that Enoch preached a coming judgment on sin, that his son’s name may indicate a sending from God, and that Methuselah actually died (presumably) just before the flood, then we see that Enoch was indeed concerned that people would anticipate a coming judgment of God on the sins of the world.

...Methuselah’s godly son Lamech (a different Lamech from the one mentioned in Genesis 4) grieved over the effects of sin and looked to his son as one who would bring relief from God...

“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 our work and from the painful toil of our hands’ ” (Gen. 5:28–29).

“Noah” sounds like the word for “rest” or “relief,” and Lamech thus named him in hope of God’s coming redemption.

Michael Barrett writes...The name Noah means comfort or “rest.” He is a type of Christ since in his day he builds the place of rescue from the impending judgment.

What is interesting is that Lamech foresaw the great judgment of God in Noah’s flood as also the great redemption of his people from the curse of sin. This is exactly what did happen as God summoned Noah and his sons, “Shem, Ham, and Japheth” (Gen. 5:32), into the ark to escape the flood. Safe in the ark, Noah’s family passed through the judgment into a renewed and cleansed world.

If Enoch saw Noah’s flood as a type of the return of Christ and the final judgment, he was right. Paul said that Christ comes “to grant relief to you who are afflicted” (2 Thess. 1:7) as well as to bring God’s judgment “in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (v. 8).

An Application in Closing...

This means that we are living now, like the line of the godly in Genesis 5, in years that are racing forward to a great cleansing of the world in judgment.

Jesus is for us the ark that will carry us through to eternal life. Our calling now, as we walk with God in faith, is to carry on the work of those who lived long ago, proclaiming God’s grace for sinners through faith in Christ, together with his coming judgment on those who will not repent.

Christ’s return is coming for us soon, just as Noah’s day was looming ahead for the godly Lamech. It is, Paul said, “our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13), when we will be redeemed from every vestige of sin and its curse. We hear in Paul the echo of Lamech’s longing to be relieved from the curse of Adam’s sin. Having been forewarned, as were Enoch and Lamech, let us walk with God, trusting in the blood of faith. And let us not shrink from Enoch’s witness that there is a coming judgment on all the ungodly for the deeds they have committed in sin.

Source...Richard Phillips, Genesis (Edited)