

Degeneration, Death, and Divine Grace (Genesis 5:1-6:5) - Family Foundations Series, Pt 9
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How many of you find genealogies to be the most exciting part of the Bible to read? How many of you if you're not on a Bible reading program or reading through a book chapter-by-chapter will choose to read through a genealogy if you're looking for somewhere to read on a given morning (or whenever)? How many of you who do read through the Bible come to a genealogy and actually read what it says? Or do you quickly skip down to the next text where there's an actual story or some action? (Confession: I have sinned thus!)

This is one reason systematic reading through the Bible and expository preaching from both OT & NT is important, if we believe "all Scripture is inspired and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training." When Paul wrote that text, mainly only the OT was available, and he speaks of all of it and then he says "Preach the Word." There are vital truths we will miss if we don't. It's not just Paul's epistles or our favorite psalms, there is truth for us in all of God's Word and even in (*especially in*) today's text

Genesis 5 (NKJV) ¹ This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. ² He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind [better NASB / ESV / NIV "Man"; KJV "Adam"; Heb. *adam* same word and form as proper name "Adam" in v. 1]

God gave both husband and wife the name of the man, which may have some relation on wives in later times taking on the husband's name at marriage (certainly consistent with Bible). The language at the end of v. 1 of being made in the likeness or image of God, and v. 2 "created them male and female and blessed them" comes right out of Gen 1:27-28. This is a reminder of God's original creation (male and female in God's image) and God's original mandate (be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth ...), both of which are still true and take place here but sin is now in the picture in chapter 5.

³ And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot *a son* in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.

As man and wife multiply and as their descendents fill the earth, the image and likeness from God in original man is still passed on. Genesis 9:6 & James 3:9 make clear all men are still in God's image.

⁴ After he begot Seth, the days of Adam were eight hundred years; and he had sons and daughters. ⁵ So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died. ⁶ Seth lived one hundred and five years, and begot Enosh. ⁷ After he begot Enosh, Seth lived eight hundred and seven years, and had sons and daughters. ⁸ So all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years; and he died. ⁹ Enosh lived ninety years, and begot Cainan. ¹⁰ After he begot Cainan, Enosh lived eight hundred and fifteen years, and had sons and daughters. ¹¹ So all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years; and he died. ¹² Cainan lived seventy years, and begot Mahalalel. ¹³ After he begot Mahalalel, Cainan lived eight hundred and forty years, and had sons and daughters. ¹⁴ So all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years; and he died. ¹⁵ Mahalalel lived sixty-five years, and begot Jared. ¹⁶ After he begot Jared, Mahalalel lived eight hundred and thirty years, and had sons and daughters. ¹⁷ So all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years; and he died. ¹⁸ Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and begot Enoch. ¹⁹ After he begot Enoch, Jared lived eight hundred years, and had sons and daughters. ²⁰ So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years; and he died. ²¹ Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. ²² After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters.

²³ So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. ²⁴ And Enoch walked with God; and he *was* not, for God took him. ²⁵ Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years, and begot Lamech. ²⁶ After he begot Lamech, Methuselah lived seven hundred and eighty-two years, and had sons and daughters. ²⁷ So all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years; and he died. ²⁸ Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and had a son. ²⁹ And he called his name Noah, saying, “This *one* will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD has cursed.” ³⁰ After he begot Noah, Lamech lived five hundred and ninety-five years, and had sons and daughters. ³¹ So all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years; and he died. ³² And Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Genesis 6 ¹ Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, ² that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they *were* beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. ³ And the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he *is* indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.” ⁴ There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore *children* to them. Those *were* the mighty men who *were* of old, men of renown. ⁵ Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

In Gen. 5:1 your Bible may have a different word or phrase than “the book of the genealogy” – ex: “generations” or “family line.” “This is the written account of Adam’s line” (NIV) or “the family records of the descendants of Adam” (HCSB). We have been studying in Genesis in this series what it records about the earliest families and marriage and parents and children and what chap. 4 reveals about the first family ever and those who went the way of Cain departing from God’s design.

Genesis 6:5 we will actually cover next week, which may be the most important truth for parents to know about their children, and the most important truth to know to understand what is going on in our society, and why horrible things happen that you see on the news, and why salvation has to be all of God, and why our hearts are still the way they are even as believers at times ... next Sunday we’ll round up our foundation series discussing total depravity.

Chapter 5 may not seem as immediately applicable to today’s family concerns or modern individual concerns, and some of what we discuss tonight may seem more technical than practical at first, but hang in there. We ended last week in Genesis 4 with the family of Cain and their degeneration, but chapter 5 is also a family tree, tracing a different family through a different descendant of Adam (the one we all come from – Seth; Cain’s line all died in flood).

The context is all leading up to God’s judgment on sinful humanity in the flood, except for one family in this line that he saves and through whom we also all are descendants (Noah). I want to work our way backwards from chapter 6 and the bad news to chapter 5 to close with good news, so I want to begin with the last section we read (6:1-4) and the title of our message will be our outline. There are several questions in the passage that we’ll cover under the headings Degeneration, Death, and Divine Grace:

Degeneration

What is the meaning of Genesis 6:1-5?

Death

Are there gaps in the genealogy of Genesis 5?

What stands out in Genesis 5 and why?

Are the long ages here to be taken literally?

Divine Grace

Where and how is God’s Grace shown in this passage?

1. What is the meaning of Genesis 6:1-5?

This is one of the more difficult passages to interpret in Genesis, if not the whole Old Testament! I've read 100-200 pages and spent dozens of hours studying and wrestling with it and want to try and condense that to a few minutes that I hope won't confuse too much!

Just a quick note on v. 4: The KJV/NKJV uses the word "giants" but all the other versions have the better transliteration *nephilim* (a word possibly meaning "fallen" or "mighty one," possibly great warriors adding to the sinful violence of the day). They are not explicitly said to be the offspring of the sons of God and daughters of men, it just says they were on the earth in those days. These people were wiped out by the flood, but the term probably refers to a type of great men or warriors because we see it in Number 13.

The overall meaning of the beginning of chapter 6 is clear in verse 5 and following, that society reaches the climax of degeneration from God's design, and God is grieved by the sins of His creatures and will now destroy all life on the earth. The less clear and more controversial question is this: *who are the "sons of God" and daughters of men" in verse 2 and 4?* Verse 1 is clear, men were multiplying on earth (which is a good thing and part of God's design) but the rest of the text is clearly not good or God's design.

ESV Study Bible: 'Various scholars have proposed that the "sons of God" are (1) fallen angels (cf. Job 1:6 [oldest book in Bible, events at same time as early Genesis]; some, however, suggest that this contradicts Mk 12:25 ["not given in marriage, but are like angels"], though the reference ... is to angels in heaven ...; or (2) tyrannical human judges or kings (in the ungodly line of Lamech, possibly demon-possessed); or (3) followers of God among the male descendants of Seth (i.e., the godly line of Seth, but who married the ungodly daughters of Cain) ... it is clear that the kind of relationship described here involved some form of grievous sexual perversion, wherein the "sons of God" saw and with impunity took any women ("daughters of man") that they wanted. The sequence here in Gen. 6:2 ("saw . . . attractive [good] . . . took") parallels the sequence of the fall in 3:6 ("saw . . . good . . . took"). In both cases, something good in God's creation is used in disobedience and sinful rebellion against God, with tragic consequences.'

Arguments for view 1 ("sons of God" = angels):

1. Has the most biblical support as the Hebrew phrase for "sons of God" always elsewhere means angels and never elsewhere refers to humans. Some NT passages seem to fit with this view
2. Immediate context of v. 1 uses "men" to refer to mankind, so it would seem natural that the next verse would use same word same way. To limit it in v. 2 to one line of descendants doesn't fit the context (Cain's not mentioned in at all in prior chapter).
3. The other two views require the text to mean different than what it says, i.e., "the sons of some men" married "the daughters of other men." **TURN TO 2 PETER 2**
4. Most ancient and Jewish support, some LXX (250 B.C. have "angels of God" here), some Targums, Dead Sea Scrolls, 1 Enoch (200 B.C.), Book of Jubilees (150 B.C.), some Pseudepigrapha and other ancient Jewish writings, Josephus, Philo (*Works*, 811), etc., as well as early church support.¹
5. Angels in Genesis and other parts of Scripture frequently take on bodies for extended periods of time with physicality, eating, drinking, sleeping, wrestling, etc.

6. Christ's statement thousands of years later about angels *in heaven* not marrying is not particularly relevant to Gen 6, which describes *on earth* an apparently one-time act of rebellion by angels not in heaven (similarly Job 1-2 describes "sons of God" who come into His presence from elsewhere)

2 Peter 2:4-11 (NASB95) ⁴ For if God did not spare **angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell** [Grk. *Tartarus*] and committed them to **pits of darkness** [*perhaps the Abyss that demons feared Jesus casting them into, too?*], reserved for judgment; ⁵ **and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah**, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly [*Gen 6 – then look at v 6-8 discussing Sodom and Gomorrah, also in chronological order of Genesis, so v. 4 would contextually naturally speak of fallen angels committed to pits of darkness before the flood*] ... ⁹ then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, ¹⁰ and **especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority**. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile **angelic majesties**, ¹¹ whereas angels ...” [he continues contrast with *human* false teachers]

1 Peter 3:19-22 (NASB95)

¹⁹ in which also He [Christ] went and made proclamation to **the spirits now in prison**, ²⁰ **who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah**, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through *the water* ... ²² [Christ] who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after **angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him**.

Jude 6-9 (NASB95) ⁶ And **angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness** for the judgment of the great day, ⁷ **just as Sodom and Gomorrah** and the cities around them, **since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh**, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire. ⁸ Yet in the same way these men [*the false teachers in Jude's day*], also by dreaming, **defile the flesh**, and reject authority, and revile **angelic majesties**. ⁹ But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with **the devil** and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, **“The Lord rebuke you!”**

The major difficulty with this view to me is it doesn't seem supernatural beings can procreate or produce offspring – so you can read in the *MacArthur Study Bible* and others that if these are fallen angels they probably possessed human bodies.

It's clear to in the NT that not all the demons are bound in darkness in Tartarus or the Abyss as Jude 6 says (that's why a legion of demons possessing a man in the gospels fear Jesus was sending them there and they ask Jesus to let them possess the bodies of pigs instead). But some fallen angels are bound as verse 6 says, because they left their domain, and the perversion of Sodom and Gomorrah and its gross immorality is compared to that angelic rebellion in some way. Notice in verse 9, the devil is not bound, he is alive and well, and Michael the archangel doesn't say “Satan, I bind you.” Only the Lord has that power, and Christians are never told to pray that (the Lord will bind Satan in Rev. 20 after He returns before the Millenium).

2. Are there gaps in the genealogy of Genesis 5?

Thankfully this question is a lot easier, I think.

Jude 14-15 (NKJV) ¹⁴ Now **Enoch, the seventh from Adam**, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, ¹⁵ to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”

Enoch was the first prophet, although these words aren't recorded in Genesis, they are recorded by the Holy Spirit here. He is prophesying of Messiah-Lord, not His first coming, but His second coming. The Scripture confirms Enoch was "seventh from Adam," which is not only the perfect number, but shows Genesis 5 is perfect.

I don't believe this genealogy there has missing gaps of time, even though some good godly men assume there may be, and some for various motives say there must be gaps of many thousands of years or longer. Some do so to try to make the age of the earth and humanity much older to fit with secular theories and assumptions, like evolutionary ages.

- But in Genesis 5, a literal reading shows Enoch would be the 7th in line of Adam (his great, great, great grandson), and that's exactly what Jude records by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
- Luke 3, which is a historically precise genealogy by a careful historian, lists exact same names back-to-back (also 1 Chr. 1:1-3)
- The word "begot" *can* refer to ancestry, but in this context, there is multiple indications it refers to father-son relationships: in each case, it records after so-and-so begot so-so-so, "they had *other* sons and daughters" (see end of v. 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 26, 30)
- It also explicitly states the father-son relationship 5 out of the 10x

Genesis 4:25-26 (NKJV) ²⁵ And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore **a son and named him Seth**, "For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed." ²⁶ And **as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh** ...

Genesis 5 ³ Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and **begot a son** in his own likeness, after his image, and named him **Seth** [*4:25 confirms his son*]...

⁶ Seth lived one hundred and five years, and **begot Enosh** [*v26 confirms his son*]

... ²⁸ Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and **had a son**. ²⁹ And he called his name **Noah** ... ³⁰ After **he begot Noah**, Lamech lived five hundred and ninety-five years, and had **sons and daughters**. ...

³² ... Noah **begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth**. [*6:10 confirms these are his sons*]

What also makes this genealogy so precise is that it lists the exact age the predecessor was when the next in the line was born. So even *if* the word "begot" skipped a generation or more, having the ages listed out when the next name was born makes it precise.

Even liberal Hebrew scholars who don't believe the Bible is inerrant don't argue that Hebrew grammar implies genealogy gaps.

James Barr, then Heb professor at of Oxford University said once:

'Probably, so far as I know, there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university who does not believe that the writer(s) of Gen. 1-11 intended to convey to their readers the ideas that ... the figures contained in the Genesis genealogies provided by simple addition a chronology from the beginning of the world up to later stages in the biblical story ... arguments which suppose ... the figures of years not to be chronological ... are not taken seriously by any such professors, as far as I know.'²

There are biblical genealogies that skip generations to highlight key figures for their purposes (Ruth, Matthew, etc.) but even if the other 5 names in Genesis that are not explicitly called a "son" could instead be a distant descendant (even 800-1000 years later each), that doesn't help with any evolutionary reconciliation as it only stretches mankind's time before the flood to 6-7,000 years.

So even conservative creationists who allow for gaps in this Genesis genealogy recognize the earth cannot be more than about 10,000 years old, certainly not millions and billions of years. Scripture must not bow to secular theories; all must bow to Scripture.

3. What stands out in this genealogy?

Did you notice a repeated phrase over and over again in chapter 5?

“And he died” – repeated 8x. I did a search and there is no other genealogy in Scripture that records the phrase “and he died.” It is only the characters in Gen. 5 that it says this and keeps saying it.

If anyone ever doubted if God’s warning about sin in chapter 2 (“you shall surely die”) was fulfilled, they only need to read this chapter. This is a vivid illustration that the wages of sin is death, or as God said through the OT prophet, “the soul that sins shall die.”

The tragic effects of original sin spread to all of Adam’s offspring

Paul repeats this several times several ways in Romans 5:12-21:

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and **death through sin**, and so **death spread to all men**, because all sinned ... **death reigned from Adam** until Moses ... by the transgression of the one the **many died** ... by the transgression of the one, **death reigned through the one** ... through one transgression there **resulted condemnation to all men** ... the **many were made sinners** ... sin reigned in death”

I would encourage you to study Romans 5 further, because it contrasts the last Adam, Jesus Christ, and His grace for all who are in Him who will live eternally even though they die physically.

There are a couple names that stand out in the genealogy that we’ll come back to later as illustrations of God’s grace, but perhaps the most noticeable thing that stands out to most is the long ages here.

4. Are the long ages here to be taken literally? Yes. On to #5!

Ok, a couple comments: It was a different world before the flood. You can read various scientific explanations and even some research that suggests there were higher concentrations of H₂O vapor in the atmosphere in the past limiting harmful rays and radiation that affects the aging process today (but probably not a thick canopy as earlier writers suggested). Creation scientist Paul Taylor says an ‘alternate, and perhaps preferable, view is that the bombardment of the atmosphere by cosmic particles was shielded by the earth’s magnetic field. It is known that this magnetic field is decreasing. A greater field strength in the past would have produced a greater shielding effect.’³

Secular ancient history also records even more extraordinarily long ages in this timeframe before the flood and then radically shortened life-spans afterwards (ex: Sumerian King lists).

But we don't need secular or scientific corroboration ultimately – I believe the text gives a Supernatural explanation in Genesis 6:3:

³ And the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he *is* indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”

This is another area where good scholars differ and some of your Study Bibles may say this means there would be 120 years before God would send the flood to cut off all flesh. But in the context following chapter 5, I would lean toward the view that this is God's decision to soon limit man's lifespan to 120 years in light of his sin. The future tense “his days shall be 120 years” can mean God will soon radically reduce how long His Spirit will allow men to live on this earth (and in the next few chapters you see this gradual reduction, and God may have used natural means or just supernatural withdrawing of His grace earlier; life is in His hand).

It is very notable that after you get through primeval history in Genesis 1-11, 120 years eventually becomes generally the maximum age of man, with rare exceptions (in fact Moses who wrote Genesis dies at age 120) and only 2-3 others exceed that age past Genesis 12 (I believe Abraham, Aaron just slightly, etc.). Interestingly, I remember reading in the *Guinness Book of World Records* that the oldest documented age in modern times was 120 as well. Even if modern medicine might allow some to live longer in the future, this appears to be a general and natural understanding of Genesis 6:5. In fact, as one of the psalms states later, the more normal lifespan is 70 or maybe 80 years if God gives us strength.

5. Where and how is God's Grace shown in this passage?

Obviously God's common grace is shown in the fact that sinful people are allowed to live long lives; *to live at all and not die is a great gift of God's grace!* And the fact that men enjoy children and the blessings of family, and as chapter 4 records, the advancements and discoveries that enhance our life with God's good gifts. One name in particular stands out for God's very special grace:

²³ So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. ²⁴ And Enoch walked with God; and he *was* not, for God took him.

Enoch is #7 in this genealogy in contrast to #7 in Cain's genealogy from chapter 4, evil Lamech, the guy who marries 2 wives and murders youths – the great savage contrasted with this great saint. Enoch gave birth to Methuselah, who lived the longest ever. But what's most amazing is that he is only one of two people in biblical history to be taken up to heaven without ever dying (RCC teaches Mary also ascended to heaven in this way, which is not biblical).

Who is the other biblical character to ascend without dying? Elijah on chariots of fire. So you have Enoch, who Jude calls a prophet, the first prophet, and Elijah, the last great prophet of the OT, and NT embodiment of all the prophets, as the only two individuals who the gates of death did not prevail against, the only two to receive an individual rapture (preview of saints alive when 1 Thessalonians 4 takes place).

Hebrews 11:5-7 (NASB95) ⁵ **By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death;** AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for **he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.** ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. ⁷ **By faith Noah,** being warned *by God* about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of **the righteousness which is according to faith.**

Genesis 5:29 shows that they were looking to God's grace and comfort in Noah, which we'll pick up on in a future message. Even the very names in this chapter seem to communicate God's grace:

Adam = *man*
 Seth = *appointed*
 Enosh = *mortal*
 Kenan = *sorrow*
 Mahalel = *the God who is to be praised*
 Jared = *shall come down*
 Enoch = *teaching*
 Methuselah = *his death shall bring*
 Lamech = *despairing*
 Noah = *rest / comfort*

Some of the names there's not complete agreement as to their meaning, but if these are the correct meanings of the names known to OT Jews, it's striking to listen to how the Hebrew of 1 Chron 1:1-4 might sound with these 10 names one after another:

¹ Adam, Seth, Enosh, ² Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, ³ Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, ⁴ Noah ...

Here is how those verses would read if we substitute the meaning of the names and just add a verb "is" and a conjunction "but":

*Man (is) appointed mortal sorrow (but) the God who is to be praised shall come down, teaching that his death shall bring the despairing rest.*⁴

Certainly those naming their kids weren't trying to plan this message, and I'm cautious of reading secret or special "hidden meanings" into a text, but it is at least interesting to note that in God's providence in the OT, names often fulfilled God's purposes, whether the human agents realized it or not. This may be yet another evidence of God's grace in Genesis, even in a genealogy!

¹ Early Christian writers also advocated the angel view. The influence of Enoch is found among Christian authors of the east until the third century and among Latin authors to Ambrose. E.g., Justin, *Second Apology* 5; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.36, 4; Ps.-Clem. *Homilies* 7.12–15; 8.11–15; Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor* 3.2; Tertullian, *On the Veiling of Virgins* 7; Commodianus, *Instructions* I, 3. Those who held to the Sethites were, e.g., Julius Africanus, *Chronicles* 2; Chrysostom, *Homilies in Genesis* 22.2; and Augustine, *City of God* 15.23. Cyril of Alexandria proposed sons of Enoch. See L. R. Wickham, "The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men: Genesis VI 2 in Early Christian Exegesis," in *Language and Meaning*, *OTS* 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 135–47, and Alexander, "The Targumim and Early Exegesis," 63. – as cited by Matthews, *New American Commentary*, Vol. 1, p. 325.

² As cited at <http://www.icr.org/article/do-days-really-matter/>

³ Paul Taylor, *The Six Days of Genesis: A Scientific Appreciation of Chapters 1-11*, p. 132

⁴ Taylor, 134-35, based on A. McIntosh, *Genesis for Today* (United Kingdom: Day One Publications, 1997), p. 127.