

Beginnings for Beginners

Genesis 5: Genealogical Bridge in the Salvation Story

Lesson 14 | Genesis 5

Outline:

- I. Blessing of the Ability to be Fruitful and Multiply
- II. Curse for Human Sin: Death Reigned (cf. 3:17-19)
- III. Redemption Comes Through a Seed of the Woman

Introduction: In our study of Genesis 1-4, we saw how the book of Genesis serves as a discipleship manual in Moses' hands for the infant nation of Israel.

No doubt, during the exodus, the wilderness wandering years, and even the early years of being back in the land, the people's hearts would often be filled with questions as the immensity of their challenge to build a nation from the ground up. They would likely often ask themselves, "Why are we doing this again?" or "How is this supposed to really happen?" or "What kind of success can we really expect?" The Book of Genesis is a resource for God's continuing ministry to His people who step out even in weak faith to follow Him.

We also saw that these early chapters are intended to be a discipleship manual for Israel always, that it was part of the armory in which Jesus Himself had been disciple, and part of the apparatus employed by Jesus in His discipleship of others. The New Testament makes it very clear that God intends for this Mosaic tool to be an indispensable asset in our own spiritual journeys.

It has been our desire to form a row or two of chairs at the back of the classroom in which the children of Israel find themselves, and profit from the instruction they received in their beginning years as a nation. The wilderness has been their mobile school room, the content of Genesis the foundation of their curriculum, and Moses has been their tutor, and God their Teacher.

As we continue our series, we pick up the narrative with Genesis 5 – a chapter that forms an important genealogical bridge between Genesis 4 and 6, drawn from a written record (5:1). Structurally the section likely extends to Genesis 6:8. It shows us that all of the key features of God's dealings with man in Adam's day were still present in Noah's day and have thus continued to the present moment in human history. Those key elements are the blessing of the ability to be fruitful and multiply, the curse for human sin, and the truth that redemption comes through a Seed of the woman.

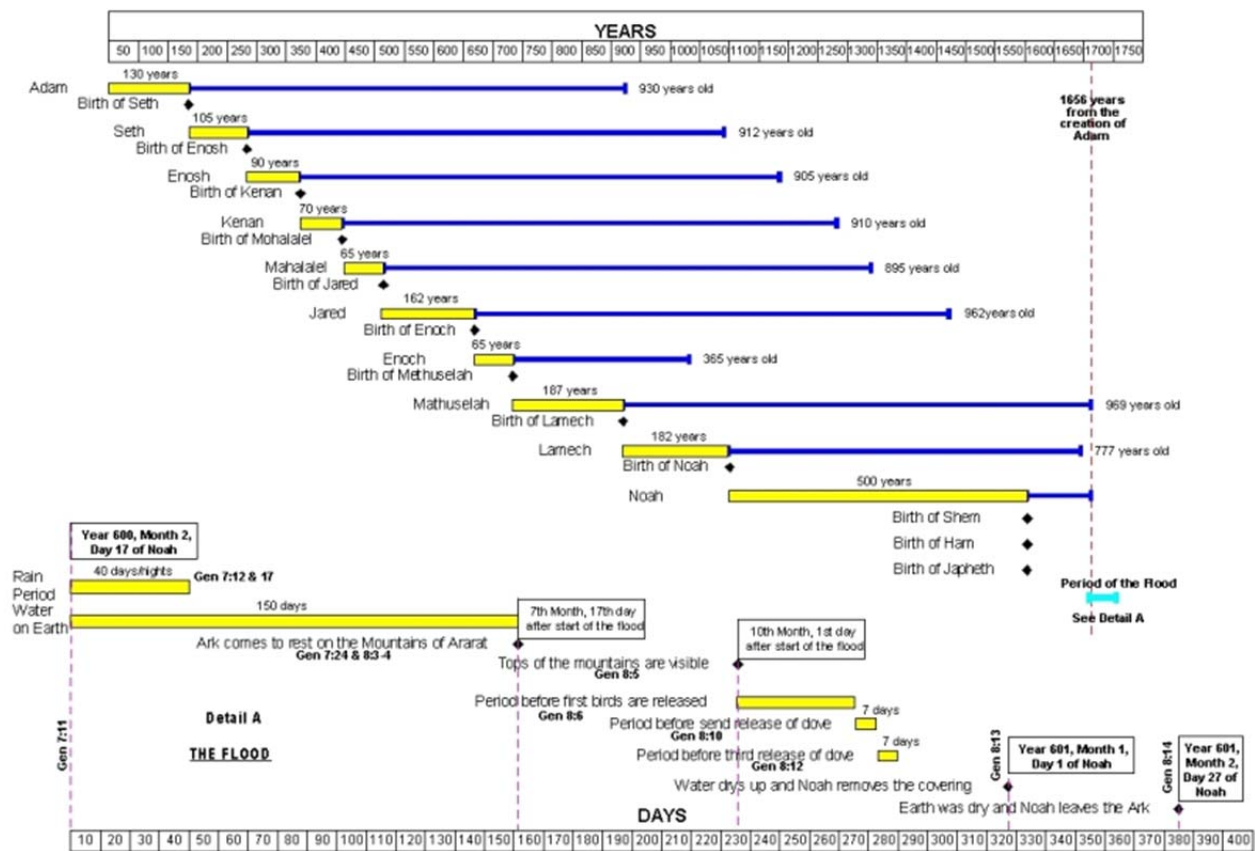
I. Blessing of the Ability to be Fruitful and Multiply

- Though the admonition to be fruitful and multiply also applied to the animals (Genesis 1:22), we have no chapters in our Bible that provide a genealogy for animals. We have a genealogy for mankind, because of man's special place in creation – he (both man and woman) alone was created in the image of God (5:1).
- Not only do we have a genealogy, but we have personal names. Chapter 5 “bears witness to man's value to God, by naming individuals and stages in this early human phase: each is known and remembered” (Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, TOTC, 79).
- We know so little about these characters, though the New Testament does offer glimpses that inform us a bit further (i.e., Enoch, a preacher, Jude 14). Martin Luther viewed this list of names reverently:

“This is the greatest glory of the primitive world, that it had so many good, wise, and holy men at the same time. We must not think that these are ordinary names of plain people; but, next to Christ and John the Baptist, they were the most outstanding heroes this world has ever produced. And on the Last Day we shall behold and admire their grandeur. Likewise, we shall also see their deeds. For then it will be made manifest what Adam, Seth, Methusaleh, and the others did; what they endured from that old serpent; how they comforted and maintained themselves by means of the hope of the Seed against the outrages of the world or of the Cainites; how they experienced various kinds of treachery; how much envy, hatred, and contempt they endured on account of the glory of the blessed Seed who would be born from their descendants” (quoted in J. M. Boice, *Genesis*, 3 vols., 1:277).

- The genealogy of Adam in Chapter 5 covers at least the firstborn of 10 generations through the line of Seth until Noah (compare 5:3 with 5:32). The genealogy links together the first head of the entire human race before the Flood with the second head of the race after the Flood. The total number of years from the creation of Adam to the birth of Noah totaled 1056 years. Over the course of these years, the population growth must have been staggering, conservatively estimated at 7-8 billion and less conservatively as much as 10 billion more (covered more in Genesis 6 lessons).
- One of God's purposes for the original creation of man is being carried out. Adam and Eve (male and female) together produced descendants prodigiously that produced descendants prodigiously, and so on. No more men were created from the ground, and no more women were created from men. Now both men and women are coming through procreation (1 Corinthians 11:11). All of their descendants are contributing to the fruitfulness and multiplication (Genesis 1:28).
 - Adam “had sons and daughters” (5:4) and so did his descendants (5:7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 26, 30).
- Multiplication of offspring was aided by multiplication of years
 - While men lived longer, their reproductive years do not seem to have begun nearly as early.

- The generations between Adam and Noah were extremely long time periods, overlapping each other significantly. Adam lived 130 years before having Seth. Seth lived 105 years before having Enosh. Enosh lived 90 years before begetting Kenan. Kenan lived 70 years and begot Mahalalel. Mahalalel lived 65 years and begot Jared. Jared lived 162 years and begot Enoch. Enoch lived 65 years and begot Methuselah. Methuselah lived 187 years and begot Lamech. Lamech lived 182 years and begot Noah. Noah lived 500 years and begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth. If one adds up these years alone, we see that the total years from Adam's first born son of Seth to the birth of Lamech was 744 years. Adam lived 930 years. These calculations indicate that Adam would have been alive during Lamech's life to pass onto Lamech's generation the promises of a Messianic Seed, to explain the commission of being fruitful and multiplying, and to explain the curse attached to sin. Noah was the first seed born from Seth's line that would have never met Adam. Intriguingly, Noah will take over the headship of the human race after Adam dies.



II. Curse for Human Sin: Death Reigns (cf. 3:17-19)

- We should not lose sight of Genesis 4 and Genesis 6 – all the while these Sethite generations were progressing, the line of Cain advanced as well. By the time we get to Genesis 6:5-6, it is evident that the impact of the godly line of Seth was minimal, and their numbers were clearly in the minority.
- The curse against the sin of Adam’s line extends to Noah and the people who followed him (*and he died* is repeated eight times; 5:5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 27, 31)
 - *And he died* is a single word in Hebrew (*muwth, /mooth/*), and it is always the last word of each entry (except Enoch)
- So pedantic is the pattern that we are startled at the interruption in connection with Enoch (5:21-24)
- Enoch seems to have recovered a rare degree of the blessed life that Adam had enjoyed prior to the fall (3:8), and as a result, God took him so that he did not experience death (Hebrews 11:5). “The repetition of ‘Enoch walked with God’ may have been designed to dispel any idea that the patriarch’s shorter life was a punishment for sin” (Kenneth Mathews, *Genesis 1:11-26*, New American Commentary, 1a:315).

“The simplicity of the repeated *walked with God*, suddenly breaking the formula that had begun to close round Enoch like the rest, portrays the intimacy that is the essence of Old Testament piety. This, rather than the harsh moralism popularly associated with the Old Testament, is Enoch’s common ground with Noah (of whom alone this particular phrase recurs, 6:9), with Abraham the friend of God, Moses who spoke with Him ‘face to face,’ and such men as Jacob, Job, and Jeremiah who wrestled with Him” (Kidner, 80-81).

- This emphasis of God’s original intention for His created people in Genesis 5:1-2 is contrasted with the actual results in Genesis 6:5-7. The world that God created was so marred by sin that the Lord was ready to destroy it after only 10 generations.

III. Redemption Comes Through a Seed of the Woman

- The genealogy is redemptive in nature. “Both testaments show how the message of salvation is anchored in history by presenting genealogies as their prelude” (Mathews, 1a:309). Cain’s line is not mentioned in Genesis 5, because it doesn’t contribute to the advancement of the redemptive narrative.
- The promise of a Seed who will deliver Adam’s people also carries forward from Genesis 3:15 through Seth’s line (cf. 4:25, “the Appointed”) to Noah.
 - Lamech is the only father who explains the meaning of his son’s name in Genesis 5.

This one [Noah] will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord has cursed (Genesis 5:29).

Lamech anticipated deliverance through Noah, indicating that the messianic expectation of a Savior Seed was very much alive in Noah's day, and Noah was thought to be that Seed.

“His vision for Noah rings with the reverberating sounds of the garden's tragedy. Reference to toilsome labor and the cursed ground reflects the verdict of God's judgment in 3:17-18, where 'cursed is the ground,' and the man is doomed to beat out his existence by 'painful toil'" (Mathews 1a:317).

Conclusion: For the infant nation of Israel, Genesis 5 takes them through a spectrum of time more than twice as long as their sojourn in Egypt. Adam comes and goes. Seth comes and goes. Multiple generations come and go . . . and yet God remains, ever blessing (as proven in each generation), ever personal (as proven by Enoch), ever-remembering (as proven by Noah's name). That same personal God has made Himself known to Israel by the name Yahweh, and Israel is getting a portrait of God long before they knew Him, and long before He set them apart from the nations of the earth. The personal, covenant-keeping God they are coming to know is timeless and faithful in all His ways.

In comparison to the vast span of time and population described in 5:1-6:8, Israel must have already been able to discern that, like the line of Seth, Israel also was in the minority, and her influence in the earth could be minimal. Yet God desired to raise Israel up to make His name known in the earth. As comparatively young and small Israel might be as a nation, God could still use Israel to achieve His covenantal purposes in the earth, that we soon learn are to bless all the nations of the earth.