

LIFE, DEATH, AND GOD'S PURPOSES
(SUNDAY, MAY 18, 2014)

Scripture Reading: Genesis 5; Hebrews 11:1-7

INTRODUCTION

From a careful and honest study of God's Word, we can say that the world is a little over 6,000 years old.

This is nothing in comparison to the evolutionary timeframe.

Of that 6,000 year history, about $\frac{1}{4}$ is summarized in the genealogy and chronology found in Genesis 5.

Psalm 90 written about 3,400 years ago declares that most people live about 70 years or 80 years if one is especially strong.¹ This is an amazingly accurate statement about the *average* human lifespan.

Sarah Kraft in a few days will celebrate her 97th birthday. There are currently six women in the US who are over 113 years old.

Jeanne Calment of France died at nearly 122.5 years old and lived from 1875-1997.²

It is almost impossible for us to grasp what it would have been like to live to 900 years or more.

Think of Methuselah who lived to 969 years. His life spans over 16% of human history.

Much has changed since the great judgment of the Flood and God's Word and our own experience testify to some of these great changes.

What is the purpose of the genealogy and chronology found in Genesis 5?

Its central purpose is to show the line of patriarchs that God would use in fulfilling the promise of Genesis 3:15. This is the line leading to Jesus Christ.

For most of them, we know only how long they lived and the one son that God used in the line of Jesus Christ.

It really is a testimony of God's grace and Providence rather than anything they did.

Along with Psalm 90, Genesis 5 bears witness to our own insignificance and mortality.

¹ NET Translation.

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oldest_people

Who are we to ever boast?

Even though we are nothing, we still rejoice that God's promises will be advanced.

You can rejoice in even the small part God gives to you in light of His promises that will be advanced.

In the face of your own insignificance and mortality, trust that God's promises will be advanced.

We will look at Genesis 5 in two parts: verses 1-2, verses 3-32.

1. GENESIS 5:1-2, THE END OF ADAM'S STORY

Gen. 5:1 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 in the day they were created.

I mentioned when we looked at Genesis 2 how the book of Genesis has a number of sections that are noted by language similar to what we read in verse 1.

Turn back to Genesis 2:4.

Gen. 2:4 This *is* the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created...

The word history in Genesis 2:4a is the same word translated as genealogy in Genesis 5:1. It is the Hebrew word *toledoth*.

Also when we looked at Genesis 2:4, I briefly discussed the question about whether Genesis 2:4a is the end of a section or the beginning of a new section?

The same question can be asked about Genesis 5:1-2. Are these verses the beginning of a new section in Genesis or the close of the previous section?

I discussed the great discoveries made by Dr. Wiseman summarized in an article by Charles Taylor found at creation.com.

I quote again from that article.

Wiseman has shown that ancient Middle East records were produced on clay tablets using a metal or wood stylus which made wedge-shaped indentations on

the damp clay during production. The tablets were then either sun-dried or baked for permanent storage. All this had been known for a century, but what Wiseman points out is the actual textual form of the tablets.

The characteristic format is that:

1. The record begins straight away, without a heading as title, though in fact a tablet may be referred to by its opening words.
2. Each tablet ends with a *toledoth* statement, referring to what has been written above. It is therefore anaphoric, that is referring to what comes before it.
3. A name in the *toledoth* statement refers either to the writer or to the owner of the tablet.³

I think these comments are very helpful in indicating that the book of Genesis was not written ages after the accounts took place, but that over time the Holy Spirit inspired various writers to summarize key events.

These different accounts were then assembled together as the book of Genesis.

Genesis 5:1-2 record the ending of the history of Adam, beginning with Genesis 2:4b.

Genesis 5:3 starts a new section in Genesis which ends with Genesis 6:9, the genealogy or history of Noah.

Let's look at some of the other details found in the first two verses.

The word book in Genesis 5:1 refers to something written down.

It is sadly the case that many primitive cultures have no written language and so all the history is passed down through story and song.

But such was not the case of what we find in Genesis. We don't have to depend upon oral stories passed down over the ages, but information written down, likely on clay tablets.

This is all part of God's wondrous work in writing and preserving the truth of His word.

³ Charles V. Taylor, "Who Wrote Genesis? Are the *Toledoth* Colophons?" Article from the Journal of Creation 8(2): 204-211. Taylor was quoting from Wiseman. Wiseman, P.J., *New Discoveries in Babylonia about Genesis*, Marshall, Morgan and Scott, London, 1946; p. 86. This article is available at creation.com.

Appropriately at the end of the “Adam book” attention is again drawn to Adam’s creation and how Adam was made in the likeness of God.

If you have never read the book *Darwin’s Black Box*, I would highly recommend reading at least parts of it.

Much of the discussion is way beyond my limited understanding of biology and chemistry. What I appreciate most is how it discusses the amazing complexity of how God has made us.

There is absolutely nothing simple about God’s magnificent work of creation.

Darwin had no idea of the complexity of life or all that takes place in the cell. To Darwin and other evolutionists, the assumption is made that life is rather simple and so their evolutionary fairytales take on a degree of believability.

When we studied Genesis 1, I mentioned that the words likeness and image are best understood to be synonyms.

God has made us in His likeness and image.

In discussing this I emphasized different aspects of what this means including:

Dominion over creation

Unity and diversity – male and female, yet in marriage one flesh.

Fellowship with the living God

Since God is spirit, it is not that we look like God, but our human body does bear witness to God’s glory and the amazing way he has created us.

Verse 2 parallels Genesis 1:27.

Gen. 1:27 So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

In our perversion of God’s order this basic division is now seen to be irrelevant.

We can create gender based on our own ideas and change gender as we like.

God’s word so clearly testifies that there are only two sexes and therefore only two genders.

Before we look at verses 3-32, let me again review the structure of Genesis that we have covered and now will begin to cover.

Genesis 1:1-2:4a is the first section – the account of creation

Genesis 2:4b-5:2 is the second section – the account of Adam

Genesis 5:3-6:9 is the third section – the account of Noah

2. GENESIS 5:3-32, 10 CHOSEN MEN.

Verses 3-32 is made of 10 sections.

Most of these 10 sections are 3 verses in length, but 3 of the sections are different – Enoch, Lamech, and Noah.

All 10 of the sections begin by listing their age at the birth of their son or in the case of Noah three sons.

9 of the sections then indicate how many years after the son was born the patriarch lived on earth.

The complete story of Noah is not given here.

Some Christians look at this listing and want to respect what is found but they also want to try to somehow bring together evolutionary thinking and the word of God.

So they suggest that although this is an interesting listing, it may well have gaps in it.

We are told, for example, that Matthew's genealogy in Matthew 1 has a few names not included. Why can't that be true for Genesis 5?

What is a significant difference between this genealogy and most of the other genealogies found in Scripture?

This is both a genealogy and a chronology. This makes Genesis 5 quite different from Matthew 1 and other listings.

The very style of this genealogy shows that there is no room for gaps. There is no place for them.

Others studying the tremendous ages in this genealogy suggest that maybe years really might mean months. Honestly, how can you believe Methuselah lived to be 969? This has to be a symbolic or figurative number.

But what happens if you try to compress Methuselah's long life into something like a typical lifespan today?

Well, to be consistent, you must also then compress the other years listed.

What is the smallest number in this listing?

The number 65 is found two times – verse 15 and 21.

So if you reduce Methuselah's life by 12, then you have to reduce the age of Enoch and Mahalalel at the birth of their respective sons.

Are we to believe they were five years old at the birth of their sons?

This is an amazing listing, but nothing in it suggests we are to interpret in a figurative sense. It is to be interpreted in a literal, straightforward fashion.

Let's continue to look at the 10 names listed and other details presented in these verses.

Look at verse 4.

You see the phrase, "and he had sons and daughters." This phrase is found 9x in this chapter. It is only not used for Noah, whose account is not completed in this chapter. This same phrase is used another 8x in Genesis 11.

I highlight this phrase in the listing for Adam, to show that it doesn't mean only after the birth of the son listed here that he had other children.

We know for a fact that before the birth of Seth, that Adam had two other sons and at least one daughter.

So I don't believe we are to think of the listing here as being a listing of just firstborn sons. We see that every person on this list had more than just the listed son.

Just think of trying to make a family tree for all these patriarchs. We can say this is a listing of 10 generations in a strict ordering, but as you look at ages given here, you might say in some cases they were already great-great-great grandparents by the time the listed son was born.

Family gatherings would have been quite interesting to say the least.

Adam would have been still living by the time Noah's father Lamech was born. Lamech could have known every single person on this listing.

I believe that the account of creation was written likely by Adam; it then could have been easily passed down to Noah.

Let's consider the names and meanings of the names as can be determined.

The name **Adam** which is similar to the word for ground means man.

The name **Seth**, we noted last week, is related to the word appointed.

Enosh is a name which means human being or mortal.

Cainan is spelled perhaps better as K-e-n-a-n. This is how Tyndale spelled the name and how most modern translations do also.

His name is similar to the name Cain.

The meaning of his name is very difficult to determine.

Mahalalel is a name that could mean praise of God or God is shining.⁴

Jared is a name that could mean rose or servant according to one dictionary. The name is similar to the verb which means to go down. Other suggestions, however are also given.

Enoch is a name we discussed also last week, a name which means dedicated. It is written Enoch rather than **Hanoch**, I think, because the name is used also in the NT and Enoch is a spelling closer to how it would appear in Greek.

Enoch is the 7th from Adam. To those who argue for gaps, we can respond by saying that the NT also bears witness to Enoch being the 7th from Adam as we read in Jude.

What is the testimony given of Enoch?

Two times in this short account we are told that Enoch walked with God.

Enoch lived a life of close fellowship with God.

The Greek translation of Genesis 5 says Enoch pleased God.

How did Enoch please God? How did he walk with God?

Hebrews 11 declares that he did this through faith.

Hebrews 11:6 But 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 diligently seek Him.

Enoch is the only one in this listing where we do not read the words, and he died. We read this later about Noah.

Rather God took him.

⁴ HALOT.

The verb take has been used very significantly in Genesis already in 2:15; 3:6, 22, 23; 4:11, 19.

The book of Jude testifies that Enoch prophesied of coming judgment in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Isn't this an amazing testimony?

Jude 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."

Was Enoch also prophesying as he named his son Methuselah?

There are different interpretations for the name **Methuselah**.

Some suggest it means man of the javelin or spear. Others translate that it means, "when he dies it comes."

It is very interesting to see that Methuselah dies in the same year that the flood begins, 1656 years after creation.

The meaning of the name **Lamech** is not entirely certain either. A similar name in Arabic means a very powerful man.

The account of Lamech differs from the others in that attention is brought to the name Lamech gave to his son, Noah.

Lamech selected the name **Noah** (No-ach), a name which can mean rest or comfort.

This one will comfort us from the work and toil of our hands.

The word toil is a word used only two other times in the OT, both in Genesis 3:16 and 17. It is a word that could be translated as sorrow.

Lamech could well have heard the story of the fall from Adam himself.

Lamech's prophesy of Noah's role looks forward to the building of the ark and the great flood and then also Noah later planting a vineyard.⁵

Noah is born 1056 years after creation.

⁵ Wenham, 128-129.

When Noah was 500, we read of the birth of his three most important sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

The flood would begin 100 years later, 1656 years after creation.

CONCLUSION:

I commented earlier that the central purpose of this chapter is to show the line of patriarchs that God would use in fulfilling the promise of Genesis 3:15, the great promise which points to Jesus Christ.

Luke's gospel contains all of these names in Luke 3:36-38.

In giving this important line, we have then a vital link from creation to the flood.

We really are not given a great deal of information of the pre-flood period.

However, consider how much information God already has given that is ignored.

The Bible is already a fairly long book. Would people read it more if it were 5 times longer?

This listing confirms that God chooses and works in time such that all the glory will be His.

Your life is so small in comparison with the full extent of God's plan. What he calls you to do is not to change the world but to serve faithfully and diligently where you have been placed.

In the face of your own insignificance and mortality, trust that God's promises will be advanced.

Prayer

Hymn: 165

Benediction – Jude 24-25

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.