

Prayers

To God

Powerful Lord, come into my life today to defend it, and protect me I pray from my enemy. May no sin stand in the way, may no demon detract Your purposes in me, and may no ungodliness be found in my soul to offend Your Holiness. By the life and death of Jesus Christ, may I be found worthy of the protection of my Saviour! AMEN

For myself

Weekly theme: Pray for joy

Pray today for the blessing of joy. How long is it since you felt joy in your life? Ask the Lord God to bring some joy into your life so that you can enjoy all God has given you.

For others

Pray for the world of the press, its reporters and the photographers who compete for every possible angle on each newsworthy story. Pray that sanity will begin to prevail in these areas of our lives, so that news and other events are not blown out of proportion to true life.

Meditation

The Glory of Creation is the Father who spoke, and it was done.

We know of Him from the life of Jesus, His Son;
We hear of Him from His servants, who told us;
We feel Him in His powerful touch on our lives;
We read of Him in the history of the Church;
We discover Him within the pages of His Word;
We observe Him in the lives of great saints;
We appreciate Him in the healing of our wounds;
We experience Him in the power of the Holy Spirit
We honour Him in the sacrifice of our lives;

And one day we will be with Him in the Glory of His Re-Creation!

Bible Passage

Genesis 5

¹ This is the written record of Adam's descendants. When God created people, He made them in His likeness. ² He created them male and female, and he blessed them and named them "Man" when they were created.

³ When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son who resembled him, like his image, and he named him Seth. ⁴ Adam lived 800 years after the birth of Seth, and he had other sons and daughters. ⁵ Adam lived a total of 930 years before he died.

*(In verses 6 to 31, scripture lists each patriarch in order, and uses the same formula of words as verses 3-5. It is easiest for us to read the list in the form below, and where the text departs from this form of words, the relevant names are marked * and the verses are written in full, below)*

Father	Age son born	Son	yrs lived on	Age at death
Adam	130	Seth	800	930
Seth	105	Enosh	807	912
Enosh	90	Kenan	815	905
Kenan	70	Mahalel	840	910
Mahalel	65	Jared	830	895
Jared	162	Enoch	800	962
*Enoch	65	Methuselah	300	365
Methuselah	187	Lamech	782	969
**Lamech	182	Noah	595	777
***Noah	500	Shem, Ham, Japheth		

* ²¹ Enoch lived 65 years before Methuselah was born. ²² He then walked with God for 300 years and had other sons and daughters; ²³ and lived 365 years in all. ²⁴ Enoch walked with God and was then no more, for God took him.

** ²⁸ Lamech lived 182 years before Noah was born; ²⁹ he named him Noah and said,

"He will give us relief from the painful hard work we do caused by the curse of the LORD on the ground."

³⁰ He then lived 595 years and had other sons and daughters; ³¹ and lived 777 years before he died.

*** ³² Noah lived 500 years before Shem, Ham, and Japheth were born.

Review

Genesis 5 is a whole chapter of lists of names! Lists of names are, however, very important in the Bible, and they help us to locate the passage of God's blessings through history. We do not often think about this, but where would we be today without the faithful people who through their life, example and words, have passed on to us our knowledge of God, of Jesus Christ, and of the Gospel of salvation that has led us to faith? The Israelites held records of their ancestors in high regard, and they still do; and Genesis 5 helped them to trace their heritage of faith in God back past Abraham, past Noah and finally to Adam. Adam was important to them because he was the first man made 'in the image and likeness of God' (Gen 1:26).

The beginning of the Bible is not just a story. In our study yesterday, I indicated ways in which we can identify with our past and our Christian heritage by explaining that the notion of 'Adam' was no myth, ideology or 'bright idea'. There is every reason for us to be confident that Adam was a real and historical person, albeit almost (but not quite) lost in the mists of time, and we can even attempt to locate him through archaeology. It is good to be reminded that our heritage of faith and the image and likeness of God in which we are made is real and historical, despite the powerful philosophies of the world today that treats all religions as the same and something akin to a lifestyle choice. Christian faith claims to be the truth about God and the universe He made, and must always be able to appeal to the 'facts' for verification of its claims, without being defensive. Certainly, if the fields of biology and geophysics (and others) do not presently wish to engage with Christian faith, then we must pursue the archaeological route and our appeal to reason.

The genealogy we are presented with here has meaning; it is not merely put into this book of Genesis for causal information, which is the way we treat it too often. It has more to say. If we take our time with Genesis 5 then we will find that there is more to it than meets the eye. For example, the first verse repeats words from Genesis 1 to reaffirm the important truth that lies at the heart of the genealogy; that we are made in God's 'image and likeness' (5:1). Indeed, that same Hebrew word for 'likeness' or 'resemble' is given to Seth, Adam's son ('he had a son who resembled him' 5:3), as if this truth basic of creation is being passed down through the generations, through the line of Seth. The more we read in scripture, the more we will discover that the Biblical genealogies contain small clues like this for our guidance, but we will not spot them if we are not looking for them!

I believe that we should look at this chapter of Genesis and conclude that it is an important pointer towards the Gospel of salvation. This is a bold claim, but I believe it is justified. All manner of scriptural devices are used in this passage to tell us that this list is a complete list, and one which tracks the blessings of God through early generations of humanity. The seventh male in Adam's line is Enoch, who we are told was so close to God that he did not die but was taken straight to heaven (5:24)! Enoch's '*walk*' into heaven has been noted by preachers in recent years, who have used him, together with Moses and Elijah, as an example of holy men who have been at one with God in life and ultimately in death. The tenth male in this genealogy is Noah, and according to this genealogy, we are told that he was born to relieve men from the curse of hard labour on the ground (5:29, see 3:17). This is fascinating, for we can begin to see here that God has had his eye on the overall progress of humanity, and from early days was beginning to put into action a plan to deal with the consequences of the Fall.

But finally, the really important fact is that whereas yesterday we read the genealogy of Cain, the 'cursed' line of descent from Adam, today we read the genealogy of blessing through Seth, a line which gives us hope, through the birth of Noah. Through his sons we can follow the genealogies of the Bible through the Old Testament past the likes of Abraham and David, and then on to the New Testament (e.g. Matthew 1), until we come finally to the birth of Jesus Christ, our Saviour

Going Deeper

It has long been a mystery as to why some of the names in the genealogy of Genesis 4 are close or similar to those in Genesis 5. Not only that, they are also in a different order! I indicated yesterday how the reading of ancient cuneiform Sumerian and Akkadian king lists and genealogies creates a great deal of uncertainty about both the names and their order, and you can see this graphically set out in the book from which I quoted yesterday. However

these oddities have arisen, they certainly have a different purpose, and that is what I shall focus on today.

To begin with, the very first verse of Genesis 5 says 'this is the written record ...'. This is a remarkable statement, because the word for 'record' is the same as that used previously to describe the stories of Creation (see Gen 2:4), but added to it is the word 'written'. It is as if those writing down the Word of God started by writing stories about Creation handed down by word of mouth. However, at this point in Genesis 5 they began to use 'written' sources for what they put into their text! It is also interesting that this list in Genesis 5 is accurate and close to the Sumerian document of 'kingly' ancestors referred to in David Rohl's archaeological work (see yesterday).

The writers of Genesis, however, made it crystal clear that the list they wrote was one which related back through Adam to the God who made all things, and made men and women 'in his likeness' (Gen 5:1 see Gen 1:26). They also repeated the basic truth of God's creation of people, which is that He made them 'male and female' (1:27, 2:23), and they re-affirmed their belief in the divine origin of humanity by saying that God 'named' the human race 'Man'. It is becoming less and less usual for written English to use this name to designate the human race because of modern sensibilities about this name implying 'maleness', but the proper noun 'Man' does accurately translate the Hebrew at this point, and the name for the human race is obviously meant to include both men and women.

Numbers

One other issue catches our eye about this list of people in Genesis 5, and it is that of numbers. It is unclear how to interpret Hebrew numbers, however much we would like this to be the case. The basic 1,2,3 etc. are obvious, but the way numbers are combined is uncertain, and the full meaning of larger complex numbers is not known, and they may well have had symbolic meanings of which we do not know. We tend to see things today with a mathematical correctness we have been taught since youth, but ancient peoples had more generalised ways of perceiving and recording some larger numbers which related to their experience and surroundings.

Whilst it is virtually impossible to say anything about many of the large numbers of years these people are recorded as living, there are a few number meanings we can deduce. For example, the numbers seven and ten represent completeness; and there are ten generations in this list with Enoch as the seventh who as we shall see, is a special character. This indicates the completeness and correctness of the genealogy in recording God's blessings. It is also possible that the number 1,000 was special, or 'perfect' in some way. This may explain why this group of honoured and blessed people are listed as dying just short of this perfect number; except for Enoch and Lamech who are both 'special cases', and whose numbers of years appear to have other meanings. How closely these numbers represent actual ages is impossible to tell, but we should pay attention to what they mean because they help us understand God's Word within this text.

One other interesting feature of the numbers is that if you add them up, all manner of interesting possibilities become apparent. For example, Adam would still have been alive when Lamech, his six-times great grandson was born! This means that each individual would have seen a remarkable growth in their own ancestors, something which fulfils the command of God given at the beginning of Genesis 'be fruitful and multiply (1:28). Also, Enoch was still alive when Noah is born (aged 434) but died before the flood (which happened when Noah was 600 – see Gen 7:6); Methuselah died exactly in the year of the Flood and therefore possibly in the Flood, and Lamech, a good man in this genealogy, died before the Flood! This may explain some of the ages less than 900 years at the end of the genealogy.

Features of the genealogy

The whole list of ten people of successive generations is generally referred to as a list of 'Patriarchs', which is another name for 'Fathers'. One of the unspoken issues of this list of Patriarchs is how each son comes to be in this list. We might assume that an elder son is recorded, but that is not what Genesis 5 says. Indeed, the son of Adam recorded is Seth, not the elder Cain. Seth was conceived and born because of Cain's sin and despite the 'Fall', Adam and Eve appear to have made use of their 'knowledge of good and evil' from the fruit of the tree; their actions in raising Seth appear to be a choice for good rather than evil. The genealogical line through Seth is certainly the line God used to bless people, but it did not represent the tradition of a favoured 'elder son'. God was the sole arbiter of who bore his blessing out of all the 'sons and daughters' mentioned at each stage of the genealogy. Some think that the issue of God's 'choice' to work through one individual or nation began with the choice of Abraham. It goes back much further than that, to the choice of Seth over Cain. By the time Abraham is chosen to 'bear a nation', the principle of God's sovereign choice in what He does is well established.

The seventh Patriarch in the list is the famous Enoch. By the time he had lived just over a third of the lifespan of the other Patriarchs, he was transported to heaven because he 'walked with God'. This extraordinary statement within the genealogy, whatever happened originally, tells us that in God's timing (represented by the 'seventh') His blessings are sufficient to overcome death itself. This is an extraordinary prophetic act of God which shows His desire to defeat the effects of the Fall. Enoch is the first example of someone in the Old Testament whose life directly points, albeit indirectly to the redemptive work of Christ.

The ninth Patriarch is Lamech, who bears the same name as the seventh ancestor of Adam through Cain (4:18,19,23ff). Whereas the Lamech born of Cain was evil, this Lamech was of a different calibre, being part of the genealogy of blessing. This may be why his age at death was the fascinating 'triple perfect' 777, and also means he died just 5 years before the Flood! Lamech's blessing to the world was both his 'righteous' son Noah (Gen 6:9) and the prophecy he gave about Noah's name which indicated that through him, people would find 'rest' (a pun on Noah's Hebrew name) from the curse of hard work on the ground (Gen 3:17). Noah, as we know, was God's means of salvation when the whole earth was 'washed' by the Flood.

Discipleship

Application

Going back through time

We tend to look at a list of names such as this and read it from the beginning, in this case, starting with Adam. In reality, a list such as this is probably best read backwards, for that is the real perspective we have on history. When we do this, we will find that instead of trying to make the list fit what we now know, it does in fact take us back, gradually stripping us of what we know until we find ourselves at Adam, made in the likeness and image of God. That applies to each of us who reads this passage, and it therefore says to us that we are all united in our ancestry under God, and united in our likeness to Him. In a world of increasing cultural division, this is no small matter.

On the journey back through time, we see people who remind us that God has blessed His people throughout history, and in that sense, Noah, Lamech (in Seth's line!), and Enoch all remind us of God's power to save His people. It may be that reading genealogies seems boring, or that we do not know enough about Hebrew numbers and ancient beliefs to make sense of the numbers recorded, but there is no lack of interesting material here.

Following the history of things ...

You will not be surprised if I comment now on the importance of knowing the history of what you believe. It is worthwhile finding books about the history of your church or Christian denomination; and if you belong to a 'free' church, then there may be still books available which chart the history of such independence. Some of the tales you can find are extraordinary. The more we read, the more we come to realise the reasons why our churches are as they are today, both in terms of their divisions, and their unity in the Gospel. All of us who are disciples can learn from dipping into our past.

Ideas for what to do

- It is always a helpful exercise to spend time giving thanks to God for those who have passed down the faith to you, perhaps, even as far back as some of the Biblical genealogies! To do so is an expression of historical faith.
- Pray for those who find it hard to connect with other people, and therefore find it hard to think of themselves as people who are dependent upon others, and upon whom others depend. Pray that God will open their hearts and minds.

Questions (for use in groups)

1. What do you think the age of the Patriarchs means, if anything?
2. In what ways do you feel connected to this genealogy, and how can we make the significance of this scripture more accessible
3. What might be the characteristics of one such as Enoch (or Moses or Elijah) who 'walked with God' into heaven and did not die?

Final Prayer

May we find our peace in You, Lord Jesus; carpenter of Nazareth, teacher of Israel, servant of all and healer of the sick. Bless our work, teach us the truth, lead us where we should go and help us in our need, we pray; Lord Jesus, Son of God, Saviour of the World: **AMEN**