

SESSION 39: THE RIGHTEOUS LINE BEGINS, PART ONE

Genesis 5:3-27

August 25, 2024

PREFACE

There are a number of basic perceptions we need to either establish or at least consider before moving into this chapter.

The Span of Years

For the non-literalist there are two common ways that Chapter Five is interpreted so as to bring the life-spans of the patriarchs more in line with our own experience:

- **Years are really months.** Thus, for example, Adam's 930 years would then be reduced to 77.5 years. The problem with this is that this would require Enoch to have fathered Methuselah when he was only 5.5 years old.
- **Each name represents a family, rather than an individual.** This is slightly more palatable than the previous, but one does not get this sense reading through the list. The common-sense understanding is that we are reading about individuals fathering individuals.

So we will take a literalist position: the years are real years, and the names represent individuals in a family tree.

How Could This Be?

The explanation for the long life-spans of the patriarchs that seems to track the best is that, even considering the corruption resulting from the Fall, it would take a long time for the vitality and longevity created in the first man (Adam) to be diluted from man's constitution. Or as David Guzik puts it,

It is more likely that people did live much, much longer 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, life spans quickly came down to the life-spans we are familiar with today.

Along with this, perhaps it was God's intention to extend man's life-span for a while to more rapidly populate the earth. One man can father a lot of children in 930 years.

For example, “one writer has estimated that if Adam, during his lifetime, saw only half the children he could have fathered grow up, and if only half of those got married, and if only half of those who got married had children, then even at these conservative rates, Adam would have seen more than a million of his own descendants” (Guzik).

The Textual Pattern of vv3-31

With only a few exceptions—exceptions which we will look at later—each generation in this chapter employs the same template:

And father's name lived # years till son years and became the father of son's name. Then father's name lived # of years years after he became the father of son's name, and he had other sons and daughters. So all the days of father's name were # of years years, and he died.

As in,

And Seth lived 105 years and became the father of Enosh. Then Seth lived 807 years after he became the father of Enosh, and he had other sons and daughters. So all the days of Seth were 912 years, and he died.

And Seth lived 105 years and became the father of Enosh.

Scholars are split on whether the names of the sons in this list are or are not firstborns. For me it is obvious. We already know that Seth was not Adam's firstborn, and in our previous session we enumerated an incomplete list of second- or third-borns receiving the blessing rather than the firstborn—not least, King David, who was the runt of his father's litter after *seven* brothers!

The text simply says that so many years passed before *this* son was born. It just gives us the age of the father when this son was born. And in this was the Holy Spirit, working through Moses, aiming us toward the chosen line that would lead us, initially, to Noah, and then onward to David and Jesus of Nazareth.

...and he had other sons and daughters.

Likewise, there is nothing in the text to require his “other sons and daughters” being born *after* the chosen son. The literal text just reads “and begat sons and daughters.” Again, we know that at least in Adam's case there were two sons prior to Seth, and who knows how many daughters (at least one, which Cain surely married).

...and he died.

The inclusion of this in each statement is more than just acknowledging a funeral for each aged patriarch. By this Moses is emphasizing the regrettable but certain, Fall-induced mortality of man. We might add to it the unspoken but implied tag: “But it didn’t have to be this way.”

The Time Span

Adding up the generations we come to the following conclusion: The Flood began in the year 1656 after Creation.

Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth. (Genesis 7:6)

There is, of course, much overlap in the generations. Thus Adam would have lived until after the birth of Lamech, the ninth patriarch; Methuselah, the eighth patriarch (the oldest and last to die [other than Noah and his sons]), would have lived until the year of the flood (Sailhamer).

THE EXCEPTIONS

vv3-5: Adam to Seth

Read Genesis 5:3-5.

The first exception does not really break the template but just expands it with an initial tidbit of information; in place of “father of <name of son>”, it has: “father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.”

And we can’t help but do what, I believe, was the author’s intention: that is to hearken back to—and draw a distinction *from*—the creation of Adam by God. The phrasing is similar, but flipped.

1:26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...”

5:3 he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image...

Some invest meaning in the flipping of “likeness” and “image,” but I just see it as the prerogative of any author to phrase it differently this time. The meaning is the same in both—except in this instance there is a depth of meaning in the contrast between God creating Adam and Adam becoming the father of Seth.

Adam was not just *created*, but created in the image of deity.

image = *tselem*: At its root the word means something carved, cut off or cut out. That is, something formed to look like something else.

likeness = *demut* (dee-MOOT): This word is similar, but has a different shading. It means a resemblance in outward appearance, similitude, in the same pattern; it includes the idea of “a representation of that which is not visible.”

As formed, Adam was created sinless and into an uncorrupted environment; the loss of both of these would come later.

The author Moses goes out of his way, as he initiates this line in Chapter Five, to emphasize that Adam’s son Seth was *not* made in the image of God, but in the image of man—*fallen* man, at that.

Even so, Keil & Delitzsch say that there was *something* of God passed down to his son.

K&D: As Adam was created in the image of God, so did he beget “in his own likeness, after his image;” that is to say, he transmitted the image of God in which he was created, not in the purity in which it came direct from God, but in the form given to it by his own self-determination, modified and corrupted by sin.

That is, from Abel, Cain, and Seth onward, every human being has been a mix of the two: a little bit of God, as man’s initial Creator, and a lot of the weakness and corruption of flesh and sin.

vv21-24: Enoch to Methuselah (meh-thoo-SHEH-lach)

Read Genesis 5:21-24.

This, of course, is a different Enoch than the one in Cain’s line from Genesis 4:17. Different line; different person. And at the relatively young age of sixty-five, he became the father of Methuselah, who will be the oldest living human being in the history of mankind. His father, Enoch, will have the *shortest* lifespan of the patriarchs of his generation—only 365 years. But this man had a better distinction than that.

Enoch “walked with God” (*Elohim*).

Alexander MacLaren: A dreary monotony runs through the ages. How brief and uniform may be the records of lives of striving and tears and smiles and love that stretched through centuries! Nine hundred years shrink into less than as many lines. The solemn monotony is broken in the case of Enoch. This paragraph begins as usual—he ‘lived’; but afterwards, instead of that word, we read that he ‘walked with God’—happy they for whom such a phrase is equivalent to ‘live’—and, instead of ‘died,’ it is said of him that ‘he was not.’

However your version arranges the words of v22, all the versions are saying the same thing. The word translated “after” means the hind, behind, or following part; so we are left with the impression that there must have been something about the birth of his son Methuselah that changed—or at least improved—Enoch’s relationship with God ever after. ❏

Since Enoch is seventh from Adam in the line of Seth, as Lamech is seventh from Adam in the line of Cain, we see Enoch as the exemplar of righteousness, as we saw Lamech as the exemplar of evil—or at least worldliness—in their respective lines.

But the most important aspect of Enoch’s life was not his long-lived son, but that Enoch “walked with God.” And we have a pretty good picture of what that means in the prophecy of Malachi where, after God states his curse against the priests, He describes the nature of His relationship with Levi.

Read Malachi 2:4–6.

I agree with Leupold that this was probably not an intimate face-to-face relationship, as enjoyed by Adam and Eve prior to the Fall, but more of a *spiritual* relationship—which even we can enjoy today. Even so, this must have been a remarkable “walk.” As Jude’s epistle states, Enoch was not just a righteous man, but a prophet as well.

But Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, also prophesied about these men, saying, “Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” (Jude 14–15) ❏

Just what the name means, that Enoch gave his son, is hard to pin down; the basic definition of the name “Methushelach” seems to be “man of a dart,” or “man of the javelin.” If David Guzik is correct that his name means “when he is dead, it shall come,” which echoes the venerable Matthew Poole (1624-1679), who makes it “he dies, and the dart or arrow of God’s vengeance comes; or, He dies, and the sending forth of the waters comes,” then Enoch may have been privy to a prophecy regarding God’s future judgment upon mankind—i.e., the Flood—and so commemorated this in the name of his son, even as the prophecy affected his walk with God.

See Commentary on Jude passage in Handout.

Enoch was a man of faith, as the writer to the Hebrews describes him.

Read Hebrews 11:5-6.

Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

Enoch was so faithful to God that his Lord rewarded him by saving him from the experience of death. The word translated “took” (*laqach*) offers an exquisite word picture of what God did; it means to accept, to take in the hand. It is a picture of the Lord God reaching down and lovingly lifting Enoch up and into His literal presence.

His being taken in this quiet manner does not picture the drama of Elijah’s translation (2 Kings 2:11-12), but it is, in some respects, more preferable in its level of soft intimacy. One day Enoch was; the next, he was not.

And Enoch’s translation is more akin to what living believers will experience when Christ Jesus raptures His church. One moment they will be walking the soil of earth in their corrupted flesh; then next moment they will be walking the streets of heaven in a brand new, uncorrupt, glorified body.

In our next session we will complete the generations in this list with Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah—another patriarch who “walked with God” and was “blameless” (Genesis 6:9)—and who represents an important mile-marker in these early generations.

SESSION 39

The Righteous Line Begins, part one Genesis 5:3-27

Long Lives

David Guzik: It is more likely that people did live much, much longer 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, life spans quickly came down to the life-spans we are familiar with today.

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Commentary on Jude 14

Enoch, who "walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away" (Gen 5:24), is not specifically called "the seventh from Adam" in the OT. But in Genesis 5 and also in 1 Chronicles 1:1–3, he is the seventh in order (counting Adam as the first). Here, however, Jude quotes not Genesis but the Book of Enoch (also called "The Ethiopia Book of Enoch")—the longest of the surviving Jewish pseudepigraphical writings and a work that was highly respected by Jews and many Christians. Those who wonder about the propriety of Jude's quotation of this noncanonical book should note that he does not call it Scripture. Paul also quoted from noncanonical writers statements he considered true. See Acts 17:28, where he quoted Cleanthes and Aratus (Phaenomena 5); 1 Corinthians 15:33, where he quoted Menander (Thais 218); and Titus 1:12, where he quoted Epimenides (De oraculis). Lawlor (p. 102) argues that Jude is not quoting the Book of Enoch but a prophecy of his given to Jude by inspiration. This is possible, of course, but unnecessary. The prophecy does not give any startling new information but is simply a general description of the return of the Lord in judgment (cf. Deut 33:2; Dan 7:10-14; Zech 14:5; Matt 25:31). (Edwin A. Blum, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p393; 1981, The Zondervan Corporation.)

The Names

(In the names below, two names lists are referenced; these are located in 1 Chronicles 1, and Luke 3.)

Adam

Mentioned in numerous references throughout the Bible.

Seth

Mentioned only in the two name lists.

Enosh

Mentioned only in the two name lists.

Kenan

Spelled as here, included only in the 1 Chronicles list; listed as "Cainan" in Luke's list; in the KJVs, "Kenan" is translated "Cainan."

Mahalalel

Spelled as here, included only in the 1 Chronicles list; listed as "Mahaleel" in Luke's list and original KJV; the same name in Nehemiah is a different individual.

Jared

Mentioned only in the two name lists.

Enoch

Did not die, but was translated much as living believers will be at the Rapture; included in both name lists, as well as Hebrews 11:5 and Jude 1:14.

Methuselah

Mentioned only in the two name lists.

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