

Truths From an Ancient Record

Genesis 5

Introduction

If you have decided to read through the Bible from cover to cover, and you have started in the book of Genesis, the first major hurdle you have had to overcome is Genesis, chapter 5. In fact, many people have never hurdled it and have stopped in their reading at that point.

In one sense Genesis, chapter 5, seems unimportant to the twentieth century Christian. In another sense it seems almost discouraging or despondent. In this chapter, you are walking through a cemetery viewing the headstones of the deceased patriarchs.

Why would God spend time recording this ancient obituary column for us in Genesis, chapter 5? I must admit or confess that those thoughts have crossed my mind. In fact, I considered skipping chapter 5 with only a few comments, and then getting into the more exciting chapter 6 of Genesis. We know the story of Noah and the flood.

However, as I plowed into Genesis, chapter 5, it was not long before I discovered many precious gems. In fact, when I finished the week of study, I even entertained the thought of making this a two or three part sermon. We will never get through Genesis that way, right? And all of you want to get through Genesis eventually. So, we will cover some of the key thoughts in Genesis, chapter 5.

Why Did God Record an Obituary Column?

Let us answer the first question. I will give three answers to the question, "Why would God take the

time to record this chapter of the generation of Adam? Why did God record an obituary column?"

Let us begin by looking at verses 1 through 3a of Genesis, chapter 5.

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created. When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father . . .

Now we begin making our way through the graveyard. Why take the time to give us this? Let me give three suggestions.

God is keeping His word

1. I think God is implying first, that He is keeping His word.

God had promised a deliverer through the godly seed of woman. He is listing the names of those in the godly line of Seth. Chapter 4 of Genesis lists the ungodly line of Cain. God is taking time to remind Israel that, "I have kept a godly seed alive through Seth, and here are their names."

God always has a remnant of believers

2. The second implication along that same line, is that God always has a remnant of believers.

The God-fearing may be a tiny minority. In fact, at the writing of this, man was becoming increasingly immoral. Yet God is letting us in on the fact that

there are those who have not “thrown in the towel”; there are still some who follow God.

I think of Elijah, who, when he took on the prophets of Baal, won the great victory on Mount Carmel. The fire fell and he was on the mountaintop experience of victory. Then he had all of the false prophets rounded up and they were all killed. He had also been praying for three years that no rain would come, and it had not. God had answered his prayer as the prophet.

However, after Mount Carmel, Jezebel says these words in I Kings, chapter 19, verse 2b,

. . . So may the gods do to me and even more, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them [prophets of Baal] by tomorrow about this time.

In other words, she is saying, “You’ve got twenty-four hours to live, and then it’s curtains; you’re done. I’ve put a contract out on your head, and I’m going to make sure this time tomorrow, you’re dead.”

You may remember the story that Elijah runs for his life. He is tired and discouraged. This is what he prays to God, in I Kings, chapter 19, verses 4b and 10. Have you ever prayed this?

It is enough; now, O Lord, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers. . . . I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. . . .

(note this),

. . . And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

God, I think, chuckles under His breath and then, moves closer to Elijah and whispers in his ear these words, “Son, there are seven thousand people in Israel alone who have never bowed their knee to Baal. Seven thousand – unknown, unnamed – believers in Me. You don’t know who they are; you don’t know where they are, but I want you to know that I have a remnant. And they have never bowed their knee to the false gods.” (I Kings 19:18)

I think of what Paul wrote to the Philippians in chapter 4, verse 22. He said these words,

All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar’s household.

We are never given their names, but in the ungodly household of this emperor lived a believing remnant – those who were following God.

And how about that long list of names in Romans, chapter 16? There are names like Aristobulus, and Junias, and Phlegon, and others that we have never even heard of. They were unnoticed and unnamed, but they were not forgotten. They might have been in the minority, but they were never overwhelmed.

Let me apply this thought to you. Perhaps this past week, you have had the thought that you are alone in your walk with the Lord – but you are not. You might even find yourself in the minority in your family. When Thanksgiving and Christmas family reunions come along, the last thing they do is lighten your load; refresh your heart. Instead, they increase the burden of your heart. You are the tiny minority in that realm of relatives that you see every year or every other year. You might be in the minority at your job, where it seems that you are the only one that has not bowed his knee to the gods of materialism and pleasure. So, you get to the point where you bow your knee to the Lord, and say, “Lord, this isn’t worth it. I am the only one.”

I want you to hear today, my friend, from Genesis, chapter 5, God whispering in your ear, “Son [or daughter], you are not alone. I have a godly remnant out there – thousands here, hundreds there, one or two tucked away over there that you do not know about. You’re not alone.”

God never forgets His own people

3. The third implication, along that line, is that God never forgets His own people.

Now, chapters 1 through 11 in the book of Genesis cover two thousand years. There are two thousand years to cover in eleven chapters. Do you know what you and I would have done? For heaven sake, we would never have taken an entire chapter to list peoples’ names. There is too much to cover; too much ground in the history of the world. He has two thousand years to cover and He stops to give us a list of names.

It is interesting that God is particularly concerned to record the names of those who follow Him. One illustration would be Malachi, chapter 3, verse 16, where the prophet writes,

Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem His name.

Revelation, chapter 20, verses 11 through 15, tell us that the names of those who believe in the Lamb are written in the book of life. Isn't it an interesting thought, ladies and gentlemen, that God is interested in you? He is so interested that He has recorded your name. You and I have a hard time remembering names, but God never forgets. If you believe in Him, He will never forget you.

Do you know what it is like to be forgotten? Perhaps some husband this past week, forgot a birthday and is in trouble today. Or perhaps you forgot an anniversary – that is worse.

I grew up in a rather large family of four boys and our parents. In the afternoons, my father, my brothers and I would frequently play basketball at the public school. One day, when my youngest brother was about four years old, we were at the school playing. We played and had a great time and then, piled back into the car and headed home. About ten blocks down the street, someone asked, "Hey, where's Jonathan?"

We had forgotten the poor kid! So, we turned around and went back, and there was Jonathan walking down the street with his hands tucked in his pockets. He looked so forlorn; so forgotten. I can remember my father trying to explain to him, "I love you, son, I just forgot you."

Perhaps you know what it is like to be forgotten at the airport. Someone did not come and pick you up – they forgot.

It is easy for us to forget, but God never does. He is letting us know in Genesis, chapter 5, that, "I remember all those who believe in My name."

Two Notable Mentions

Now that we have discovered a few general principles, let us look at some specifics. We will not take the time to study all who are mentioned in Genesis, chapter 5, but He makes notable mention of two men in this long list. These men are kind of the salutatorians of the graduating class of patriarchs. The two men are Enoch and Methuselah. Since God took special time with them, let us spend some time with them as well.

Enoch

1. Enoch is the first notable mention.

Four phrases about Enoch

Enoch appears five times in Scripture and four different phrases or thoughts are connected with this man. Let me give them to you.

Enoch was the seventh generation from Adam

- In Jude, verse 14, it is recorded of Enoch that he is the seventh generation from Adam.

Turn to Jude, the small book with only one chapter that is just before Revelation, the last book of the Bible. Jude, verse 14, says,

. . . Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam . . .

Why is this mentioned? If you go back to Genesis, chapter 4, verse 17, you discover that in the line of Cain, there is an Enoch. There are two Enochs that are contemporaries living at the same time. God is saying, "I want you to know about the godly Enoch, the one who followed Me, not the one in the line of Cain. This Enoch, in the line of Seth, is the seventh generation from Adam. He is the godly one."

That gives us an illustration that during the course of world history, there will be the Enochs who follow God and the Enochs who follow the way of Cain.

Enoch was a preacher of righteousness

- The second thing that is said about Enoch is that he was a preacher of righteousness.

Look again at Jude, verses 14 through 15.

It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, 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."

You should underline the word "ungodly," as it appears four times in these two verses.

Enoch was a preacher, and his sermons were two-fold, or had two themes: the current ungodliness and the coming judgment. Boy, Enoch was a popular

preacher – he preached about those things. It was so known of Enoch that he preached on ungodliness that, when it lists his autobiographical statement, he used the word “ungodly” four times.

The interesting thing is, you know who his audience was – his relatives; those related to him. He did not have an easy task, and yet he preached righteousness.

Enoch walked with God

- Turn back to Genesis, chapter 5, verse 22a, and notice the phrase that you are probably familiar with, which gives us the third thing that is said about Enoch,

Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years . . .

This was not just for a day, a week, a year – no, Enoch walked with God three hundred years.

The original stem of the word “walk” would indicate close and intimate communion. Enoch fellowshiped with God. Notice this is a walk, not a hundred yard sprint. It is not a mad dash, but a walk. It is also not a casual “take it or leave it” stroll. No, this is an intimate walk; this is a pursuit.

Two things necessary for a walk with God

This is a subject for an entire sermon, but let me at least suggest two things that are necessary for you to walk with God.

Harmony

- The first thing necessary for a walk with God is harmony.

You cannot take a walk with someone you are at odds with, there must be harmony. A walk with someone in an intimate fellowship means that your hearts are in harmony.

Agreement

- The second thing I would suggest is agreement.

You are agreeing, as Enoch did, with the direction God is going. I think the reason more of us do not want to walk consistently with God is because there come times in our lives when we do not like the direction He is taking us. We say, “turn left; He

says, “turn right”. We say, “stop”; He says, “continue”. So we say, “Well, Lord, I don’t like the direction of this walk. I can’t agree.”

For three hundred years, Enoch obviously agreed.

Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death

- The fourth descriptive thought concerning Enoch is found in Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 5. I believe this is even more powerful in its implication than his walk with God. It is obviously a synonymous thought, and yet it is a different thought.

By faith . . .

(that was the key),

. . . 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.

Note that Enoch’s reputation before his being taken up was that he was pleasing to God. Enoch pleased God.

You might think, “Well that’s great for Enoch. He was a great man of the faith. He was one of the patriarchs. He had an extra dose of grace. I mean, God kind of padded the way for him. He could please God. Is it really up to me to please God today?”

Well, there are several times in the New Testament that the word “ambition” is used. One of these texts is in II Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 9, where Paul says,

. . . we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him [God].

We are ambitious to please God.

How do we please God? This again is a subject for another study, but let me point out one thought. Turn to I Kings, chapter 3. I want to take you to an incident in Scripture where a man did something and then, we hear God saying, “Hey, that pleased me.”

I think we can learn what it takes to please God from this one incident. Look at I Kings, chapter 3, verse 5,

In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream at night; and God said, “Ask what you wish Me to give you.”

How would you like that for Christmas?
Anything you want – you wish for it, you have got it.
Boy, I can think of three or four things, right away!

So, in verse 6,

Then Solomon said, “You have shown great lovingkindness to Your servant David my father, according as he walked before You in truth and righteousness and uprightness of heart toward You; and You have reserved for him this great lovingkindness, that You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.”

Well, get to the wish, Solomon. Continue to verses 7 and 8.

Now, O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my father David, yet I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. Your servant is in the midst of Your people which You have chosen, a great people who are too many to be numbered or counted.

Here is the wish in verse 9.

So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?

Continue to verse 10.

It was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing.

Now, in the next verse, God will put His finger on the three wishes that you and I would normally ask. Look at verse 11.

God said to him, “Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, . . .

(that is the first thing – health),

. . . nor have asked riches for yourself, . . .

(that is the second thing – wealth),

. . . nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, . . .

(that is the third thing – no enemies; popularity),

. . . but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice,

Health, wealth, and fame – those are the three wishes that we would have made. God said, “Because you didn’t ask for these three, but instead asked for

discernment to understand justice,” – continue to verse 12a,

behold, I have done according to your words. . . .

What pleases God, ladies and gentlemen, from this little incident? It is when you and I pray, “Lord, I don’t ask for help, I just ask for the discernment to understand when sickness comes. Lord, I’m not going to ask or wish for wealth, I just ask for the prudence and the wisdom to steward what you have given me. Lord, I don’t ask for popularity or fame, I just ask for grace to handle my enemies.”

Then, God says to you and me, “I’m pleased.”

Methuselah

2. Note one other honorable mention in Genesis, chapter 5. God mentions another man, just briefly, and yet there is so much about this one character. Methuselah is the second honorable mention in verse 22.

Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had other sons and daughters.

Three thoughts about Methuselah

Let me give three thoughts about Methuselah.

Methuselah’s birth changed his father’s life

- First, Methuselah’s birth evidently brought about a change in his father’s life.

Look at verse 22 again, and note the word “after”.

Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah . . .

The cry of his newborn son pierced Enoch’s heart. God used that to cause the understanding and desire in his heart that, “Now my son is watching. He is here and I must now walk with God.”

For three hundred years after Methuselah’s birth, Enoch followed God and pleased God.

There is a story of the alcoholic who lived a terrible life of sin. He abused his wife, never took care of things around the home, and spent most of his money on liquor. Into their home a baby boy was born, and all the town thought it was a tragedy for a

baby boy to be born into a home like that. And indeed, this man continued his carousing and drinking, never giving any thought to his son and wife.

One winter, however, when the boy was five, the father slammed out of the house and began walking across the freshly driven snow toward the local tavern. As he was walking, he heard the door close behind him and someone call out, “Daddy, slow down.”

The father turned around and found his son taking large strides so he could step where his father had already pressed the snow down. His father angrily said, “Son, get back in the house. What are you doing?”

The son stopped and kind of stuck out his chest and said, “Daddy, I’m big enough now, so that wherever you step, I can step. Now I can follow in your footsteps.”

That man turned and came back to his son, and he knelt in the snow, gathered his boy into his arms, and said to his son, “In that case, I need to change directions.”

Now we do not know what Enoch was like before the birth of his son. However, something about his birth told Enoch, “Even though you’re in the godly line, you have not been godly and you need to change direction; you need to begin walking with God.”

The best thing that you and I can do for our children, men and women, is not provide for them the most expensive education, not give them the finest clothes and automobiles. The best thing that we can do for our children is to walk with God. We need to press down the ground where we are not ashamed if they should follow step after step.

Methuselah’s name means “when he is dead, it will come”

- The second thing about Methuselah is the meaning of his name. The name means, “when he is dead, it will come”.

That is a great name to have. Names were always chosen according to meaning, so Enoch saw his baby boy and thought, “What should I name this boy so that the meaning will ring into the ears of all who hear it? Methuselah means, ‘when he is dead, it will come’.”

That is a strange name, unless you understand the chronological history. History reveals that the year Methuselah died, the flood covered the earth. Now,

according to Jude, verse 14, Enoch was a prophet. God must have given him revelation that when his little boy died – and he would not know if that would be in two weeks, two years, two hundred years – but when Methuselah died, it would come, meaning the judgment.

Methuselah lived longer than any other person ever lived

- Let me give the third thing that is even more powerful because of this point, and that is, Methuselah lived longer than any other person has ever lived.

Do you get this? God said, “When this boy dies, judgment is coming.”

However, in order to illustrate His grace and patience towards humanity, he made it so that Methuselah would live longer than anyone ever lived. When Methuselah died, judgment came.

“And He Died”

One phrase receives repeated attention in Genesis, chapter 5. It is the phrase, “and he died”.

In:

- verse 5 – *So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.*
- verse 8 – *So all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years, and he died.*
- verse 11 – *So all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years, and he died.*
- verse 14 – *So all the days of Kenan were nine hundred and ten years, and he died.*
- verse 17 – *So all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years, and he died.*
- verse 20 – *So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years, and he died.*
- verse 27 – *So all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years, and he died.*
- verse 31 – *So all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years, and he died.*

Lamech, the last in this genealogical record, lived seven hundred and seventy-seven years and guess what happened? And he died.

God told Adam, in Genesis, chapter 2, verse 17b,

. . . in the day that you eat from it [the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] you will surely die.

In Genesis, chapter 5, verse 5, we are told,

So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.

God kept His word. And, by the way, ladies and gentlemen, that is why one day, you and I will grace the column of some obituary in the newspaper. We, like Adam, will die. We cannot avoid it, except for the coming of Jesus Christ for the church.

There is a fable of a wealthy merchant who sent his servant to the market in Samaria to purchase goods that were needed. The servant went to the market in obedience to his master and began making purchases. He then decided to take a little shortcut through an alley. Halfway there, he ran face to face with lady death. The fable tells that this servant was so startled that he turned and ran. Lady death must be after him! He ran back to his master and said, "Please loan me one of your fastest horses. I must flee to Baghdad tonight."

The master could tell his servant was distraught. He said, "Okay, take the horse, it's yours."

So, the servant fled to Baghdad. The master then went to the market in Samara and finished buying the needed goods. He also went back through the alley, and came face to face with lady death. He, perhaps knowing that his time had not come, said to lady death, "Why have you startled my servant?"

Lady death said to him, "Actually it was I who was startled. I couldn't understand why he was in Samaria. I have an appointment with him tonight in Baghdad."

The writer of Scripture tells us, in Hebrews, chapter 9, verse 27,

. . . it is appointed for men to die once . . .

That could be literally translated, "It is the destiny of everyone to die."

We do not like to think about that. And yet, one of the godliest men who ever lived said, in Psalm, chapter 90, verse 12a,

[Lord] teach us to number our days . . .

We are not ready to live, until we are prepared to die.

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