

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS CHAPTER 5

This chapter is the only authentic history extant of the first age of the world from the creation to the flood, containing (according to the verity of the Hebrew text) 1656 years, as may easily be computed by the ages of the patriarchs, before they begat that son through whom the line went down to Noah. This is one of those which the apostle calls

"endless genealogies"

#1Ti 1:4, for Christ, who was the end of the Old Testament law, was also the end of the Old Testament genealogies; towards him they looked, and in him they centred. The genealogy here recorded is inserted briefly in the pedigree of our Saviour **#Lu 3:36-38**, and is of great use to show that Christ was the

"seed of the woman"

that was promised. We have here an account,

I. Concerning Adam, **#Ge 5:1-5**.

II. Seth, **#Ge 5:6-8**.

III. Enos, **#Ge 5:9-11**.

IV. Cainan, **#Ge 5:12-14**.

V. Mahalaleel, **#Ge 5:15-17**.

VI. Jared, **#Ge 5:18-20**.

VII. Enoch, **#Ge 5:21-24**.

VIII. Methuselah, **#Ge 5:25-27**.

IX. Lamech and his son Noah, **#Ge 5:28-32**.

All scripture, being given by inspiration of God, is profitable, though not all alike profitable.

Ver. 1.

The first words of the chapter are the title or argument of the whole chapter: it is *the book of the generations of Adam*; it is the list or catalogue of the posterity of Adam, not of all, but only of the *holy seed who were the substance thereof* (**#Isa 6:13**), and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came (**#Ro 9:5**), the names, ages, and deaths, of those that were the successors of the first Adam in the custody of the promise, and the ancestors of the second Adam. The genealogy begins with Adam himself. Here is,

I. His creation, **#Ge 5:1,2**, where we have a brief rehearsal of what was before at large related concerning the creation of man. This is what we have need frequently to hear of and carefully to acquaint ourselves with. Observe here,

1. That *God created man*. Man is not his own maker, therefore he must not be his own master; but the Author of his being must be the director of his motions and the centre

of them.

2. That there was a day in which God created man. He was not from eternity, but of yesterday; he was not the first-born, but the junior of the creation.
3. That God made him in his own likeness, righteous and holy, and therefore, undoubtedly, happy. Man's nature resembled the divine nature more than that of any of the creatures of this lower world.
4. That God created them male and female (**#Ge 5:2**), for their mutual comfort as well as for the preservation and increase of their kind. Adam and Eve were both made immediately by the hand of God, both made in God's likeness; and therefore between the sexes there is not that great distance and inequality which some imagine.
5. That God blessed them. It is usual for parents to bless their children; so God, the common Father, blessed his. But earthly parents can only beg a blessing; it is God's prerogative to command it. It refers chiefly to the blessing of increase, not excluding other blessings.
6. That he *called their name Adam*. Adam signifies *earth, red earth*. Now,

(1.) God gave him this name. Adam had himself named the rest of the creatures, but he must not choose his own name, lest he should assume some glorious pompous title. But God gave him a name which would be a continual memorandum to him of the meanness of his original, and oblige him to *look unto the rock whence he was hewn and the hole of the pit whence he was digged, #Isa 51:1*. Those have little reason to be proud who are so near akin to dust.

(2.) He gave this name both to the man and to the woman. Being at first one by nature, and afterwards one by marriage, it was fit they should both have the same name, in token of their union. The woman is *of the earth earthy* as well as the man.

II. The birth of his son *Seth*, **#Ge 5:3**. He was born in the hundred and thirtieth year of Adam's life; and probably the murder of Abel was not long before. Many other sons and daughters were born to Adam, besides Cain and Abel, before this; but no notice is taken of them, because an honourable mention must be made of his name only in whose loins Christ and the church were. But that which is most observable here concerning Seth is that Adam begat him *in his own likeness, after his image*. Adam was made in the image of God; but, when he was fallen and corrupt, he begat a son in his own image, sinful and defiled, frail, mortal, and miserable, like himself; not only a *man* like himself, consisting of body and soul, but a *sinner* like himself, guilty and obnoxious, degenerate and corrupt. Even the man after God's own heart owns himself *conceived and born in sin, #Ps 51:5*. This was Adam's own likeness, the reverse of that divine likeness in which Adam was made; but, having lost it himself, he could not convey it to his seed. Note, Grace does not run in the blood, but corruption does. A sinner begets a sinner, but a saint does not beget a saint.

III. His age and death. He lived, in all, nine hundred and thirty years, and then he died, according to the sentence passed upon him, *To dust thou shalt return*. Though he did not die in the day he ate forbidden fruit, yet in that very day he became mortal. Then he began to die; his whole life afterwards was but a reprieve, a forfeited condemned life; nay, it was a wasting dying life: he was not only like a criminal sentenced, but as one already crucified, that dies slowly and by degrees.

Ver. 6.

We have here all that the Holy Ghost thought fit to leave upon record concerning five of the patriarchs before the flood, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, and Jared. There is nothing observable concerning any of these particularly, though we have reason to think they were men of eminence, both for prudence and piety, in their day: but in general,

I. Observe how largely and expressly their generations are recorded. This matter, one would think, might have been delivered in fewer words; but it is certain that there is not one idle word in God's books, whatever there is in men's. It is thus plainly set down,

1. To make it easy and intelligible to the meanest capacity. When we are informed how old they were when they begat such a son, and how many years they lived afterwards, a very little skill in arithmetic will enable a man to tell how long they lived in all; yet the Holy Ghost sets down the sum total, for the sake of those that have not even so much skill as this.
2. To show the pleasure God takes in the names of his people. We found Cain's generation numbered in haste (#Ge 4:18), but this account of the holy seed is enlarged upon, and given in words at length, and not in figures; we are told how long those lived that lived in God's fear, and when those died that died in his favour; but as for others it is no matter. *The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot.*

II. Their life is reckoned by days (#Ge 5:8): *All the days of Seth*, and so of the rest, which intimates the shortness of the life of man when it is at the longest, and the quick revolution of our times on earth. If they reckoned by days, surely we must reckon by hours, or rather make that our frequent prayer (#Ps 90:12), *Teach us to number our days.*

III. Concerning each of them, except Enoch, it is said, *and he died*. It is implied in the numbering of the years of their life that their life, when those years were numbered and finished, came to an end; and yet it is still repeated, *and he died*, to show that death passed upon all men without exception, and that it is good for us particularly to observe and improve the deaths of others for our own edification. Such a one was a strong healthful man, but he died; such a one was a great and rich man, but he died; such a one was a wise politic man, but he died; such a one was a very good man, perhaps a very useful man, but he died, &c.

IV. That which is especially observable is that they all lived very long; not one of them died till he had seen the revolution of almost eight hundred years, and some of them lived much longer, a great while for an immortal soul to be imprisoned in a house of clay. The present life surely was not to them such a burden as commonly it is now, else they would have been weary of it; nor was the future life so clearly revealed then as it is now under the gospel, else they would have been impatient to remove to it: long life to the pious patriarchs was a blessing and made them blessings.

1. Some natural causes may be assigned for their long life in those first ages of the world. It is very probable that the earth was more fruitful, that the productions of it were more strengthening, that the air was more healthful, and that the influences of the heavenly bodies were more benign, before the flood, than afterwards. Though man was driven out of paradise, yet the earth itself was then paradisiacal--a garden in comparison with its present wilderness state: and some think that their great knowledge of the creatures, and of their usefulness both for food and medicine, together with their sobriety and temperance, contributed much to it; yet we do not

find that those who were intemperate, as many were (#Lu 17:27), were as short-lived as intemperate men generally are now.

2. It must chiefly be resolved into the power and providence of God. He prolonged their lives, both for the more speedy replenishing of the earth and for the more effectual preservation of the knowledge of God and religion, then, when there was no written word, but tradition was the channel of its conveyance. All the patriarchs here, except Noah, were born before Adam died; so that from him they might receive a full and satisfactory account of the creation, paradise, the fall, the promise, and those divine precepts which concerned religious worship and a religious life: and, if any mistake arose, they might have recourse to him while he lived, as to an oracle, for the rectifying of it, and after his death to Methuselah, and others, that had conversed with him: so great was the care of Almighty God to preserve in his church the knowledge of his will and the purity of his worship.

Ver. 21.

The accounts here run on for several generations without any thing remarkable, or any variation but of the names and numbers; but at length there comes in one that must not be passed over so, of whom special notice must be taken, and that is *Enoch*, the seventh from Adam: the rest, we may suppose, did virtuously, but he excelled them all, and was the brightest star of the patriarchal age. It is but little that is recorded concerning him; but this little is enough to make his name great, greater than the name of the other Enoch, who had a city called by his name. Here are two things concerning him:--

I. His gracious conversation in this world, which is twice spoken of: *Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah* (#Ge 5:22), and again, *Enoch walked with God*, #Ge 5:24. Observe,

1. The nature of his religion and the scope and tenor of his conversation: he *walked with God*, which denotes,

(1.) True religion; what is godliness, but walking with God? The ungodly and profane are without God in the world, they walk contrary to him: but the godly walk with God, which presupposes reconciliation to God, for two cannot *walk together except they be agreed* (#Am 3:3), and includes all the parts and instances of a godly, righteous, and sober life. To walk with God is to set God always before us, and to act as those that are always under his eye. It is to live a life of communion with God both in ordinances and providences. It is to make God's word our rule and his glory our end in all our actions. It is to make it our constant care and endeavour in every thing to please God, and nothing to offend him. It is to comply with his will, to concur with his designs, and to be workers together with him. It is to be *followers of him as dear children*.

(2.) Eminent religion. He was entirely dead to this world, and did not only walk after God, as all good men do, but he walked with God, as if he were in heaven already. He lived above the rate, not only of other men, but of other saints: not only good in bad times, but the best in good times.

(3.) Activity in promoting religion among others. Executing the priest's office is called *walking before God*, #1Sa 2:30,35, and see #Zec 3:7. Enoch, it should seem, was a priest of the most high God, and like Noah, who is likewise said to walk with God, he was a preacher of righteousness, and prophesied of Christ's second coming. #Jude 14, *Behold, the Lord cometh with his holy myriads*. Now the Holy Spirit, instead of saying, *Enoch lived*, says, *Enoch walked with God*; for it is the life of a good man to walk with God. This was,

[1.] The business of Enoch's life, his constant care and work; while others lived to themselves and the world, he lived to God.

[2.] It was the joy and support of his life. Communion with God was to him better than life itself. *To me to live is Christ, #Php 1:21.*

2. The date of his religion. It is said (**#Ge 5:21**), *he lived sixty- five years, and begat Methuselah;* but (**#Ge 5:22**) *he walked with God after he begat Methuselah,* which intimates that he did not begin to be eminent for piety till about that time; at first he walked but as other men. Great saints arrive at their eminence by degrees.

3. The continuance of his religion: he walked with God *three hundred years,* as long as he continued in this world. The hypocrite will not pray always; but the real saint that acts from a principle, and makes religion his choice, will persevere to the end, and walk with God while he lives, as one that hopes to live for ever with him, **#Ps 104:33.**

II. His glorious removal to a better world. As he did not live like the rest, so he did not die like the rest (**#Ge 5:24**): *He was not, for God took him;* that is, as it is explained (**#Heb 11:5**), *He was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him.* Observe,

1. When he was thus translated.

(1.) What time of his life. It was when he had lived but three hundred and sixty-five years (a year of years), which, as men's ages went then, was in the midst of his days; for there was none of the patriarchs before the flood that did not more than double that age. But why did God take him so soon? Surely, because the world, which had now grown corrupt, was not worthy of him, or because he was so much above the world, and so weary of it, as to desire a speedy removal out of it, or because his work was done, and done the sooner for his minding it so closely. Note, God often takes those soonest whom he loves best, and the time they lose on earth is gained in heaven, to their unspeakable advantage.

(2.) What time of the world. It was when all the patriarchs mentioned in this chapter were living, except Adam, who died fifty- seven years before, and Noah, who was born sixty-nine years after; those two had sensible confirmations to their faith other ways, but to all the rest, who were or might have been witnesses of Enoch's translation, it was a sensible encouragement to their faith and hope concerning a future state.

2. How his removal is expressed: *He was not, for God took him.*

(1.) He was not any longer in this world; it was not the period of his being, but of his being here: he was *not found*, so the apostle explains it from the LXX; not found by his friends, who sought him as the sons of the prophets sought Elijah (**#2Ki 2:17**); not found by his enemies, who, some think, were in quest of him, to put him to death in their rage against him for his eminent piety. It appears by his prophecy that there were then many ungodly sinners, who spoke hard speeches, and probably did hard things too, against God's people (**#Jude 15**), but God hid Enoch from them, not under heaven, but in heaven.

(2.) God took him body and soul to himself in the heavenly paradise, by the ministry of angels, as afterwards he took Elijah. He was changed, as those saints will be that shall be found alive at Christ's second coming. Whenever a good man dies God takes him, fetches him hence, and receives him to himself. The apostle adds concerning Enoch that, *before his translation, he had this testimony, that he pleased God,* and this was the good report

he obtained. Note,

[1.] Walking with God pleases God.

[2.] We cannot walk with God so as to please him, but by faith.

[3.] God himself will put an honour upon those that by faith walk with him so as to please him. He will own them now, and witness for them before angels and men at the great day. Those that have not this testimony before the translation, yet shall have it afterwards.

[4.] Those whose conversation in the world is truly holy shall find their removal out of it truly happy. Enoch's translation was not only an evidence to faith of the reality of a future state, and of the possibility of the body's existing in glory in that state; but it was an encouragement to the hope of all that walk with God that they shall be for ever with him: signal piety shall be crowned with signal honours.

Ver. 25.

Concerning Methuselah observe,

1. The signification of his name, which some think was prophetic, his father Enoch being a prophet. *Methuselah* signifies, *he dies, or there is a dart, or, a sending forth*, namely, of the deluge, which came the very year that Methuselah died. If indeed his name was so intended and so explained, it was fair warning to a careless world, a long time before the judgment came. However, this is observable, that the longest liver that ever was carried death in his name, that he might be reminded of its coming surely, though it came slowly.
2. His age: he lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years, the longest we read of that ever any man lived on earth; and yet he died. The longest liver must die at last. Neither youth nor age will discharge from that war, for that is the end of all men: none can challenge life by long prescription, nor make that a plea against the arrests of death. It is commonly supposed that Methuselah died a little before the flood; the Jewish writers say,

"seven days before,"

referring to [#Ge 7:10](#), and that he was taken away from the evil to come, which goes upon this presumption, which is generally received, that all the patriarchs mentioned in this chapter were holy good men. I am loathe to offer any surmise to the contrary; and yet I see not that this can be any more inferred from their enrolment here among the ancestors of Christ than that all those kings of Judah were so whose names are recorded in his genealogy, many of whom, we are sure, were much otherwise: and, if this be questioned, it may be suggested as probable that Methuselah was himself drowned with the rest of the world; for it is certain that he died that year.

Ver. 28.

Here we have the first mention of Noah, of whom we shall read much in the following chapters. Observe,

I. His name, with the reason of it: *Noah* signifies *rest*; his parents gave him that name, with a prospect of his being a more than ordinary blessing to his generation: *This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which*

the Lord hath cursed. Here is,

1. Lamech's complaint of the calamitous state of human life. By the entrance of sin, and the entail of the curse for sin, our condition has become very miserable: our whole life is spent in labour, and our time filled up with continual toil. God having cursed the ground, it is as much as some can do, with the utmost care and pains, to fetch a hard livelihood out of it. He speaks as one fatigued with the business of this life, and grudging that so many thoughts and precious minutes, which otherwise might have been much better employed, are unavoidably spent for the support of the body.
2. His comfortable hopes of some relief by the birth of this son: *This same shall comfort us*, which denotes not only the desire and expectation which parents generally have concerning their children (that, when they grow up, they will be comforts to them and helpers in their business, though they often prove otherwise), but an apprehension and prospect of something more. Very probably there were some prophecies that went before of him, as a person that should be wonderfully serviceable to his generation, which they so understood as to conclude that he was the promised seed, the Messiah that should come; and then it intimates that a covenant-interest in Christ as ours, and the believing expectation of his coming, furnish us with the best and surest comforts, both in reference to the wrath and curse of God which we have deserved and to the toils and troubles of this present time of which we are often complaining.

"Is Christ ours? Is heaven ours? *This same shall comfort us.*"

II. His children, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. These Noah begat (the eldest of these) when he was 500 years old. It should seem that Japheth was the eldest (#Ge 10:21), but Shem is put first because on him the covenant was entailed, as appears by #Ge 9:26, where God is called the *Lord God of Shem*. To him, it is probable, the birth-right was given, and from him, it is certain, both Christ the head, and the church the body, were to descend. Therefore he is called *Shem*, which signifies a *name*, because in his posterity the name of God should always remain, till he should come out of his loins whose name is above every name; so that in putting Shem first Christ was, in effect, put first, who in all things must have the pre-eminence.