

The Line of Seth

Genesis 5:1-32

So what do we learn from this long list of names, this extended genealogy? So-and-so lived so many years and then he begot so-and-so. Over and over, generation after generation. Our text this morning in Genesis 5 traces the history of mankind from Adam all the way to Noah.

There is one thing that stands out at the outset, one broad theme that I will stress this morning, which is to say that we will focus upon the line of Seth. Remember last week, when I mentioned two lines of the descendants of Adam and Eve, the line of Cain and the line of Abel. And the focus last week, if remember, was really upon the line of Cain, which represents all those who rebel against God. Beginning, of course, with Cain, the first murderer. The line of Cain represents all those we would now identify as unbelievers, non-Christians; the wicked, the ungodly. I quoted as well from the book of Jude, who identifies “certain men...who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jude declares with a sense of final condemnation,

Jude 11 “Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain.”

This morning the focus is upon the other line, the line of all those who are faithful to God. The line of Abel, carried on not by his descendants, of course, since he was killed, but carried on by a substitute, the replacement whom God so graciously provided to Eve. And that is where chapter 4 ends,

Gen. 4:25 “And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, “For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.” 26 And as for Seth, to

him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the LORD.”

So we begin chapter 5, with a note that God has already brought redemption to his fallen world. He has already by salvation, by grace, to those whom he loved before the creation of the world. And they bringing their sacrifices of worship to God, calling “on the name of the Lord.” The evidence of that is found in the line of Seth.

Chapter 5 begins with a big of a recapitulation, though, going all the way back to the beginning, to Adam.

v.1-5

I want to stress from those verses the evidence of the grace of God.

I. GOD’S GRACE IS EVIDENT IN MAN’S GLORIOUS BEGINNING.

So just a brief review, as this chapter begins, identified as the genealogy of Adam. The history of mankind, and the simple emphasis is that,

A. Man was created in the image of God.

In the likeness of God, we read in verse one. We’ve studied what that means, and chiefly it means that man, alone among the creatures, has a moral relationship with God. He is a moral creature, accountable for his actions, called upon and created to offer up to God the intentional, deliberate worship of his heart and soul. He was to exercise dominion over the rest of the creation, ruling not on the basis of his own authority but as the steward entrusted by God. He was God’s agent to act in his place upon the earth, living with accountability, thus subject to the curse and condemnation of God for his sin as well as the blessing and praise of God for his faithfulness.

We note again in verse 2 that man, created in the image of God, lives and exists as male and female. That is our essential identity, two genders created specifically by God to complement each other, and together, as man, as mankind, to glorify God.

Paul would later note that image of God inherent in mankind was the image of righteousness, urging the Christians in Ephesus,

Eph. 4:22 "...that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."

We then read, in verse 2 of our text, that,

B. Man was created with God's special blessing.

God "blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created." God blessed them. God honored them. Man, in God's image, was created to enjoy that special blessing. They were the crown of his creation, the triumphant achievement of those six days of creation. They were given the ultimate blessing,

C. Man was created with life and with the ability to reproduce life.

So we read of Adam,
v.3-5

Notice a couple things there. First, though this is now after the curse and man is subject to that curse, to death, but still, the emphasis as we read here in these verses isn't so much about death as it is about life. Long life. 930 years of life. With reproduction, with children, and descendants. So when he was 130, Adam had that son who would replace Abel, and he lived another 800 years. So even after the fall, as an emphasis upon God's grace even then, man, created in the image of God, lived

with the blessing of a long life. Thus we see then that,

II. GOD'S GRACE IS EVIDENT IN MAN'S DESCENT FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION.

There is something unmistakable in this chapter, something other than the realization that Hebrew names are really hard to pronounce. What stands out in that is how personal it is, each man is identified by name. And, with that name, each man is chosen by God. In each generation, God's chosen representative is identified. Not necessarily the firstborn, and certainly not the only child; rather, the appointed representative.

A. Each generation is personally known and identified by God.

There are ten generations listed, Adam. Seth. Enosh. Kenan. Mahalalel. Jared. Enoch, and we'll look more closely at him in a few moments. Then, Methuselah. Lamech. And Noah. Each one is named and dated, personally.

Now, there are some genealogies in Scripture that may well have gaps in them, for a genealogy doesn't need to be exhaustive in order to be accurate. However, given the specific information in this genealogy, the repetition of dates both of birth and death, there is nothing to indicate that it is anything but a full list of the patriarchs from Adam until Noah. If that is the case, we can then date the time of the flood in terms of creation.

Let me put a few of those dates together for you, and you'll notice some interesting things. Putting the dates together, you conclude that Adam actually lived until Lamech was 56 years old, and Lamech was the father of Noah. Adam's son Seth died only 14 years before Noah. And Noah was born in year 1056, dated from the creation of Adam. Since the flood came when Noah was 600 years old, we can calculate exactly that Methuselah died in the year of the flood, the year 1656 after creation.

Let me say that again. First the creation of Adam. Year 1. Seth was born in the year 130, and died at the age of 912, in the year 1042. Noah was born 14 years later, in the year 1056, and the flood came 600 years later, the same year Methusaleh died as the last surviving of the recorded ancestors of Noah. It's entirely possible, maybe probable, that he actually died in the flood.

It's also good to realize that the oldest living patriarch would be expected to preserve and pass on God's word to his descendants, and since two of the nine patriarchs before Noah died before their father, seven of them would have had this great responsibility of being the oldest living patriarch. Noah would have been the eighth. Thus we read in,

2 Pet. 2:4 "For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; 5 and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly."

The literal rendering of those words would stress the fact that Noah was the eighth preacher of righteousness, referring I believe to Noah and his seven ancestors, not the seven descendants with him on the ark. The Greek doesn't speak of "seven others" but simply of Noah as the 8th, and that fits well with the idea that Noah was, in fact, 8th in line from Adam with the responsibility to proclaim God's righteousness.

That preaching had taken place during the 1656 years from creation to the flood. And though we will see next time that the preaching was not successful, as mankind dug deeper and deeper into sin, yet those were years of great blessing, at least in terms of life. After the flood, several things changed, including a steady decrease in the average life span.

The point is, that although "death reigned from the time of Adam," still, each generation is personally known and identified by God. Thus, God's grace is evident.

But it is even more than merely a personal identification. God has a reason for identifying, and sovereignly choosing this line of Seth. In God's eternal plan and according to God's covenant of grace, this line is the line of Christ! And so God's grace is evident in the fact that,

B. Each generation has its appointed representative in the line of Jesus.

Adam. Seth. Enosh. Kenan. Mahalalel. Jared. Enoch. Methuselah. Lamech. And Noah. Only one descendant is named in each generation, only one man chosen--the one man chosen by God to be in the line of Christ.

In Luke 3, we read of the line of Jesus, traced through Joseph. It's a line that goes back to Adam, and it is the line traced for us in Genesis 5. I'll pick it up in,

Luke 3:36 "...the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, 37 the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel, the son of Cainan, 38 the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God."

Amazing, isn't it? God's whole purpose throughout the whole history of mankind since the fall is to prepare the way for Jesus. Jesus is the ultimate seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent. And God is preserving the line through which he would come!

Everything in the Bible is focused on Jesus Christ. Even these genealogies. As you read these strange Hebrew names

from generation to generation, you are reading about the ancestors of Jesus Christ. You are reading about the evidence of God's grace in establishing his covenant to redeem his sinful people from the curse of the law which their sins deserve.

In that context, let's look specifically at two of these patriarchs who stand out in this text, Enoch and Noah. Again, the emphasis will be on God's grace.

III. GOD'S GRACE IS EVIDENT IN THE LIFE OF ENOCH. v.21-24

Enoch was the seventh from Adam, in the line of Seth, the climactic example of one faithful to God. Remember our study in Genesis 4 on the line of Cain, the line of wickedness and rebellion. The seventh in that line was also the climactic example of one in rebellion against God. It was Lamech. His sinful and rebellions boast is written in,

Gen. 4:23 "Then Lamech said to his wives: "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; Wives of Lamech, listen to my speech! For I have killed a man for wounding me, Even a young man for hurting me. 24 If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

As his counterpart in the line of Seth, Enoch is a marvelous example of godliness. We find his righteousness and his faith confirmed elsewhere in the Bible.

Hebr. 11:5 "By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. 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."

And he surely was faithful in proclaiming the righteousness of God to a wicked and corrupt generation. We read that,

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."

Enoch spoke of God's judgment upon such wickedness. And twice in our text this morning we read that Enoch walked with God.

v.22-23

v.24a

A. Enoch was blessed to walk with God.

So what does that mean? It certainly portrays the intimacy that is the essence of OT religion. There is no harsh moralism, no legalism, no terror of God at all. Just the close words of family love--he walked with God.

The words are also used of Noah, which we'll see in the next chapter, and they are also used of Levi, with a fuller description,

Malachi 2:5 "My covenant was with him, one of life and peace, And I gave them to him that he might fear Me; So he feared Me And was reverent before My name. 6 The law of truth was in his mouth, And injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, And turned many away from iniquity."

To walk with God is to live with God, to live every moment of every day in the awareness of his loving presence. It is to live in peace and uprightness. It is, perhaps, the greatest way for us to communicate in our language what the Christian life really is.

I cannot believe that Enoch walked with God physically in the perfection of fellowship enjoyed by Adam and Eve before the fall, for Enoch inherited Adam's sinful nature and was therefore guilty of sin. It cannot be that Enoch would have been allowed to re-enter the Garden of Eden and walk with God literally as Adam and Eve had done. Yet, to walk with God is to enjoy the highest possible communion with him, living your life in such a way that in faith you remain uninterruptedly conscious of the nearness of almighty God and so walk as the thought of that presence determines. In the words of Hebrews, Enoch was one who "had this testimony, that he pleased God."

What a marvelous description! One so well worth our imitation, and of such motivation for us in our own lives, to walk with God, to desire to please him, every moment of every day. Can anything greater ever be said about any of us, any of you? Can there be any greater reputation for you to acquire? Is there any greater way for you to be remembered? Certainly not. Just this, "He walks with God." "She walks with God."

That's more important than how much theology you might know. It's more important than any role you might have within the church. It's more important than what you wear, how you look, or how much money you have. So let this be your goal, that others, when they think of you, might simply say, "He walked with God!"

Then notice just how thoroughly God's grace was evident to Enoch.

B. Enoch was blessed to be taken by God without suffering death.

There isn't any other way to explain these verses. Enoch did not die. God took him from earth alive!

v.23-24

And so we read,

Hebr. 11:5 "By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

The words are plain in their meaning. In the flesh, with his human body, he was taken up into God's presence, which we call heaven. He would still be there today! We read about two others who went into heaven with their human bodies, the prophet Elijah and Jesus Christ himself. So when we read about the final resurrection, that all who are in Christ will be raised in body, we realize that Enoch got there without first tasting death. His body was glorified immediately. In a sense, he broke the chain of death. At the very least, he represents God's power over death. And he proves the truth of the resurrection of the body, and the reality of our physical existence into all eternity.

Our great hope is the resurrection of the body, and don't ever forget that! For the last enemy to be destroyed is death, the death which kills our bodies. And Enoch proves to us that death has already been rendered powerless when confronted by omnipotent power God! God's grace was evident in the life of Enoch.

Finally, Genesis 5 introduces a man whom we will be studying for the next few weeks, the man Noah, the 10th generation of Adam.

IV. GOD'S GRACE WAS EVIDENT IN THE LIFE OF NOAH. v.28-29

We'll be looking at Noah in much more detail, but this morning, with these verses, let get an introduction. First, the meaning of his name. Noah is derived from the Hebrew word for

“rest.” It is a synonym for the word sabbath, though with slightly different connotations. Noah, or the root word nuah, is the rest of quietness in the presence of security. It refers to the peacefulness of having no troubles.

Makes you want to experience that, doesn't it? Nuah is the settled enjoyment of a final resting place or a final victory. It is the rest which ultimately we will experience in our eternal resting place.

It is the word used in,

Ps. 116:7 “Return to your rest, O my soul, For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you. 8 For You have delivered my soul from death, My eyes from tears, And my feet from falling. 9 I will walk before the LORD In the land of the living.”

And so, what we see is that,

A. Noah represented the quiet rest of eternal security.

As we'll see, that's very significant in the day and time in which he lived, for we read that,

Gen. 6:5 “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.”

Noah, and the work to which God called him, would provide rest and security in the midst of a very sinful world. Surely, God's grace was evident in his life. Notice again how Noah is described in,

v.29

Noah would bring comfort, according to the prophecy of his father Lamach. It would be comfort in the midst of the labor and

painful toil brought about by God's curse spoken to Adam. Surely, working by the sweat of your brow is a difficult and painful task. Ruling and subduing the ground which is producing thorns and thistles is a painful task. That pain is, in fact, the essence of God's curse. The task of earning a living and providing for the needs of your family had, no doubt, become increasingly difficult in the 1600 years before the flood. It seemed to be a hopelessly unending cycle. But,

B. Noah represented the comforting release from God's curse.

v.29

In fact, in Genesis 8, we're told that floodwaters of judgment would never again come.

Gen. 8:20 “Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. 21 And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. 22 “While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, Cold and heat, Winter and summer, And day and night Shall not cease.”

And in an even fuller explanation, we read that the floodwaters of Noah's day represented not only God's judgment upon a wicked generation, but also his salvation granted by grace to those who believe.

1 Peter 3:18 “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, 19 by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, 20 who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the

days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. 21 There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.”

And so the greatest evidence of God’s grace is represented in the life of Noah--the water of salvation, water symbolized by the water of baptism. In other words, the water of cleansing, the water which cleanses away our sin. In that context, the message of the gospel is never more clearly stated than it is in the words of Ezekiel,

Ezek.36:25 “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh...You shall be My people, and I will be your God.”

So what do you learn from all these genealogies? History, you learn the history of mankind. But especially so, you learn the history of the line of mankind from whom Jesus would come, the line of Seth.