

Genesis 5 "Learning from the Past"*

Proposition: We can learn from the past. As we investigate Genesis 5, there are three important discoveries for us.

I. We learn about our origin (1-2).

A. God created mankind.

1. He made man in a day.

2. He made man in His likeness.

3. He made man in plurality.

B. God blessed mankind.

C. God named mankind.

II. We learn about our ancestors (3-32).

A. First there was Adam (3-5).

B. Then came Seth (6-8).

C. Then came Enosh (9-11).

D. Then came Kenan (12-14).

E. Then came Mahalalel (15-17).

F. Then came Jared (18-20).

G. Then came Enoch (21-24).

H. Then came Methuselah (25-27).

I. Then came Lamech (28-31).

J. Finally came Noah (32).

III. We learn about our desperate need.

A. We are mortal.

B. We are depraved.

C. We can experience hope beyond the grave.

Two pals are watching the eleven-o'clock news. A report comes on about a man threatening to jump from the 20th floor of a downtown building. One friend turns to the other and says, "I'll bet you ten bucks the guy doesn't jump."

"It's a bet," agrees his buddy.

A few minutes later, the man on the ledge jumps, so the loser hands his pal a \$10 bill. "I can't take your money," his friend admits. "I saw him jump earlier on the six-o'clock news."

"Me, too," says the other buddy. "But I didn't think he'd do it again!"

Do you like history? We can learn from history, can't we? In fact, the person who ignores the past may do so to his own detriment.

It's true. God wants us to learn from the past. It's been well said that history is *His* story. Jesus lived in history. The Bible is a historical book.

This morning, as we return to our Genesis series, we turn our attention to Genesis 5. Genesis 5 is history. In fact, Genesis 5 is a genealogical record.

I can hear your thoughts, "Oh no! There's nothing here for us." Wrong! What does 2 Timothy 3:16 say is true of God's Word? It is *profitable*--all of it is. But we must look and reflect. We must study it, seek to understand the intent of the biblical author, and then apply it to our lives.

I'm convinced we need to *learn from the past* and Genesis 5 can help us. Here's how. God wants us to know some important truths which are conveyed in this text. As we investigate Genesis 5, there are three important discoveries for us. The first is this...

I. Discovery #1: We learn about our origin (1-2).

Verse 1 begins, "This is the written account of Adam's line." The first two chapters of Genesis present the creation account. In chapter 3 we see the Fall. In chapter 4 we learn about the first children, the first murder, and the spread of evil. There we also discovered there are two types of people in the world--people like Cain who live for themselves, and people like Seth who call on God (4:25).

In chapter 5 we find "the written account of Adam's line," or "the book of the generations of Adam" (as the KJV puts it). What follows is the genealogy of Adam to Noah. Who compiled the account? Moses wrote Genesis in the fifteenth century B.C., but verse 1 seems to indicate he had access to an existing, written document which he incorporated here.

Answer this. Whose line is presented here? Adam's. You can go back no further, can you? All human beings trace their ancestry to Adam. So here's our first discovery. In verses 1-2 we learn about our origin.

The text states, "When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. ² He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them "man."

Sound familiar? Moses isn't giving us new truth here, but is reviewing some basic highlights pertaining to origins from Genesis 1-2. He uses three verbs to depict what God did at the beginning of mankind.

A. God created mankind. "When God created man," verse 1 states. Remember Genesis 1:27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

Why are we here? Because God created us.

"You mean we're not here by chance and evolutionary process?" That's right. This is fundamental. We are here because *God created mankind*.

How did He do it? There are three important phrases in the text which shed light on the subject. They also tell us much about our identity.

1. *God made man in a day*. In its attempt to render a smoother reading of the Hebrew, the NIV misses this. The KJV and the NKJV capture the literal rendering of the Hebrew, "In the day that God created man." And at the end of verse 2, "In the day when they were created."

How long did it take God to make mankind? He did it *in a day*. Not an age. Not by means of an evolutionary process. He did it on day six.

2. *He made man in His likeness*. Does that mean we look like God? No, not physically. God is a Spirit (John 4:24). God is infinite, while we are finite. But God imaged Himself when He fashioned mankind. He said so.

Remember our photo illustration? In my wallet I have a picture of my wife. Is it my wife? Sure it is--it's not *your* wife! But is the picture really my wife? No, the picture is merely some Kodak paper and ink. There's no inherent worth in the picture. The worth of the picture is linked to what it represents. The picture is an image of my wife.

Likewise verse 1 concludes, "When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God." We are something the animals are not--God's imagebearers.

3. *He made man in plurality*. What do I mean by "plurality?" What Moses meant at the beginning of verse 2, "He created them male and female." Why are there two sexes? Don't miss this. Is sexuality merely a social matter? No. There are two sexes by divine design.

Let that sink in. We are different by design. Whose design? God's. It takes the two sexes together to express what God means by "human" (Kidner, 80). Are there any implications here for the present debate about homosexuality being an "acceptable alternate lifestyle?" Indeed there are.

God did not create Adam to be alone. He fashioned a complement for him, a companion, a partner, a woman.

Think of the implications. Why is marriage sacred? Because God designed it. Why is marriage one man and one woman for life? Because God designed it that way. And this is God's world. God created mankind--in a day, in His likeness, and in plurality. What else did God do?

B. God blessed mankind. That's the second verb Moses used to review what God did in the creation account. God "blessed them."

Adam and Eve lived under the blessing of God. Just think of it. A perfect world. They knew the privilege of experiencing the blessing of God.

And they forfeited it.

That's our problem, too. You see, we were created to live in relationship with God, under His blessing. But because of sin--Adam's sin and our own--we're under God's wrath. Can we experience God's blessing again? Yes! How? By coming to know the "last Adam," Jesus Christ. At the Cross, Jesus took the wrath we deserve.

Ephesians 1:3 puts it this way, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has *blessed us* in the heavenly realms with every spiritual *blessing* in Christ." Those who know Christ are no longer under God's wrath, but once again under His blessing. A third activity...

C. God named mankind. Verse 2 concludes, "And called their name Adam, in the day when they were created (KJV)." The Hebrew word *Adam* is used in various ways. It was Adam's personal name. It can refer to the male gender. At times it can designate both sexes, like our term "mankind" (or "humanity") does.

So here, "God called them 'Adam' or 'man.'" What does that indicate? There is a fundamental equality between men and women. There's difference of function and role, yes, for God designed it that way (Eph 5:22-33; Col 3:18-19). But when it comes to worth and value, there is no difference between men and

women. God called *them* "Adam."

So there's the first discovery. In Genesis 5 we learn about our origin. The rest of the Bible builds on this foundation. Will you affirm today what God's Word says about where we came from? What else can we learn from the past? A second discovery...

II. Discovery #2: We learn about our ancestors (3-32).

There are some portions of God's Word we tend to avoid. Genealogies are one. Ray Stedman tells the story of an old Scots minister who was reading from the first chapter of Matthew's gospel:

He started reading, 'Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac beget Jacob, and Jacob begat Judah,' and he looked on ahead and saw the list to follow and said, 'and they kept on begetting one another all the way down this page and halfway into the next.'

If we are honest, that is what most of us do with the genealogies of the Bible—we skip them. Or try to get through them as fast as we can to get to something really "practical."

But all of God's Word is "practical" once we grasp its God-given purpose. God gave us His Word so we could *know Him*. That includes this genealogy.

He didn't give us this genealogy merely to satisfy our curiosity. He gave it to transform us, not merely inform us.

A couple of general comments first. One, *this is Seth's line*. We already saw Cain's in chapter 4. Cain was a wicked man whose descendants were wicked, too. But God preserved a godly remnant in the world, just like He does today. Genesis 5 gives us Adam's lineage through Seth.

Two, some of the names in Seth's line sound familiar to the names in Cain's. Cain's son was Enoch, and there was an Enoch in Seth's line. Both had a Lamech as well. Scholars have wondered about the similarities. One thing's for sure. People can have the same names, descend from the same ancestors, and have the same family-blood flowing through their veins, *and be very different!* Godliness is a matter of grace, not genetics.

Three, the genealogy includes *ten generations*. Moses mentions Adam, Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah. Let's take a look at our ancestors one at a time...

A. First there was Adam (3-5). "When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth. ⁴ After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. ⁵ Altogether, Adam lived 930 years, and then he died."

At age 130 Adam had a son. He'd had two sons prior to this, but one was now dead and the other a renegade. Then God gave Adam "Seth," a child of promise to replace Abel--as Eve recognized when she named Seth in 4:25.

What was true of Seth? He shared in Adam's "likeness" and "image." And in whose likeness and image was Adam formed? God's. Don't miss that. Moses used the same words to depict Seth's connection to Adam as Adam's to God. What was true of Adam was true of Seth. Seth, too, is an imagebearer.

What happened after Seth was born? Adam lived another 800 years and had other sons and daughters. How many? We're not told. How many children can a couple have if they live to be over 900 years old?

You say, "You don't mean to tell me you actually believe Adam lived to be 930 years old, do you? How could

a man live so long?" To the first question, my answer is, "Yes, I do believe it because that's what the biblical record says. To the second question I would say this. The modern assumption is that the present is the key to understanding the past. So if the average life span of people is 84 years in our day it must have been in Adam's day.

Not so. The present is not the key to understanding the past. The fact is, the first world was *very different* from our world. Noah's flood changed many things. It changed the world's geography--prior to the flood there was one continental land mass and one sea (1:9-10). It changed the world's climate--before the flood there was a vast water expanse around the globe (1:6) which may have shielded harmful radiation from the sun and created a greenhouse effect on the planet. What's more, in the first world diet was different--both man and the animals were vegetarian (1:30).

My point is this. Things have changed as the result of divine judgment. We *don't know* and can't even imagine what that pre-Flood world was like.

Gordon Talbot observes (48), "The Bible does not tell us why people lived long lives at that time in history. Various suggestions have been put forward. Perhaps the human race in its original purity was much stronger than in later generations. Perhaps the cloud cover over the earth before the great Flood strained out damaging rays from the sun. The Lord chose to give them long lives, and we may just have to leave it at that, rather than speculating further."

Altogether Adam lived 930 years, and as the text says, "then he died."

B. Then came Seth (6-8). "When Seth had lived 105 years, he became the father of Enosh. ⁷ And after he became the father of Enosh, Seth lived 807 years and had other sons and daughters. ⁸ Altogether, Seth lived 912 years, and then he died."

We're not told much about Seth. We're given his age when Enosh was born--105. We're told that he like Adam had other sons and daughters. And that he lived 912 years. And that he died.

Why are we told the name of one of his sons and not the others? Because the purpose of this genealogy is to show a connection--between Adam and Noah. And Enosh was part of the connection.

C. Then came Enosh (9-11). "When Enosh had lived 90 years, he became the father of Kenan. ¹⁰ And after he became the father of Kenan, Enosh lived 815 years and had other sons and daughters. ¹¹ Altogether, Enosh lived 905 years, and then he died."

Remember, it was during Enosh's lifetime that some type of spiritual renewal occurred according to Genesis 4:25. "At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD."

D. Then came Kenan (12-14). "When Kenan had lived 70 years, he became the father of Mahalalel. ¹³ And after he became the father of Mahalalel, Kenan lived 840 years and had other sons and daughters. ¹⁴ Altogether, Kenan lived 910 years, and then he died." We know nothing else of Kenan. He lived, had a son, had other sons and daughters, and then he died.

E. Then came Mahalalel (15-17). "When Mahalalel had lived 65 years, he became the father of Jared. ¹⁶ And after he became the father of Jared, Mahalalel lived 830 years and had other sons and daughters. ¹⁷ Altogether, Mahalalel lived 895 years, and then he died."

Mahalalel was *only* sixty-five years old when he fathered Jared--that's the youngest age so far in the genealogy. He too lived along time, and then he died.

F. Then came Jared (18-20). "When Jared had lived 162 years, he became the father of Enoch. ¹⁹ And

after he became the father of Enoch, Jared lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. ²⁰ Altogether, Jared lived 962 years, and then he died."

Jared is the second oldest man in the list. But more noteworthy is what happened to his son.

G. Then came Enoch (21-24). "When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. ²² And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. ²³ Altogether, Enoch lived 365 years. ²⁴ Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away."

All of a sudden the pattern breaks with Enoch. Enoch *walked with God*.

Don't miss the contrast. The text says that Adam lived 930 years and then died. Seth lived 912 years and then died. Enosh lived 905 years and then died. Kenan lived 910 years and then died. Mahalalel lived 895 years and then died. Jared lived 962 years and then died.

All these men lived, but Enoch *walked with God*. There's a difference, isn't there? The world is full of people who *live*, but it's a beautiful thing to find a person who *walks with God*.

Ray Stedman shares the account of the little girl who was telling her mother the story of Enoch. She said, "Enoch used to take long walks with God. One day he walked so far God said, 'It's too far to go back; come on home with me.'" That is what happened to Enoch."

Enoch was quite a man. How long did he walk with God? Verse 22--300 years! We can learn a lot from Enoch, and in fact will. Next week I want to devote an entire study to Enoch's life entitled, "Enoch: A Man Who Walked with God."

H. Then came Methuselah (25-27). "When Methuselah had lived 187 years, he became the father of Lamech. ²⁶ And after he became the father of Lamech, Methuselah lived 782 years and had other sons and daughters. ²⁷ Altogether, Methuselah lived 969 years, and then he died."

According to the dates given in Genesis 5, Methuselah lived longer than any other person--969 years of life. But in the end, he too died.

I. Then came Lamech (28-31). "When Lamech had lived 182 years, he had a son. ²⁹ He named him Noah and said, "He will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the LORD has cursed." ³⁰ After Noah was born, Lamech lived 595 years and had other sons and daughters. ³¹ Altogether, Lamech lived 777 years, and then he died."

Once again the pattern changes with Lamech. We're told what Lamech named his son: "Noah." Noah sounds like the Hebrew for "comfort." And we're told what Lamech said after his son, Noah, was born: "This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed (KJV)."

Why did Lamech say that? I see his words as an evidence of faith. He affirmed that his son would bring comfort to the world. Did he? Not quite as Lamech might have envisioned.

It's interesting that if you chart the ages given in Genesis 5, Noah was born about 1,000 years after the curse. Just think of it. One thousand years of toil and pain had gone by. And then Noah was born. And his father called him "comfort."

It's also interesting to note that based on the years given in Genesis 5, Noah was the first person listed who was born after the death of Adam. According to this genealogy, Noah was born in the year 1056 after the

Creation, while Adam died at the age of 930. Perhaps Lamech heard of Adam's death. And perhaps he thought that since Adam died the curse spoken to Adam would soon come to an end.

No doubt, he knew about the promise God gave about a coming Deliverer in Genesis 3:15. And so he named his son "Noah"--or "comfort"--with the hope that his son would fulfill God's promise.

To be sure, Noah was a special man, a man who "found favor in the eyes of the LORD" (Gen 6:8). But his mission would be far more radical than Lamech could ever have imagined!

No, Noah was not the promised Deliverer. The world would wait many more centuries until the day when *the* Deliverer would come. In fact, rather than bring comfort to the world, Noah saw the complete destruction of it.

Which brings us to the end of the genealogy...

J. Finally came Noah (32). "After Noah was 500 years old, he became the father of Shem, Ham and Japheth."

Noah may have had other sons and daughters before these three. If so, they died either before the flood or in it.

Shem, Ham, and Japheth were born about twenty years after God told Noah that the flood was coming (Talbot, p. 51). We can assume they helped Noah build the ark.

A sidelight about the dates: If you work with the figures given in Genesis 5, you can date the Flood at 1656 years after Creation. That is, *if* there are no gaps in between the ten given names. And if the chronology has no gaps, then Adam died 57 years before Enoch did (his great, great, great, great grandson). That means Adam would have lived to see his descendants through Lamech, Noah's father. In fact, Noah would have been born only 126 years after Adam died.

But are there gaps in the record? Do these ten names represent continuous links or could they be separate landmarks (as Kidner puts it, p. 82)?

That's not an easy question to answer. In the Bible, there are other genealogies. Some of them have "gaps." Matthew's genealogy of Christ, for example (Matthew 1:1-17) is arranged into three successions of 14 generations each. And his genealogy is known to be selective.

Robert Deffinbaugh observes, "The expression 'A begat B' does not always imply direct parentage." Matthew 1:8 states that 'Joram begat Uzziah,' but from the Old Testament (II Kings 8:25; 11:2, 14:1,21) we learn that Joram was the father of Ahaziah, who fathered Joash, father of Amaziah father of Uzziah. Thus 'begat' can mean 'begat the line culminating in.'

Elsewhere Kitchen states, "Terms like 'son' and 'father' can mean not only '(grand)son' and '(grand)father,' but also 'descendant' and 'ancestor' respectively."

The question remains, "What was Moses' intent in Genesis 5?" His intent is to show the connection between

Adam and Noah. Could there be gaps in the genealogy? Perhaps. Could there be no gaps? Perhaps. The language of the text and the nature of biblical genealogies would allow for either. I prefer to take the reading at face value until I'm given reason to not do so.

Now we come to our third discovery.

III. Discovery #3: We learn about our desperate need.

Warren Wiersbe has remarked, "You do not move ahead by constantly looking in a rear view mirror. The past is a rudder to guide you, not an anchor to drag you. We must learn from the past but not live in the past."

That's key. I'm not interested in living in the past. Shortly we will close our Bibles and move on in the present. But right now we have an opportunity. God gave us this historical record to teach us something, about our origin, about our ancestors, but ultimately, about our fundamental, desperate need. We must not miss three undeniable, inescapable truths in light of Genesis 5...

A. We are mortal. Did you notice the pattern in Genesis 5? So and so lived. Then he had a son. Then he had other sons and daughters. Then he lived a long time. And then he what? And then he *died*.

The statistics are pretty high. One out of every one person born into this world in the eighteenth century *died*. And the same was true for the seventeenth century, and the same will be true for those born in the twenty-first century if the Lord doesn't first return.

We're born, we live, we may have a family, but in the end, we die. Why? We are mortal. Whether you live 90 years or 900 hundred years, death is inevitable. It's the tragic consequence of being a sinner in a sin-cursed world.

God told Adam and Eve, "You shall surely die." And they did.

Are you living in light of your mortality? We often live like we're going to be here forever. We're not.

B. We are depraved. Not deprived, but depraved. What is depravity? We see the seeds of it in Genesis 5, and we'll see the ugly fruit of it in Genesis 6.

Genesis 6:5 states, "The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time." That's depravity.

In ten generations the earth was full of people, full of wicked, evil people. There were thousands and thousands, if not millions and millions of people. Yet there was only *one* righteous man, Noah.

How do you explain that? Why weren't there more righteous people? Why don't people seek God? The answer is because mankind is *depraved*.

We are depraved. We are born that way.

Genesis 8:21 gives as vivid a description of depravity as you'll find anywhere in the Bible. After the Flood God said to Noah, "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though *every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood*."

When we look to the past we learn something about ourselves. We see our mortality. But we also see our depravity.

Is there hope? Yes. We can be reconciled to God. How? Through Jesus Christ. Jesus came, died and rose again to rescue depraved sinners. Do you know Jesus?

C. We can experience hope beyond the grave. Like Enoch did. Enoch walked with God and God *took him*. Answer this. Are you walking *with* God or *without* Him?

In a chapter full of "and then he died," "and then he died," "and then he died," there's a ray of hope! The grave is not the end for the child of God. Enoch walked with God, and God took him to heaven. That's our hope, too.