

ADAM'S BOOK

by Ray C. Stedman

In Genesis 5 we come to the first of the familiar genealogies of Scripture. These have proved to be a stumbling block to many who seek to read the Bible through. They start well, but they soon get to the desert of genealogies and give up their reading. These genealogies are somewhat difficult. I am tempted to handle them in the fashion of the old Scottish minister who was reading from the opening chapter of Matthew. He started reading, "Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Judah," and he looked on ahead and saw the long list to follow and said, "and they kept on begetting one another all the way down this page and halfway into the next." But it is a mistake to ignore these genealogies because they are very fruitful, very suggestive, and very interesting.

This one begins with a brief introduction and continues, in a standard formula of presentation, throughout the chapter. Look at the first five verses:

This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made them in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. When Adam had lived a hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. The days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were hundred years; and he had other sons and daughters: Thus all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred thirty years; and he died. {Gen 5:1-5 RSV}

Now it is important that we take careful note of the title of this chapter. The phrase, "This is the book of the generations of" occurs only one other place in Scripture. Perhaps you have already guessed that it occurs the second time at the opening of the New Testament, the first verse of Matthew, "This is the book of the generations of Jesus Christ." Here in Genesis it is, "This is the book of the generations of Adam."

We are told here that God created man in the likeness of God. This is a recapitulation of what we have seen before. "Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man...", or literally, he named them "Adam." Notice, he did not name them "The Adamses;" it was "Adam." I think the revisers are quite right in translating this "Man," because it is clear that we have here the story of a race, not merely an individual. There is only one man in the Old Testament, and that is Adam. There is only one man in the New Testament, and that is Jesus. There are only two men who have ever lived in history, Adam and Jesus -- the first Adam and the last Adam; the first Man and the Second Man. Thus these two books are introduced by this same phrase, "The book of the generations of..." The phrase does not describe ancestry, but characteristics; it describes the nature of these two men as they develop into a race.

We are told further that it was God who named Adam. When Adam named the animals we saw that it was necessary that he understand their character, their nature. The name reflected the character. Therefore this suggests here that only God understands man. Only God can name man because he is the only one who understands him. This is why we so desperately need the revelation of man that comes from God, and this is why psychology cannot be realistic or accurate unless it takes into account what we read in the Scriptures about man. God knows more about man than man does and this is strongly implied here.

The first thing said in Adam's book is that Seth was made in the image and likeness of his father. He was the exact duplicate of what Adam was, and so every son and daughter of Adam has been since. Again, this is why the Bible is so contemporary -- it is dealing with us. We find ourselves here because we too are sons and daughters of Adam and share the same characteristics as Seth, the son of Adam, one generation removed. When the account uses this phrase, "in his own likeness, after his image," it is referring to the hidden, inner pattern of man, and the actual outward characteristics. Seth was what Adam was, both in his inner life and his outer life. He was, therefore, a fallen man.

There then follows a chronology that runs through the rest of the chapter. There are several factors of great interest in this to which I will call your attention as we run through it. First, it is evident, if you study this carefully, that this chronology was not intended to be a time schedule. This was Bishop Ussher's mistake. He is the one who is responsible for the date that appears in some of our Bibles, 4004 BC, as the date of creation. He figured this all out (without the aid of a computer) back in the seventeenth century by using these Bible chronologies and thus came up with the date, 4004 BC. But scholars have since pointed out that this is not what they call a "tight" chronology. It does not trace an unbroken linkage of individuals. It highlights certain individuals. The son that is mentioned for each man is not necessarily the firstborn son. It says of each of them "he had other sons and daughters." Out of that family one is selected (not necessarily the firstborn) and included in this genealogy.

Thus the intent of this is not to give us a tracing of time. This is underscored by the fact that the versions of this account in other languages have different numbers of years for the people involved. The Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, has a quite different period of years involved, as does the Syriac Version. The obvious intent of the genealogy is to highlight certain selected names, and the reason for that we will note a bit later.

Now the second factor to note about this account is the exceedingly long length of years these men lived. Most of them lived about nine hundred years. Perhaps there are times, as we read this, that we might wish we could imitate them. At other times we feel they were the most cursed of individuals to have lived that long. But the record remains and has raised a problem for many. There have been several attempts to explain this account. Certain scholars suggest that what we have here is not individuals, but clans, family groups. The years given are the extent in which that family group held together as a single unit, much as the clans of Scotland have. But this is very difficult, because it is clear that several of these names are clearly individuals. Enoch, for instance, "walked with God." That cannot refer to a clan; but to an individual. Seth, the son of Adam, is clearly an individual.

There are others who seek to explain this longevity by taking the years as lunar months, i.e., each "year" would approximate our modern month. If you figure out these men's ages on that basis, it does come out, rather interestingly, in the upper limits. It would make Methuselah probably about eighty-five or ninety years old, which would certainly not make him the oldest man living, but it does give him a reasonable length of years. But at the lower limits this system becomes absurd. It would mean that Seth became the father of Enosh when he was five years old, which is most remarkable! Some of the miracles that are required by these explanations are far more incredible than to take the account in its natural rendering.

We must conclude, therefore, that this account indicates that conditions on earth were widely different before the flood. We have had other confirmations of this. It was doubtless true that men lived much longer before the flood than they do today. There have been a number of interesting scientific suggestions made as to why this is true. I will not go into those, but if you care to pursue it they are very interesting. It is suggestive, however, that perhaps the years of a man, intended by God, were approximately a thousand years before a change took place that would introduce him to a different mode of existence. But, of course, all this was changed by the Fall of man.

There is a third factor in this of great interest and that is the repeated occurrence throughout this account of the phrase, "and he died." Every individual's mention ends with the phrase, "and he died, and he died, and he died." Like the tolling of a great bell, this phrase resounds throughout the passage. Eight times it is recorded, "and he died" contradicting the lie of Satan in the garden when he said to Eve, "If you eat of this fruit you will not die," {cf, Gen 3:4}. But here is the factual record. Everyone who came along lived so many years and then he died.

This suggests also that all the forms of death, as we know them today, prevailed then. There was not only physical death -- you did not have to be killed on a freeway back on those days but death took other forms -- there were also present the incipient forms of death that we recognize in our lives today; things like malice, jealousy, hatred, meaninglessness, despair and emptiness. All these are forms of death. They are the absence of life, as God intended life to be. That is what death is -- the absence of life. These, too, prevailed back in

those days, so that, as we saw last week, life before the flood was very much like it is today: a generation seeking after comfort and luxury, brilliant in its technological achievements, banding together in cities and thus creating an artificial form of life. Yet, in other ways, life was vastly different then, as is clearly evidenced by the length of life they lived.

But now in this account there is found one exception to the tolling of the bell of death; one man of whom it is not said, "and he died." This is evidently the highlight of this chapter, the reason why all this is given to us:

When Enoch had lived sixty-five years, he became the father of Methuselah. Enoch walked with God after the birth of Methuselah three hundred years, and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him. {Gen 5:21-24 RSV}

Evidently this is designed to focus our interest. The whole passage rolls on almost like a movie film until suddenly it stops and focuses on one man. Instead of saying, "and he died," it says, "and he was not, for God took him." Now the book of Hebrews, in the eleventh chapter, recounts the story of Enoch and tells us that this phrase, "and he was not, for God took him," means that he was "taken up [or translated] so that he should not see death," {cf, Heb 11:5}. In other words, here is one of only two men in all history who never died. Enoch is one; Elijah is the other. Enoch did not see death but he was taken up.

Twice it says in this account that before he was taken up he walked with God. I love the story 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. Obviously, the intent of this passage is to focus our attention on this phrase, "he walked with God." What does it mean to walk with God? Here is a man who, in the midst of a brilliant but godless generation, walked with God. What does it mean? Well, it is exactly the same today as it was then. To walk with God is accomplished now in exactly the same way. Enoch did not literally walk with God, this is unquestionably a figurative expression, but a figurative walk involves the same thing today as it did then.

First, it means he went in the same direction God went. He was moving the way God was going. God is forever moving in human history. He is moving right now to accomplish certain things in human life, and he has been doing so for centuries. The man who walks with God is the man who knows which way God is going and goes the same way. Now what is that? What direction is God moving? Perhaps we cannot indicate it positively, but we certainly can negatively. God moves always in unswerving hostility toward sin. He is opposed to that which destroys and wrecks human life. No matter how good it looks, no matter how attractive it seems, how luridly it is painted, God is against it. And the man who walks with God is the man who walks in unswerving hostility toward sin in his own life and refuses to make up with it or permit it to rule or to reign. That is the first thing in a walk with God.

Second, it means to keep in step. You cannot walk with somebody if you do not keep in step with him. Sooner or later there comes unbalance and you bump into him, or he bumps into you. Therefore there must a keeping in step. Now it is most interesting that in the New Testament a walk is described this way. It is a series of steps. A walk is not like moving on one of these endless belts. It is not smooth; it is a repetition of almost falling. Have you ever analyzed your walk? Every time you take a step you almost fall. You allow your body to go off balance and then you catch yourself with your other leg. Then you shift to that and you almost fall again, only to catch yourself. That is what a walk is; living on the verge of a fall all the time. And the man or woman who walks with God is the man or woman who lives on the verge of a fall.

That is an adventurous life. That means if God is not there to support and strengthen you, down you go. You are counting on him to come through and to keep you steady. That is what a walk with God involves. It is always a walk of venturing out. It is never satisfied with the status quo, never content to remain in a quiet state, doing nothing, waiting, enjoying one's self; it is forever venturing out. It is forever moving at the same pace God moves. It means taking a step when God insists. I have discovered in my own life (and see it reflected in many others) a tendency to want to sit down after I have taken a step and rest awhile. We all feel God pressuring us to do something -- take a new step, stop this, start that, or venture out in a new direction--and after God pushes us awhile, we do it. Perhaps we have been resisting for quite awhile before,

but then we take the step and we feel good. We have accomplished something. Then God comes along and says, "Now I want you to take another step." And we say, "Oh, no, Lord. I had a hard enough time taking this one. Just leave me alone now for awhile. You walk on for a bit and then come back." But the worst thing that can happen to us is for God to do exactly that.

That is what he did with the children of Israel when they came to the edge of the Promised Land. He said, "I want you to walk with me into the land." But they said, "No, not us. You go by yourself but we're not going." So God said, "All right, then you will wander for forty years in the wilderness until you come back to this same place. I'll leave you alone. If you don't want to go in, you don't have to go in." But that is the terrible thing about God, he gives us what we want. If we want it badly enough he will let us have it, and it will be the worst thing that ever happened to us. But Enoch was a man who had learned to move as God moved, and to walk in step with him.

The third thing is that there was no controversy between them. They were in agreement. "Except two be in agreement, how can they walk together?" says the Scriptures {cf, Amos 3:3}. They must be in agreement. And this is how we must be. There must be no controversy between us if we are going to walk with God, but we must agree with things as he sees them. What changes this makes in our lives! In our Sunday School class some of us were wrestling with the problem of the Christian view of war. I could see people struggling with having to change their mind about certain things they thought were true but which the Word of God corrected. It was a severe, difficult struggle. But if you want to walk with God you must see things as he sees them. Enoch did. For three hundred years he walked with God, and this is the same activity to which we are called. We are to walk "as children of light," {Eph 5:8}. We are to walk "in the Spirit," {Gal 5:16, 5:25 KJV}. We are to walk "worthy of God" {1 Th 2:12 KJV}, through the midst of a godless generation, exactly as Enoch did.

But notice that Enoch did not always walk with God. The first sixty-five years of his life were quite another story. Evidently, he reflected for sixty-five years the same godless attitude as those around him. You ask, "Well, what started him walking with God then?" And the answer is given to us here. It was not receiving his Social Security payments when he reached sixty-five, but it was the birth of a son, a boy whom he named Methuselah. It says so. "Enoch walked with God after the birth of Methuselah three hundred years." So it was the birth of this baby that started him walking with God.

Surely there is more to this than simply the fact that he became a father. I have noticed that becoming a father has a profound effect upon a young man. It makes him more thoughtful, makes him more serious, more sober in his outlook on life. It does have a very beneficial effect. But there is more to it here than that and it is revealed by the name that Enoch gave to his son. Methuselah is a very interesting name. It means, literally, "His death shall bring it," or loosely translated, "When he dies, it will come." What will come? The flood! Enoch, we are told in another passage of Scripture, was given a revelation from God. He saw the direction of the divine movement, looked on to the end of the culture, the comforts, and the mechanical marvels of his own day, to the fact there must come an inevitable judgment on the principle of evil in human life. He saw the certainty of destruction of a world living only to please itself. When he saw it his baby was born, so, in obedience, evidently to God's word, he named the baby, "When he dies, it will come."

This revelation to Enoch is given in the next-to-the-last book of the Bible. If you want to see what a unit the Bible is, notice how Jude and Revelation tie in with Genesis. In the 14th verse of Jude we read, concerning certain godless men who would be present in any age but especially in the last age:

It was of these also that Enoch in the seventh generation from Adam prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with his holy myriads, to execute judgment on all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness which they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own passions, loudmouthed boasters, flattering people to gain advantage. {Jude 1:14-16 RSV}

That was the world of Enoch's day, and Enoch saw the end of it. He saw that the Lord was coming to execute judgment on it. Now I know there are those who take that passage in Jude to refer to the second coming of the

Lord Jesus Christ, and in a secondary way it does refer to that. But its primary reference is to the judgment of the flood. Enoch saw the coming of the flood and he named his child, "When he dies, it will come." If you figure out the chronology of this from the life of Noah, who was six hundred years old when the flood came, you will find that the very year Methuselah died, the flood came. It happened exactly as God had predicted.

But the grace of God is revealed here in the fact that this boy lived longer than any man ever lived, nine hundred and sixty-nine years! That is how long God waited before he fulfilled the threat implied in the boy's name. Can you imagine what a fascination this boy must have been to his family? How they watched him every time he went out? But God let him live longer than anybody else to reveal the heart and compassion of a God who dislikes to bring judgment but does so because of the moral demands made upon his nature of truth. Now we see the reason for this table of genealogy. First, it is given to highlight the supreme purpose of revelation, to teach us the possibility and importance of a walk with God. That is what men are called to do, to walk with God. The greatest glory that can come to any human being is to learn to walk with and be a friend to God. Enoch was the friend of God. Second, this genealogical table is given to warn us of the day when evil shall ultimately be stopped. God cannot allow human evil to increase endlessly. He restrains it, but when it reaches a certain limit, he judges it. That is the repeated story of history. This is the whole message of the book of Jude. It happens again and again in history. But, as Paul tells us in First Corinthians 10, there is always a way of escape provided.

That way of escape is indicated again in a most fascinating way in this chapter by the meaning of the names listed. There is some difference among authorities as to the meaning of these names, depending upon the root from which they are judged to be taken. But one authority gives a most interesting sequence of meanings. The list begins with Seth, which means "Appointed." Enosh, his son, means "Mortal;" and his son, Kenan, means "Sorrow." His son Mahalalel, means "The Blessed God." He named his boy Jared which means "Came Down," and his boy, Enoch, means "Teaching." Methuselah, as we saw, means "His death shall bring;" Lamech means "Strength," and Noah, "Comfort." Now put that all together:

God has Appointed that Mortal man shall Sorrow; but The Blessed God, Came Down,
Teaching, that His Death Shall Bring, Strength and Comfort.

Is this book from God?

God has given you and me a life to watch just as Methuselah's generation watched his. It is your own life. God has written "Methuselah" on each one of us. "His death shall bring it," or "When he dies, it will come." How far is it till the end of the world for you? When you die. That is the end of the world. That is the end of man's day. Is it fifty years from now, ten, tomorrow? Who knows? But at any moment, when he dies, it will come.

Is it not foolish how we try to escape the inevitability of the end? Yet everything hangs on that. It will be for us the end of Adam's Book, when all that Adam is in us is at an end, there is nothing more to be recorded in it. Then only what Christ has written in us will survive. You have heard the little motto,

Only one life, 'twill soon be past.
Only what's done for Christ will last.

That is a pithy expression of what we find in this chapter. In Revelation when John saw the dead standing before God, the books also were opened. What books? Adam's book, and Jesus' book. The book of the generations of Adam and the book of the generations of Jesus Christ.

Now one question lingers: What are you doing today in this godless generation? Are you walking with God? Have you learned to keep step with the Almighty? Have you learned to trust what he says and walk in his direction and to keep step with him, in agreement with him? That is the only basis for any hope of escaping the judgment of death, as Enoch did. Jesus said, "Because I live, you shall live also," {cf, John 14:19b}. "He that believeth in me shall never die," {cf, John 11:26 RSV}. For the believer in Christ death loses its character, its fearfulness. Death is but a momentary transition into the life God has for you.

Prayer:

Thank you, Father, for helping us to view reality, to see through the tinsel, the glitter, the sham, the illusion of life. How helpful it is to see the possibilities of a walk with you as Enoch walked with you, and to believe you and trust you. Teach us so to walk that we may overcome the world, and one day you will say to us, "Come on home, it's too far to go back." We thank you in Jesus' name, Amen.

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