

122 The Significance of Genesis 5

Genesis Chapter 5 is remarkable, for listed there is nothing less than the very first generations of mankind's family tree, from Adam through to Noah.

Nothing like this thorough and detailed list exists anywhere else in ancient literature, (and it is followed of course by others, in Genesis Chapters 10 and 11, and, best of all, regarding the Lord Jesus Christ, in Matthew 1 and Luke 3). Unfortunately the great ages of the people mentioned in Chapter 5 arouse hoots of laughter from both within and beyond the Church, and give critics one of the various excuses they use to tell us that early Genesis is clearly just some hotted-up fairy tales borrowed from supposedly earlier cultures. Strangely the explanation for those great ages in comparison with later generations is wilfully ignored; as is any sensible answer to the obvious question - "If these lists are not simply what they claim to be, then why ever are they there in the first place?" - for fairy tales, myths and legends tend to be rather lacking in such detailed genealogical lists!

The years covered by the lives of those men of Genesis Chapter 5 saw the world becoming gradually more and more "off track". The Fall (Genesis 3) had shattered the state of God's creation as being "very good". The sin of Adam and Eve led to their lives becoming lives of toil and hardship; the onset of spiritual and physical death for them and for all who have followed them; their exile from the Garden; their offspring being born "in sin" (as happens still with all of us today); and creation itself being cursed by God its Creator. All in all, the behaviour of Adam and Eve on that tragic day in the Garden was not such a good idea after all, and the earth and all within it are still suffering the consequences.

But within the gloom was that little golden thread - the promise of the Seed of the Woman - that thread which runs throughout Scripture until its great fulfilment in the stable of Bethlehem.

For God's nature is so clearly revealed in the events of early Genesis. On the one hand are His total authority as Creator, His setting of all the rules, His unwavering judging of all sin and of all sinners. Yet on the other hand, interwoven with that first strand, are His love, His

mercy, His patience, His reassurance, His comfort - all graciously offered at every step of the long road towards the fulfilment of His promise concerning the Seed of the Woman.

Even the names of those early forefathers contain a message of assurance for those, both then and now, with eyes to see! By taking the meanings of the ten names listed, from Adam through to Noah, the following statements emerge: "Man / (is) Appointed / (to) Mortality / (and) Sorrow //// The Blessed God / Shall Come Down / Teaching //// His Death Shall Bring / The Despairing / Rest and Comfort".

Here is an extraordinary example of God's overruling sovereignty within human affairs, not apparent at first glance, to bring His blessing and comfort to those who seek Him and follow Him. But it is also an example, among many others that we are given, that demonstrates beyond all doubt the divine authorship of the Holy Bible.

For no scribe or committee could contrive this! Such a plot would presumably involve, centuries later, the concoction of a list of names of people who had not existed; with the inclusion of their life-spans which later generations would regard as ridiculous; the names being selected to tell a story claiming to be of divine comfort yet which in reality was mere human fraud; all this then being newly-imposed on the priests and the people of the day, with the claim that these were true ancient writings that had been held by God's people since the earliest days, and had always been known about and accepted by them. As we think about it, such a scenario is clearly impossible.

No, we can be assured that the words of Genesis 5 are factually true, being included by God in His Holy Word for our information and encouragement. And for all the same reasons mentioned above, our assurance can spread far beyond Genesis 5 to cover the whole of the Old and New Testaments.

The old cry , "What Scripture says, God says", is as true and well-founded as ever, and taking our stand on the factual authenticity of Jesus Christ and His resurrection, and on the first eleven chapters of the Book of Genesis, makes all the difference.