

General Comments on Genesis 5

This chapter presents the lineage of Adam by contrast to the lineage of Cain (cf. 4:16-24). Here, each of the patriarchs begets children and lives a long life, seeing their progeny prosper, following the admonition of 1:28 to be fruitful and multiply. Each recorded generation is an orderly presentation of life, begetting and death. Adam lives to see the ninth generation down to Lamech. Interruptions in the carefully presented history are for exceptionally God-fearing individuals.

Contrast this with Cain's genealogy where the presentation is disorderly and fragmented, and the noteworthy individuals are highlighted for their infamy and murderous nature.

Note the way the chapter starts: verses 1-3 present another condensed Creation narrative, entirely omitting Cain and Abel, choosing to focus on Adam being created in the image and likeness of God, and Seth being born in the image and likeness of Adam. We had previously been introduced to Seth at the end of the previous chapter (cf. 4:25-26), but the presentation is completed as with an entire new beginning of the family of humans, after the disaster of Cain and Abel.

Noteworthy with [the given genealogy](#) is all of the early patriarchs have died of natural causes prior to the flood. Methuselah is the longest lived and Lamech is the shortest lived (omitting Enoch), with both perish pretty closely before the Flood. This suggests the corruption of mankind follows closely with the passing of the early patriarchs. As the original God-fearing patriarchs pass on, their influence over the rising generations is absent and humanity becomes corrupt, sinful and murderous. This necessitates the Deluge.

Many commentators for a very long time have given various speculative readings on the numbers associated with various persons. Aside from identifying there are ten generations from Adam to Noah and then generations from Shem to Abraham (cf. ch. 10), I see no value to any of the other attempts to apply numerology to the text. The presentation of ten generations before and after Noah suggest God's power and deliberacy in managing the affairs of humanity. If there were anything to the other attempts at numerology, it seems likely there would be other more substantive connections to buttress the effort, when there aren't any. You can look at the pre-Deluge and post-

Deluge lifespans and note they are longer before and shorter after, and tie that to the statement in 6:3, but that is about the extent of the utility as far as I can tell.

With respect to the long lifespans of the early patriarchs, the statement in 6:3 clearly suggests human lifespan is limited to 120 years because of the wickedness of mankind. By contrasting this with the long lifespans of the early patriarchs, we can conclude lifespans are cut short to reduce the likelihood of impact evil men will have on future generations.

The early patriarchs were good, and the effect they had on their descendants was good, but when they are all gone, then the evil men have too much influence over the human population. The result is almost the entirety of the human population is sexually immoral and murderous, necessitating the Deluge and a fresh start with Noah.

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