

Genesis – Lesson 6

The Descendants of Seth

Read Genesis 4:25-26.

1. What might have Eve believed about *Seth* when she spoke of him in 4:25?

Eve (again) might have believed that Seth was the promised child of Genesis 3:15, the “seed” that would come and destroy the serpent in accordance with God’s prophecy. Since it is (now) obvious that Cain was *not* the promised child, and that the promised one may actually have been Abel (who was dead), Eve may have believed that God had replaced Abel with Seth, and that *he* would be the one God spoke of. In some sense, this is *true*, given that Seth would be the ancestor of the Israelites, through whom the Promised One would eventually come.

2. (a) What do you think it *means* in 4:26 that “*men began to call on the name of the Lord*”? From Romans 10:13, what does it mean for men to call on the name of the Lord *now*?

To call upon the name of the Lord is 1) to recognize the power of God as is contained in his name, 2) to realize the extent of one’s own distance from God by virtue of sin, and 3) to call upon God for mercy. It is at this point that humanity begins to realize the awful gap that sin has produced between themselves and God, and they begin to reach out to God for mercy and help. There is now a desperate sense in the human race of the need for contact with the Creator, and humanity begins to seek him, especially in the line of Seth. This is what Paul means for salvation in the N.T.; to be saved, people must recognize the awful gap that sin has produced in their relationship to the Creator and call out for mercy through Jesus Christ. It is in the name of Christ (i.e. his completed work by virtue of his person and position) that men find mercy.

- (b) Why do Christians include the phrase “in Jesus’ name” to the end of their prayers?

Although this phrase is ubiquitous amongst Christians as a rote end to their prayers, many Christians are (unfortunately) almost completely unaware of what this phrase means. To pray in the name of Jesus, and to appeal to God in Jesus’ name, is to recognize that we possess *no* authority to come into the presence of God and ask for anything. Thus, we are in need of an *advocate*, someone who possesses the authority necessary to seek favor from God. Only Jesus, of course, possesses this authority, so believers come to God in his name to receive a hearing from God on the authority of his Son. While it may appear to be just an “ending” to prayer, the phrase “in Jesus’ name” is actually a *recognition* that the prayer we have just offered has no power or authority *from us*, but is brought to the Father *through* the advocacy of the Son, and the Father should answer that prayer as his Son would desire.

Read Genesis 5:1-27.

3. (a) Compare verses 2 and 3. What *changes* in the image of man with the birth of Seth? What is the “*likeness*” of Adam that was passed on to Seth?

When God created Adam, he created him in his own image; Adam possessed a purity and perfection of mind, body, and soul. His nature was uncorrupted, and he had the ability to carry out the will of God perfectly. Unfortunately, once sin became a reality in Adam, his children were now born “*in his image*”; instead of children being born to Adam and Eve that would continue this perfection, their children would now be born with the sinful image of Adam and Eve. This corruption would be passed down from generation to generation. The “likeness” passed down, then, was the propensity to sin that is *inherent* in human beings due to their sinful nature received. This is properly known as *original sin*: the natural desire to sin that is born out of a corrupted nature inherited from our federal representative, Adam.

(b) Compare Genesis 5:2-3 to Romans 5:12, 18-19. Why is it significant to Paul that Seth was born in the “likeness” of Adam? How does this relate to the work of *Christ*?

Paul considers the likeness of Adam passed down to Seth to be an *imputed* unrighteousness; Seth received from Adam what he himself did not produce; Seth was *imputed* with a nature that was unrighteous, and from that corrupted nature, Seth sinned. This *imputation* is core to the gospel message: for as sin came into the world and was *imputed* to every human being through *one man*, righteousness entered into the world through Jesus Christ and is *imputed* to every person who belongs to him. Everyone who belongs to Adam (i.e. the entire human race) receives his unrighteousness, while everyone who belongs to Christ (i.e. the elect) receives his righteousness. This is a *parallel* that Paul makes into a great theological truth: without the imputation of *unrighteousness* to every human being through Adam, there can be *no* imputation of righteousness through Christ. One exists with the other; everyone belongs either to the unrighteousness of Adam or the righteousness of Christ.

4. (a) List four *facts* given about each patriarch in this section?

Moses lists the following four (4) facts about each descendent of Seth in this chapter: 1) his name, 2) his age at the birth of his first son, 3) the name of his first son, and 4) the total length of his life (including the number of years he lived after the birth of his first son).

(b) *Why* is this genealogy included by Moses? What does it *prove*?

There may be several reasons why Moses included this genealogy: 1) to show the Israelites who their ancient ancestors were through the line of Seth, 2) to account for the period between Seth and Noah and establish the basis for the flood, or 3) to demonstrate the awful effect of sin upon the human race. Each patriarch (save one!) has a similar final refrain, “*and he died.*” The point of that statement is obvious: death now *reigns* over human beings and, although they continue to live to great ages (see below), they will die. This is a *visible testimony* to the curse given to Adam; everyone dies, and (most of) these men proved it.

(c) What is the *average* age of the men in this genealogy? *Why* do you think they lived so long?

The *average* age of these men was 907 years (not including Enoch who did not die; 912 if you include Noah). They may have lived so long because: 1) the canopy that covered the earth with water (compare 1:6-8 to 7:11) may have shielded the earth from *direct* sunlight and made the climate of the earth so perfect that humanity was able to flourish (changed by the flood; see 6:3) and 2) the *cumulative* effects of sin on the physical nature of man had not yet been established; the various forces of aging, disease, immorality etc. were not yet fully formed, and human beings were able to live much longer due to the *lack* of such influences.

5. (a) What is *different* about Enoch’s life? What does that say about the *curse* placed upon Adam?

The sad refrain “*and he died*” does not appear in Enoch’s biography. Instead, it is said that he “*was not*” (or “*was not found*”) because he walked with God. It is intimated in this statement that Enoch was simply *translated* into eternity rather than having gone through the pain of death. This tells us that the curse upon Adam *is not absolute*; although all humanity lives under the *threat* of death, it is possible (by God’s grace) that death does not *have to* come. This is an essential element to Jesus’ words that those who believe in him “*will never die*” (John 11:26). Although *physical death* will still come to most of the inhabitants of this earth, there is a sense in which those who trust in Christ will never *finally* die. Those who belong to him will “walk” with him from this earth (even if through death) and live forever in the presence of God.

(b) Using a concordance, find other *references* to Enoch and discuss what you learn from them.

Enoch is mentioned in 1) 1 Chronicles 1:3 as a descendent of Seth, demonstrating the relationship of the Israelites to Seth; 2) Luke 3:37 in the genealogy of Jesus, demonstrating that Jesus was descended from Adam as a human being; 3) Hebrews 11:5 as one who did not “see *death*” because he was pleasing to God and God took him; and 4) Jude 1:14 as one who prophesied about the ungodly who have done much wickedness and deserve the judgment of God (potentially a reference to the reality of judgment in the Flood).

Read Genesis 5:28-32.

6. According to 5:29, what does the name *Noah* mean? Was this prophecy *fulfilled* in Noah's life?

The term Noah means “*relief*” or “*rest.*” Noah would be, according to the prophetic word about him, someone from the ground who would bring rest from the painful toil of the curse. He would be, they said, someone who would bring relief from the hard bondage of sin and death. Noah would, in fact, fulfill this prophecy, in that he would bring the *rest of death* upon most of the human race through the Flood. Death would bring to an end the painful toil (due to a lack of commitment to God) to most of humanity.

7. How does chapter 5 reveal another aspect of the *gospel* message of Jesus Christ?

Chapter 5 reveals the awful truth of the reality of death, a reality that is passed down from generation to generation just by virtue of being human. All humanity dies, and this sentence of death is inescapable. However, through the grace of God, a different alternative is made available, and Enoch stands as an example of what God will do for those who walk with him by faith. Instead of having to fear death as the only possible outcome of this life, human beings who trust in God and call out to him for mercy will receive the gift of life and live forever with him, for he will “take them” to be his own. Those who put their faith in the provision of this God, and believe him, may still have to pass through the physical realm of death, but they will never die, and will be taken to live with God forever.