

Genesis 5:1–6:8

^{5:1} This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man (Hebrew *adam*), He made him (*adam*) in the likeness of God. ² He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them man (*adam*) in the day when they were created. ³ When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth. ⁴ Then the days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years, and he had other sons and daughters. ⁵ So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died. ⁶ Seth lived one hundred and five years, and became the father of Enosh. ⁷ Then Seth lived eight hundred and seven years after he became the father of Enosh, and he had other sons and daughters. ⁸ So all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years, and he died. ⁹ Enosh lived ninety years, and became the father of Kenan. ¹⁰ Then Enosh lived eight hundred and fifteen years after he became the father of Kenan, and he had other sons and daughters. ¹¹ So all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years, and he died. ¹² Kenan lived seventy years, and became the father of Mahalalel. ¹³ Then Kenan lived eight hundred and forty years after he became the father of Mahalalel, and he had other sons and daughters. ¹⁴ So all the days of Kenan were nine hundred and ten years, and he died. ¹⁵ Mahalalel lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Jared. ¹⁶ Then Mahalalel lived eight hundred and thirty years after he became the father of Jared, and he had other sons and daughters. ¹⁷ So all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years, and he died. ¹⁸ Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and became the father of Enoch. ¹⁹ Then Jared lived eight hundred years after he became the father of Enoch, and he had other sons and daughters. ²⁰ So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years, and he died. ²¹ Enoch lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Methuselah. ²² Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had other sons and daughters. ²³ So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. ²⁴ Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him. ²⁵ Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years, and became the father of Lamech. ²⁶ Then Methuselah lived seven hundred and eighty-two years after he became the father of Lamech, and he had other sons and daughters. ²⁷ So all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years, and he died. ²⁸ Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of a son. ²⁹ Now he called his name Noah, saying, “This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our

hands arising from the ground which the LORD has cursed.”³⁰ Then Lamech lived five hundred and ninety-five years after he became the father of Noah, and he had other sons and daughters.³¹ So all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years, and he died.³² Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.^{6:1} Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them,² that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.³ Then the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”⁴ The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.⁵ Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.⁶ The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.⁷ The LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.”⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

Historical and Cultural Background

- *Hebrew Names*: Names and their meanings are often important clues

Adam: man	Jared: come down
Seth: appointed	Enoch: consecrated
Enosh: mortal	Methuselah: death shall bring
Kenan: sorrow	Lamech: despair
Mahalalel: the blessed God	Noah: rest

- *Enoch and Lamech*: Recall the line of Cain from Genesis 4 also had an Enoch and a Lamech.
 - *Enoch*: Cain murdered his brother, Abel, becoming a death-dealer, not a life-bringer. So the land rejected Cain (Gen.4:11). Cain named his first son Enoch, and built a city also called Enoch – probably to psychologically imprison his son to stay with him, because Enoch could still bring forth life from the land (Gen.4:17).
 - *Lamech*: Five generations later, Lamech was born in Cain’s lineage. He seemed to be exceptionally violent, manipulating God’s protection over Cain into an excuse for his own violence. He also took two wives – and is the first man in the Bible to practice polygamy. He said, “I have killed a man for wounding me; a

boy for striking me; if Cain is avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold” (Gen.4:23–24).

- *Fathers and Sons*: The terms can mean “ancestor” and “descendant.” King David was the father of Jesus; Jesus was the son of David. So this genealogy may have been more than just 10 generations.
- *The Number 10*: Connotes “establishment” or “foundation”
 - Ten utterances of God in Genesis 1
 - Ten people listed between Adam and Noah in Genesis 5
 - Ten generations listed between Shem and Abraham in Genesis 11
 - Ten genealogies before the nation Israel in Genesis 2–50
 - Ten plagues on Egypt in Exodus 7–12
 - Ten commandments for Israel in Exodus 19
 - Ten healings by Jesus in Matthew 8–9 (a compressed summary)
- *The Number 1000*: Connotes an idealized number
 - The Sumerian King list, from the end of the 3rd millennium, tells of 8 kings who each ruled 30,000 years and then the flood swept the earth.¹
 - Barosis, a Babylon priest writing a history of Babylon in 300 BC, writes about ten kings before the flood who ruled a total of 432,000 years. Average life span 43,000 years?
 - Hesiod, Greek poet, 9th century BC, writes a similar claim for the early history of mankind.
 - Also, the Bible uses the number 1000 as an ideal.
 - “May you, our sister, become thousands of ten thousands” (Gen.24:60)
 - God shows “lovingkindness to thousands” (Ex.20:6)
 - God owns the “cattle on a thousand hills” (Ps.50:10)
 - Satan was “bound for a thousand years” (Rev.20:2–3)
 - Christian martyrs “reigned with Christ for a thousand years” (Rev.20:4).
 - Thus, *quantity of years* means *quality of life*.
- *The Numbers 60 and 7*: Sixty was a Babylonian sacred number. “One option is attaching some significance to the fact that all of the 30 numbers can be expressed as combinations of the two “sacred” numbers 60 and 7 in terms of years and months. 60 was culturally significant because it was the number that Babylonian mathematics was based on (the influence of this sexagesimal system is still felt today with our 60 minutes per hour and 60 seconds per minute). And 7, of course, has a prominent place in biblical symbolism beginning with the Sabbath. So when we’re told that Methuselah was 187 years when he

¹ Bill T. Arnold, Bryan E. Beyer, *Readings From the Ancient Near East: Primary Sources for Old Testament Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), p.150 – 151.

had his son Lamech (Gen.5:25), we can see that $187 = 60 + 60 + 60 + 7$ years. And then because 60 months = 5 years, when Adam is said to be 130 years at the birth of his son Seth (Gen. 5:3), that can be expressed as $(60 + 60 \text{ years}) + (60 + 60 \text{ months})$.²

Adam	130	+ 800 = 930
Seth	105	+ 807 = 912
Enosh	90	+ 815 = 905
Kenan	70	+ 840 = 910
Mahalalel	65	+ 830 = 895
Jared	162	+ 800 = 962
Enoch	65	+ 300 = 365*
Methuselah	187	+ 782 = 969
Lamech	182	+ 595 = 777
Noah	500	+ [100] + 350 (after flood; Gen.9:29) = 950

Adam	[60 years x2 + 60 months x2]	+ [60 years x13 + 60 months x2]
Seth	[60 years + 60 months x9]	+ [60 years x13 + 60 months x2 + <u>7 years</u>]
Enosh	[60 years + 60 months x6]	+ [60 years x13 + 60 months x5]
Kenan	[60 years + 60 months x2]	+ [60 years x14]
Mahalalel	[60 years + 60 months]	+ [60 years x13 + 60 months x10]
Jared	[60 years x2 + 60 months x7 + <u>7 years</u>]	+ [60 years x13 + 60 months x2]
Enoch	[60 years + 60 months]	+ [60 years x5]
Methuselah	[60 years x3 + <u>7 years</u>]	+ [60 years x12 + 60 months x11 + <u>7 years</u>]
Lamech	[60 years x2 + 60 months x11 + <u>7 years</u>]	+ [60 years x9 + 60 months x11]
Noah	[60 years x8 + 60 months x4]	+ [60 years + 60 months x8] + [60 years x5 + 60 months x10]

- *Sons of God and the Nephilim*: The “sons of God” were probably male rulers who became tyrant-kings who had harems of wives (Gen.6:1–2), like the Lamech in Cain’s line (Gen.4:19–24). They are probably *not* offspring of angels mating with human women. There is considerable literary and historical context to argue that the problems were violence and polygamy, as men wanted to make a name for themselves.³ Noah was unusual because he was monogamous, as were his sons. Also, they were not violent.

Discussion Questions

1. God made Adam “in the likeness of God” (5:1) but Adam “became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image” (5:3). What has happened to “the likeness”?
2. Compare and contrast the Enoch in Cain’s line vs. the Enoch in Seth’s line.
3. Compare and contrast the Lamech in Cain’s line vs. the Lamech in Seth’s line.
4. Why do you think there are ten names here, where no one lives a thousand years?
5. What might be special about the men who have a special +7 years? Seth, Jared, Methuselah, and Lamech?
6. Who speaks in this literary section? Why?

² Jim Stump, “Long Life Spans in Genesis: Literal or Symbolic?” *BioLogos*, October 5, 2027; <http://biologos.org/blog/long-life-spans-in-genesis>.

³ Meredith G. Kline, “Divine Kingship and Genesis 6:1 – 4,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 24 (1961/62): 187 – 204. John H. Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001). Michael Jones, “Genesis 6a: The Nephilim,” *Inspiring Philosophy*, December 6, 2019; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inRjZ6ldUS4>.

7. What is human life like by the time of Noah?
8. Do you resonate with God's feeling of grief and sorrow?

Questions

1. God made Adam “in the likeness of God” (5:1) but Adam “became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image” (5:3). What has happened to “the likeness”?
 - a. Human beings are now a contradiction. We are “the image of God” made “in the likeness of God” (1:26 – 27; 5:1–3). Yet we die even though God is the source of life.
 - b. Everyone dies because they bear “the likeness of Adam.” There may be other ways that we retell Adam and Eve’s story of rebellion. We will see Genesis use language of Adam and Eve’s fall when it describes people’s sinful decisions.
 - c. This is a genealogy of Adam. The previous section was a genealogy of “the heavens and the earth.” So the focus is on human beings.
2. Compare and contrast the Enoch in Cain’s line vs. the Enoch in Seth’s line.
 - a. Enoch in Cain’s line (Gen.4:16–24): trapped by his father, part of a dynasty, meant to live on forever to defend his father
 - b. Enoch in Seth’s line (Gen.5): walked with God and actually did live on forever
3. Compare and contrast the Lamech in Cain’s line vs. the Lamech in Seth’s line.
 - a. Lamech in Cain’s line (Gen.4:23–24): threatens revenge 7-fold; despairs of life
 - b. Lamech in Enoch’s line (Gen.5:21–24): lived 777 years; despairs of sin; yet hopes
 - c. Given the Enochs and Lamechs, how does Seth’s line compare with Cain’s line back in Genesis 4?
 - i. Cain’s line: they are focused on what they built; but this city was later wiped out by the violence they brought and the flood from God
 - ii. Seth’s line: they apparently worked with the ground (5:29); had a deep spiritual life with God as suggested by the quality of their lives (described as long life) and by Enoch’s life especially; they lived in hope that God would bring about the champion He promised in Gen.3:14–15; they are preserved through the flood; they are the true heirs of Adam and Eve.
4. Why do you think there are ten generations here, where no one lives a thousand years?
 - a. Ten generations refers to the establishment or foundation of something. In this case, a “new creation / new humanity” when God brings the Flood and starts over with Noah and his family.
 - b. What’s with the long life? A literary device that says that people were living a good quality of life, in God’s view that is. Notice that everyone comes close to the ideal number of 1,000 but does not fulfill it. They are living a good life compared to the line of Cain, but falling short.
5. What else is happening with the rest of humanity? “Sons of God” and “daughters of men.” Boundary crossing in some way. Options:
 - a. It might be between the faithful and unfaithful. The “sons of God” might refer to the men of Seth’s line. The “daughters of men” might refer to the women of Cain’s line or other children of Adam and Eve who are not part of the family of faith.
 - b. It might be between angels and humans. There is one theory that the “sons of God” refers to angels, but that literary designation is unprecedented. It would also be difficult to explain. Why did that happen back then but no longer happen now? I reject this idea of angels conceiving humans or half-human beings:
 - i. Angels and demons, and certainly Satan, have no power to create life. That is what seems to make life on earth distinct from life in heaven, as per Genesis 1 where life reproduces after its kind.
 - ii. Angels and demons do not have earthly bodies (see the story of Jesus casting demons into pigs in Matthew 8:18–34, Mark 5:1–20; Luke 8:26–39). A spirit being creating life in a woman’s womb is a prerogative of God alone.
 - iii. True life (which can reproduce by itself) does not arise from different species or kinds. The Son of God shares the same nature He receives from the Father eternally. The child of a human receives human nature from his parents. God created each creature according to its own kind and nature, and reproduction follows this law. The devil has no power to break this God-given law.
 - iv. The few early church writers who seemed to believe in the angels and demons theory:

1. Justin Martyr, *Second Apology* 5
 2. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* 18
 3. Athenagoras of Athens, *A Plea for the Christians* 24
- v. Someone posted this to a Facebook group on Orthodox theology, which I find helpful:

“The idea of [the Nephilim] being angels is to be found in Second Temple Judaism, before the coming of the Lord. Among its defenders was Philo of Alexandria, who had some influence on the usage of the allegoric method of exegesis of Scriptures. The first Christians absorbed some Jewish beliefs, some of them, uncritically (such beliefs were not part of OT Scriptures nor of Christ’s NT Revelation). Philo of Alexandria was a very deep thinker and had some influence on Christian exegesis, but he was in no way a canon or rule of Christian Faith.

Most of the Fathers or Christian writers or teachers who taught the angels were the “sons of God” lived before the First Ecumenical Council [of Nicaea in 325 AD]. From the age of the Councils, we hardly heard about this teaching. John of Damascus summed up the Patristic teaching and theology in a panoramic way, and his teaching precludes this myth. John Cassian, before him, told us how an elder named Serenus (one of the Egyptian elders of the desert) taught him that the “sons of God” were the descendants of Seth, and not from Cain. Thus, one cannot even think the rejection of the angelic interpretation is a matter of “scholar theologians” - it was a tradition kept also by the Fathers of the desert.

Since the angelic view no more showed its head throughout centuries, from this we have the consensus of the Fathers was expressed by this silence and by their eventual agreement. It is a Protestant attitude to think the earlier Fathers are automatically superior or wiser than the later ones, due to their antiquity. The disagreement only appears during the first two or three centuries of Christendom.

Speculation about this Jewish myth came back, in Orthodoxy, from Protestant influence, I think. To be frank, it seems a very American thing, linked with Apocalyptic culture. I never heard about any controversy on that, say, in Greek or Russian theological milieux. I might be proven wrong, but until then, this is my strong impression.”

John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith* 1.3; 2.3–6, 12, 30; 4:24, 27 says that angels, spirits, and demons are not material, whereas humans are material.

- c. Warriors, conquerors: The Nephilim were human kings and warriors. They were present also among the Canaanites in Num.13:33 and strike terror in the hearts of the Israelites.
 - i. The phrase “sons of God” is a title used for human kings.
 1. Cultural norm in the Ancient Near East
 - a. Ugaritic: “The circuit broad of s[pan]: ‘Is, then, Keret a son [of El].” See James B. Pritchard, “Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament,” pages 142–149.
 - b. Gudea, Cylinders A and B, lines 1337–1354: “You are a true ruler, for whom the house has determined a good fate. Gudea, son of Ningiszada, you will enjoy a long life.” See ETCSL Translation; etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk.
 - c. Sumerian King Eannatum, see T. Jacobsen, “The Concept of Divine Parentage in the Ruler of the Stela of the Vultures,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 2 (1943): 119–121.

- d. The Atrahasis Epic of Akkadia parallels the story of Noah and the flood. There are many parallels between the two epics. In the Atrahasis story, there are no divine beings mating with human women.
 - e. In the Eridu Genesis story (line 35), another parallel story, kingship was “lowered from heaven” before the flood in that story.
 2. Within ancient Judaism: When God established King David and his sons as kings, He used the title, “son of God” for them. See 2 Samuel 7:14; Exodus 4:22; Deuteronomy 14:1; Psalm 2:6; 80:15; 82:6.
 3. The phrase is also used in the Bible to denote angels of some sort, in Deuteronomy 32:8–9; Job 1:6; 38:7; possibly Psalm 82:6.
 4. Note that the debates about Jesus, the Trinity, and then the Nicene Creed basically switched the meaning of “son of God” and “son of man.”
 5. In the biblical context, polygamy seems to be seen as a problem
 - a. Lamech in Genesis 4 was polygamous.
 - b. Noah and his three sons each have only one wife, and the text of Genesis seems to stress this by repetition.
 - ii. See Inspiring Philosophy, “Genesis 6a: The Nephilim,” Inspiring Philosophy, December 9, 2019; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inRjZ6ldUS4>.
 - d. Rampant violence (Gen.6:4)
 - e. God names the internal corruption in humanity (Gen.6:5–6). It was evidenced by Genesis 2:4–4:26 in the fact that the jealousy triggered by the serpent in Adam and Eve now is internal to Cain. This is the first time the diagnosis is given this clearly.
 - i. Do you agree? Is there a human nature problem? Or is the evil we do simply because our external circumstances are bad?
 - ii. Does anyone agree with God’s diagnosis? It will take a long time until one person, Moses, reaches the same conclusion (Dt.30:6).
6. If the faithful are monogamous and non-violent, and the unfaithful are ruled by polygamous kings and violence, what helped the faithful be faithful to God?
 - a. Hope!
 - b. Illus: I grew up in the Cold War, fearing nuclear war and destroying the planet quickly. My children are growing up in the climate crisis, fearing climate disaster and destroying the planet slowly. Virtue ethics.
7. Do you resonate with God’s feeling of grief and sorrow?
 - a. If you’ve ever hoped that two of your friends would be friends with each other... Or if you’ve ever hoped that your children would be better friends with each other...
 - b. God relates to both the victims and the oppressors. He cares about all human beings.
 - c. Why doesn’t the text say that God felt wrath based on retributive justice? What would be different if it had?
8. How is God redeeming humanity? How is that shown here?
 - a. He preserves Noah’s life
 - b. He will undo the corruption in people’s hearts one day.
9. Leader: Give a summary
 - a. We are contradictions: to bear the image of God who lives, yet we die. And we die because we are in exile from the garden of Eden. We are in exile because we cannot eat from the tree of life while in a corrupted state. We are meant to bear goodness, yet we bear the corruption of sin.
 - b. Jesus resolved the contradiction. The eternal Son of God became human, to share in our fallen humanity, so we could share in his healed humanity! And now he not only killed the sin-sickness we inherit from the fall by dying himself, he breathed new resurrection life into human nature in his resurrection. So he alone resolves the problem of fallen humanity. He alone can put that new life into us by his Spirit when we receive him.