

Commentary Highlights

Genesis 5:1-32

NAC	New American Commentary
PTW	Preaching the Word
BST	The Bible Speaks Today
GIG	Gleanings in Genesis
CAL	Genesis: Calvin's Commentary
SOG	The Story of God Bible Commentary
BKW	Genesis by Bruce K Waltke
KUR	Genesis by Abraham Kuruvilla
REC	Reformed Expository Commentary

****The views presented in these commentary excerpts may not reflect the general understanding of these passages as expressed by Faith Bible Church, but are presented to help us better understand the Scriptures and how various scholars have interpreted them****

(NAC) – Chapter five is a transitional chapter in the narrative of Genesis, moving the narrative along in the following ways: “(1) It presents a convincing case for the interconnectedness of all mankind and the hope for universal blessing, since the genealogy takes us from the beginnings (Adam) to the diluvian world of Noah (the new Adam). (2) It demonstrates the results of Adam’s sin (death) and, despite this harsh reality, the continuation of God’s promise of preservation through the gift of procreation.”

Open or Closed Genealogy:

Questions arise on whether this genealogy is open or closed. Traditionally this genealogy has been believed to be closed, meaning the genealogy is an all-inclusive list of the descendants and their exact ages. Many today believe this is an open genealogy, meaning that the author selected certain descendants to list in order to achieve his purpose in writing this book (ie. there are gaps in the genealogy). In this case, the list is not exhaustive and is open to other descendants not listed.

(NAC) – Kenneth Matthews believes that this is an open genealogy for the following reasons: There is evidence in Near Eastern texts that terms “father” and “son” are used loosely for “ancestor” or “descendant.” It might also be the case that the names listed in Genesis refer to a dynasty, as was done in the Sumerian King List. Therefore, the over 900 year lifespans listed refer not to a single person, but to the years of that particular dynasty. There is some evidence that genealogies in the New Testament are arranged for a theological purpose and are selective in who is added, so too might be the case here. “We can assert confidently that the listing concerns actual historical figures. Its appropriation by the author rendered theological purposes: (1) to show the perpetuation of the *imago Dei* and blessing and (2) to indicate how sin impaired the longevity of human life and that man is mortal, doomed to death because of sin in the garden.”

(PTW) – Kent Hughes believes that the genealogy in Genesis 5 is selective and not exhaustive, giving room to increased multiplication over the earth during this time.

(KUR) – Abraham Kuruvilla believes that Genesis 5 is an open genealogy because of “its highly structured conventions of language and its schematic of ten-generation depth.” Kuruvilla looks to a similar ten-person pattern in other ancient texts as a means of evidencing this claim. Such documents include: the Assyrian King List, the Sumerian King List, the genealogy of the Hammurabi dynasty, and even the listing of David’s lineage in Ruth 4. If this is the case, as noted by Kuruvilla, it is not accurate to count all the years listed in these lists to come up for a date of Adam’s creation.

(REC) – In listing potential objections to a closed genealogy, Phillips points out that if this genealogy was indeed exhaustive, most of the patriarchs listed would have all known each other, including Adam who would have been alive to know everyone except Noah.

(REC) – In listing evidence in favor of a closed genealogy, Phillips suggests that there is no internal evidence to deny the possibility of a closed genealogy. “Since five of the ten names on the list are literal father-son relationships, Gordon Wenham comments that it “requires special pleading to postulate long gaps elsewhere in the genealogy.”” In other words, Adam was the literal father of Seth. Seth was the literal father of Enosh. Lamech was the literal father of Noah. Noah was the literal father of Shem, Ham and Japheth. Since these are all literal father/son relationships, why wouldn’t we conclude that the other names are also literal father/son names.

(REC) – Secondly, many commentators point out various other ancient texts that also list 10 patriarchs in their genealogy, to which these commentators conclude that having 10 in a genealogy was a common pattern used by the author of Genesis. In objection to this, Phillips posits that Genesis was the source from which others copied the same pattern. Therefore, the listing of 10 patriarchs was due from “God’s providence rather than mere literary construction.”

(REC) – Third, while some object to the long lives of these patriarchs, Phillips suggests that “we may reasonably assume that at this early stage, the life-shortening effect of sin was taking place only gradually.”

(SOG) – While Tremper Longman does recognize the fact that the ten patriarchs listed before the flood and ten patriarchs listed after the flood seems to indicate a literary artifice, he points out that “no one has yet to put forward a persuasive explanation of the symbolic significance of the numbers in the genealogy.”

Genesis 5:1-2

(NAC) – “An inclusion brackets the introduction: “When God created man” (v. 1b) and “when they were created” (v. 2b). Sandwiched between are four comments on human

creation: (1) God created mankind in his image; (2) God made mankind “male and female”; (3) God blessed them; and (4) he named them “man.””

(KUR) – In bridging the testimony of Genesis 1 & 2 to the Sethite line, the author seems to suggest that the human line is starting again through Seth.

(KUR) – “Though it cannot be disputed that the *imago Dei* has been passed on, here the emphasis is on Seth’s resemblance to Adam, rather than to God—a hint that it is the sinfulness of mankind that is being transmitted.”

(NAC) – “The recitation of ten names (indicating completeness) in chap. 5 and the common refrain “other sons and daughters” trumpet the mercy and provision of God for the line of Seth. Just as we remember the uniform six days of creation, we hear in chap. 5 the same drumbeat of God’s orderly creation by the regular birth of human life.”

Genesis 5:3-5

(KUR) – The author of Genesis presents a pattern in listing out his genealogy:

- 1.) *A*’ lived *x* years
- 2.) *A*’ fathered *B*’
- 3.) *A*’ *then lived y* years after he fathered *B* and had sons and daughters.
- 4.) All the days of *A* were *z* ($= x+y$) years, and he died.

The only exceptions to this pattern are Adam, Enoch, Lamech, and Noah, which is the author’s way of highlighting the importance of each of these men.

(NAC) – “Procreation is the mechanism that assures the passing on of the divine “image.” Seth is not “created” or “formed” as Adam was, but he was “fathered” and thereby is the recipient of Adam’s human legacy.”

(NAC) – “The ominous “and then he died” proves the veracity of God’s warning and the outworking of his punishment imposed for sinful rebellion...sin exercised dominion in death.”

(PTW) – In this genealogy, the author makes it a specific point to tell us that each person produced a male heir and then died after a certain number of years of life (with the exception of Enoch, who didn’t die, and Noah, whose death is recorded in chapter 9). This point is not to be passed lightly, as the author is intently expressing that “life produces hope only to see it dashed by the all too real finality of death.”

(KUR) – “There is a purpose for all the repetition of the inexorable conclusion of earthly life. This single word in the Hebrew text (he died) at the close of each patriarch’s career becomes a resounding testimony to the inevitable human end...In other words, people are born, they marry, and they become parents, but in the end they all die!”

(REC) – In a closed genealogy, Adam would have likely seen the growth of the human race reach into the millions, further showing God’s continual blessing over mankind even in the midst of sin. With so many people populating the world, this genealogy serves to show that God retained a remnant in a world ever-increasing in sin.

(BKW) – “The refrain “then he died” is a bittersweet echo of humanity’s original sin and God’s grace. To each generation, humanity bequeaths life and death. Deviation from the structured pattern highlights important persons and truths.”

Genesis 5:6-20

Genesis 5:21-24

(PTW) – “Evil Lamech (of Genesis 4), the man who worshipped his sword, was number seven in the Cainite genealogy, while here, Enoch, the man who “walked with God,” is number seven in the Sethite genealogy...This phrase “walked with God” is only applied to Enoch and Noah and describes the closest personal communion with God—as if walking at the side of God.”

(NAC) – “As the seventh member of the Sethite clan, Enoch is the highlighted descendant among the ten names. Also, by a literary divergence from the highly repetitious schema of the chapter, his career is distinguished from his predecessors. Where the refrain “Enoch lived” would be expected, we read “Enoch walked with God.” That this feature of Enoch’s life was prominent in the mind of the author is evidenced by its recurrence in v. 24. It is his “walk with God” that explains why Enoch did not die... “Walked with God” is metaphorical and indicates that Enoch had a lifestyle characterized by his devotion to God. The sense of “walk” in its verbal stem indicates a communion or intimacy with God...walking with God is the key to the chains of death.”

(KUR) – “The phrase indicates “a special intimacy with God and a life of piety.” To describe Enoch twice in this fashion was a mark of his great spirituality. God was known to walk with man, but for man to walk with/before God was a special privilege: and instead of the expected formula “Enoch lived” we have “Enoch walked with God.”...The form of the verb “to walk” is the Hithpael. The intensive aspect of the verb underscores its repetitiveness; Enoch’s walking with God was habitual and continuous.”

(BKW) – The record of Enoch and his unusual ending “is a testimony to the hope of righteousness in the line of Seth...Enoch’s life affirms that those who “walk with God” in this fallen world will experience life, not death, as the last word...only Enoch and Elijah are represented as not experiencing physical death...Schmidt rightly renders “took him” in Gen. 5:24 and 2 Kings 2:3, 5 as “to rapture.””

Genesis 5:25-27

(NAC) – According to these verses, Methuselah was the longest living person in history, living 969 years.

Genesis 5:28-31

(NAC) – The Lamech presented here is a different person than the Lamech listed in Cain's lineage. "Another point of contrast is the association of "seven" with each man's career. Lamech lives 777 years, which attracts notice to the vengeful "seventy-seven times" uttered by Cain's Lamech."

(NAC) – The name Noah refers to rest, so in naming his son Noah, Lamech expresses hope that through his son rest will come to the world. "The "comfort," then, is righteous Noah's role in initiating a new era as the "new Adam" who perpetuates the family blessing by virtue of God's covenant mercies."

Genesis 5:32

(NAC) – Unlike the other men listed in this genealogy, it does not record the fact that Noah died. Noah's death is not recorded until 9:28, where another genealogy begins. Therefore, chaps. 6-9 begin an interlude where the life of Noah and God's wrath on sin are highlighted.

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