

Genesis Chapters 5-11

Some New Basic Assumptions

1. These chapters are not in chronological order. Instead, we're given thousands of years of genealogies of one family and then either thousands of years worth for another family or some more detailed account of an important story.
2. The version we have in our Bibles, as written by Moses, is not the original version of most of these accounts. It appears that one generation had written accounts that they passed down through the generations that Moses compiled into their final form.
3. Sometimes Moses will insert information into the story that would not have been in the original story but is used as a clarification. One possible example of this could be when Noah was instructed to take seven of the clean animals and two of the unclean creatures before the law defined clean and unclean.
4. There is no way of knowing the age, format (written, oral, sung or all of the above) or extent of the original material that Moses used, but at least part of it shows strong evidence of being from a human eyewitness (flood account).
5. Since we believe that Moses wrote through divine inspiration, he also had access to the eyewitness account of God who was there.
6. The genealogies are not complete, and skip generations for hundreds and perhaps thousands of years. It would be like a young person preparing a family tree for the chapter on war in history class and listing his family something like this: Me, the son of Fred, who was in Vietnam. Joe was the son of James, was in WWI. Frank was the son of William, who was in the Revolutionary War. William was the son of Fritz, who was in the war of 1432. Fritz was the son of Marcus, who was a Roman soldier under Julius Caesar.
7. Sometimes in chapter 10 names of individuals are used, sometimes names of tribes or nations are used just as freely.
8. We're going to be looking at some early history that's earlier than you typically think. We're going to go back 100,000 years or more, give or take a few.
9. Despite the amount of time that we're going to span in the next few chapters, we're going to try to speed things up a little now that we've gone through the potential landmines of creation. We've not got as long to live and study as the people we've been looking at.

A New Way of Looking at the Old World

The Bible often has a different way of looking at things from what we're used to. We've already noted that an ongoing major theme in the book of Genesis and beyond will be the tracing of the promised seed of chapter 3, first through the Godly line of Adam, then of Noah, then of Abraham, then of the tribes of Israel, then through the tribe of Judah and specifically through the line of David. Another major theme in Genesis and beyond will be the tracing of sin and rebellion against God and its consequences. These two themes will continue throughout history until they meet at Calvary.

Another major difference in the Biblical outlook, especially in Genesis, from our usual viewpoint, is that it does not take a progressive and evolving view of mankind. In our history classes we usually take that progressive and evolving view of civilization that mankind is always improving. We started out as primitive subhuman near-apes, lived in trees and cave, and slowly over the years progressed and evolved our level of intelligence, civilization and progress. We learned about fire, started using tools, made better tools, learned to grow crops and eat our own kills, settled down in little clusters of relatives, evolved into villages and eventually into towns and cities. Except for a few setbacks like the occasional invasion of Vikings or Huns or some other nasties and a few plagues and the Dark Ages, we've been progressing ever since. Every generation is a little better off than the last; a little smarter, a little wiser, a little more advanced, a little more sophisticated, etc.

Sounds familiar, doesn't it? But that is not the Biblical viewpoint! The only thing really progressive is God's revelation of Himself, the Messiah, and the overall plan of eternity and our sanctification and growth as outlined in the New Testament. The only thing that the Bible sees mankind and his civilization becoming better at is in sin, wickedness, corrupting the Gospel and various things like that. If there seems to be advancement and betterment (after all, we seem like awfully nice folks, don't we, compared to a Viking or a Hun) then it is due to the general influence of God and the Holy Spirit through the remnants of our being created in the image of God and the common knowledge of the Word of God and especially through the specific influence of God and the Holy Spirit through the work, flawed as it is, of the representative of God on Earth, the true Church.

Another Biblical viewpoint is that of mankind, despite all of its progress and technologies, becoming more degenerate. Look at our civilization as displayed in these early chapters of Genesis. We started out with a civilization of two who had perfect fellowship with God and each other. Before long, that was corrupted and civilization was adding to the words of God, toying with sin, lying, running from God, and eventually killing. Their descendants lived in cities, had technology,

made music, traded with one another, and grew further and further from God and deeper and deeper into sin until civilization, despite being far more advanced and prosperous than we usually consider, was so degenerate that it had to be wiped off the earth all the way down to the animals and given a fresh start. And even that fresh start had to be warned not to kill each other.

As we follow the story of Noah's descendants we'll continue to find prosperity, advancements and progress, but only of earthly material things. We'll see that they continue to reject God and His ways, turn to idols, disobey God's commands. Even the kings of the chosen line of David will be described as one being an even worse sinner than the before.

We can also see from extrabiblical sources such as archeology and their own writings, that these early people were not primitive and uneducated and unaccomplished. We'll find them living in three-story houses with indoor bathroom, running water and even early air conditioning. We'll find them building cities with massive defensive walls and temples rising hundreds of feet in the air. We'll find them leaving behind written records of advanced government, business and everyday life. We'll see them using common and precious metals and making things that we'd have difficulty reproducing. We'll find them studying the planets and stars and making complex calculations and mathematics. But we'll also find them perverting the original story of God into idols and mythology and false gods and human sacrifices. We'll find them growing increasingly distant from and different from their divine origin until they're destroyed either by God or by each other.

To fully appreciate these next few chapters of Genesis, you'll have to look past the preconceptions that we've picked up in public and Sunday schools and in the movies. These were not near-cavemen running around in mud huts with clubs and pulling their women around by the hair a few thousand years ago. The people we'll be looking at until we get to the Tower of Babel lived, in all probability, 60,000 to 100,000 or more years ago. They lived for hundreds of years, giving them plenty of time to think up new stuff other than just meanness, they had perhaps hundreds of children and evidently lived those hundreds of years productively and evidently their old age wasn't a time of declining physical and mental strength since they seem to keep on working and having children until they fall over (or drown). Imagine yourself at 600 years of age. The visual image you've got of a withered up bag of bones is not the one that they had. Even as late as the time of Abraham, just a little over 4000 years ago, give or take a few, his wife was such a fox at the age of 75 or 80 that he would worry about the young men taking her away. Of course, they may not have been your typical couple, but you get the general idea.