

# Genesis 5:1-32

by John Calvin

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*John Calvin's sermon on Genesis 5:1-32 explores the significance of the genealogies of Adam, the nature of sin, and the hope found in God's covenant through Noah.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 5:1-29

**Topics:** "Original Sin", "Divine Grace"

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## Description

John Calvin preaches on the genealogy from Adam to Noah, highlighting the significance of each patriarch's life and the continuous succession of the Church. He emphasizes the corruption of human nature inherited from Adam's fall and the need for divine grace for renewal. Calvin reflects on the patriarchs' long lives as a means of preserving the memory of God's judgments and the hope of salvation. He delves into the exceptional life of Enoch, who walked with God, as a model of living righteously amidst a corrupt society, and the miraculous translation of Enoch as a symbol of hope for a blessed resurrection.

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## Transcript

1. This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him;

1. Iste est liber generationum Adam: in die qua creavit Deus hominem, ad similitudinem Dei fecit illum.

2. Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.

2. Masculum et foeminam creavit eos, et benedixit eis: et vocavit nomen eorum Hominem, in die qua creati sunt.

3. And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth:

3. Et vixit Adam triginta et centum annos: et genuit ad similitudinem suam, ad imaginem suam filium, et vocavit nomen ejus Seth.

4. And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters:

4. Et fuerunt dies Adam postquam genuit Seth, octingenti anni: et genuit filios et filias.
5. And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died.
5. Fuerunt itaque omnes dies Adam quibus vixit, nongenti anni et triginta anni: et mortuus est.
6. And Seth lived an hundred and five years, and begat Enos:
6. Et vixit Seth quinque annos et centum annos, et genuit Enos.
7. And Seth lived after he begat Enos eight hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters:
7. Et vixit Seth postquam genuit Enos, septem annos et octingentos annos: et genuit filios et filias.
8. And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died.
8. Fuerunt itaque omnes dies Seth, duodecim anni et nongenti anni: et mortuus est.
9. And Enos lived ninety years, and begat Cainan:
9. Et vixit Enos nonaginta annos, et genuit Kenan.
10. And Enos lived after he begat Cainan eight hundred and fifteen years, and begat sons and daughters:
10. Et vixit Enos postquam genuit Kenan, quindecim annos et octingentos annos, et genuit filios et filias.
11. And all the days of Enos were nine hundred and five years: and he died.
11. Fuerunt igitur omnes dies Enos, quinque anni et nongenti anni: et mortuus est.
12. And Cainan lived seventy years, and begat Mahalaleel:
12. Et vixit Kenan septuaginta annos, et genuit Mahalaleel.
13. And Cainan lived after he begat Mahalaleel eight hundred and forty years, and begat sons and daughters:
13. Et vixit Kenan postquam genuit Mahalaleel, quadraginta annos et octingentos annos: et genuit filios et filias.
14. And all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years: and he died.
14. Fuerunt itaque omnes dies Kenan, decem anni et nongenti anni: et mortuus est.
15. And Mahalaleel lived sixty and five years, and begat Jared:
15. Et vixit Mahalaleel quinque annos et sexaginta annos, et genuit Jered.
16. And Mahalaleel lived after he begat Jared eight hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters:
16. Et vixit Mahalaleel postquam genuit Jered, triginta annos et octingentos annos: et genuit filios et filias.
17. And all the days of Mahalaleel were eight hundred ninety and five years: and he died.

17. Fuerunt igitur omnes dies Mahalaleel, quinque anni et octingenti anni: et mortuus est.

18. And Jared lived an hundred sixty and two years, and he begat Enoch:

18. Et vixit Jered duos et sexaginta annos et centum annos, et genuit Hanoch.

19. And Jared lived after he begat Enoch eight hundred years, and begat sons and daughters:

19. Et vixit Jered postquam genuit Hnoch octingentos annos: et genuit filios et filias.

20. And all the days of Jared were nine hundred sixty and two years: and he died.

20. Fuerunt ergo omnes dies Jered duo et sexaginta anni et nongenti anni: et mortuus est.

21. And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah:

21. Et vixit Hanoch quinque et sexaginta annos, et genuit Methuselah.

22. And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters:

22. Et ambulavit Hanoch cum Deo, postquam genuit Methuselah, trecentos annos: et genuit filios et filias.

23. And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years:

23. Fuerunt itaque omnes dies Hanoch, quinque et sexaginta anni et trecenti anni.

24. And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

24. Et ambulavit Hanoch cum Deo: et non fuit, quia tulit eum Deus.

25. And Methuselah lived an hundred eighty and seven years, and begat Lamech:

25. Et vixit Methuselah septem et octoginta annos et centum annos, et genuit Lemech.

26. And Methuselah lived after he begat Lamech seven hundred eighty and two years, and begat sons and daughters:

26. Et vixit Methuselah postquam genuit Lemech, duos et octoginta annos et septingentos annos: et genuit filios et filias.

27. And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years: and he died.

27. Fuerunt igitur omnes dies Methuselah novem et sexaginta anni et nongenti anni: et mortuus est.

28. And Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son:

28. Et vixit Lemech duos et octoginta annos et centum annos: et genuit filium.

29. And he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed.

29. Et bocavit nomen ejus Noah, dicendo, Iste consolabitur nos ab opere nostro, et a dolore manuum nostrarum de terra cui maledixit Jehova.

30. And Lamech lived after he begat Noah five hundred ninety and five years, and begat sons and daughters:

30. Et vixit Lamech postquam genuit ipsum Noah, quinque et nonaginta annos et quingentos annos et quingentos annos: et genuit filios et filias.

31. And all the days of Lamech were seven hundred seventy and seven years: and he died.

31. Fuerunt itaque omnes dies Lamech septem et septuaginta anni et septingenti anni: et mortuus est.

32. And Noah was five hundred years old: and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

32. Et erat Noah quingentorum annorum, et genuit ipse Noah, Sem, Cham, et Jepheth.

1. This is the book of the generations of Adam . In this chapter Moses briefly recites the length of time which had intervened between the creation of the world and the deluge; and also slightly touches on some portion of the history of that period. And although we do not comprehend the design of the Spirit, in leaving unrecorded great and memorable events, it is, nevertheless, our business to reflect on many things which are passed over in silence. I entirely disapprove of those speculations which every one frames for himself from light conjectures; nor will I furnish readers with the occasion of indulging themselves in this respect; yet it may, in some degree, be gathered from a naked and apparently dry narration, what was the state of those times, as we shall see in the proper places. The book, according to the Hebrew phrase, is taken for a catalogue. The generations signify a continuous succession of a race, or a continuous progeny. Further, the design with which this catalogue was made, was, to inform us, that in the great, or rather, we might say, prodigious multitude of men, there was always a number, though small, who worshipped God; and that this number was wonderfully preserved by celestial guardianship, lest the name of God should be entirely obliterated, and the seed of the Church should fail.

In the day that God created . He does not restrict these "generations" to the day of the creation, but only points out their commencement; and, at the same time, he distinguishes between our first parents and the rest of mankind, because God had brought them into life by a singular method, whereas others had sprung from a previous stock, and had been born of parents. 253 Moreover, Moses again repeats what he had before stated that Adam was formed according to the image of God, because the excellency and dignity of this favor could not be sufficiently celebrated. It was already a great thing, that the principal place among the creatures was given to man; but it is a nobility far more exalted, that he should bear resemblance to his Creator, as a son does to his father. It was not indeed possible for God to act more liberally towards man, than by impressing his own glory upon him, thus making him, as it were, a living image of the Divine wisdom and justice. This also is of force in repelling the calumnies of the wicked who would gladly transfer the blame of their wickedness to their Maker, had it not been expressly declared, that man was formed by nature a different being from that which he has now become, through the fault of his own defection from God.

2. Male and female created he them . This clause commends the sacred bond of marriage, and the inseparable union of the husband and the wife. For when Moses has mentioned only one, he immediately afterwards includes both under one name. And he assigns a common name indiscriminately to both, in

order that posterity might learn more sacredly to cherish this connection between each other, when they saw that their first parents were denominated as one person. The trifling inference of Jewish writers, that married persons only are called Adam, (or man,) is refuted by the history of the creation; nor truly did the Spirit, in this place, mean anything else, than that after the appointment of marriage, the husband and the wife were like one man. Moreover, he records the blessing pronounced upon them, that we may observe in it the wonderful kindness of God in continuing to grant it; yet let us know that by the depravity and wickedness of men it was, in some degree, interrupted.

3. And begat a son in his own likeness . We have lately said that Moses traces the offspring of Adam only through the line of Seth, to propose for our consideration the succession of the Church. In saying that Seth begat a son after his own image, he refers in part to the first origin of our nature: at the same time its corruption and pollution is to be noticed, which having been contracted by Adam through the fall, has flowed down to all his posterity. If he had remained upright, he would have transmitted to all his children what he had received: but now we read that Seth, as well as the rest, was defiled; because Adams who had fallen from his original state, could beget none but such as were like himself. If any one should object that Seth with his family had been elected by the special grace of God: the answer is easy and obvious; namely, that a supernatural remedy does not prevent carnal generation from participating in the corruption of sin. Therefore, according to the flesh, Seth was born a sinner; but afterwards he was renewed by the grace of the Spirit. This sad instance of the holy patriarch furnishes us with ample occasion to deplore our own wretchedness.

4. And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth . In the number of years here recorded we must especially consider the long period which the patriarchs lived together. For through six successive ages, when the family of Seth had grown into a great people, the voice of Adam might daily resound, in order to renew the memory of the creation, the fall, and the punishment of man; to testify of the hope of salvation which remained after chastisement, and to recite the judgments of God, by which all might be instructed. After his death his sons might indeed deliver, as from hand to hand, what they had learned, to their descendants; but far more efficacious would be the instruction from the mouth of him, who had been himself the eyewitness of all these things. Yet so wonderful, and even monstrous, was the general obstinacy, that not even the sounder part of the human race could be retained in the obedience and the fear of God.

5. And he died . This clause, which records the death of each patriarch, is by no means superfluous. For it warns us that death was not in vain denounced against men; and that we are now exposed to the curse to which man was doomed, unless we obtain deliverance elsewhere. In the meantime, we must reflect upon our lamentable condition; namely, that the image of God being destroyed, or, at least, obliterated in us, we scarcely retain the faint shadow of a life, from which we are hastening to death. And it is useful, in a picture of so many ages, to behold, at one glance, the continual course and tenor of divine vengeance; because otherwise, we imagine that God is in some way forgetful; and to nothing are we more prone than to dream of immortality on earth, unless death is frequently brought before our eyes.

22. And Enoch walked with God . Undoubtedly Enoch is honored with peculiar praise among the men of his own age, when it is said that he walked with God. Yet both Seth and Enoch, and Cainan, and Mahalaleel, and Jared, were then living, whose piety was celebrated in the former part of the chapter. 254 As that age could not be ruder or barbarous, which had so many most excellent teachers; we hence infer, that the probity of this holy man, whom the Holy Spirit exempted from the common order, was rare and almost singular. Meanwhile, a method is here pointed out of guarding against being carried away by the

perverse manners of those with whom we are conversant. For public custom is as a violent tempest; both because we easily suffer ourselves to be led hither and thither by the multitude, and because every one thinks what is commonly received must be right and lawful; just as swine contract an itching from each other; nor is there any contagion worse, and more loathsome than that of evil examples. Hence we ought the more diligently to notice the brief description of a holy life, contained in the words, "Enoch walked with God." Let those, then, who please, glory in living according to the custom of others; yet the Spirit of God has established a rule of living well and rightly, by which we depart from the examples of men who do not form their life and manners according to the law of God. For he who, pouring contempt upon the word of God, yields himself up to the imitation of the world, must be regarded as living to the devil. Moreover, (as I have just now hinted,) all the rest of the patriarchs are not deprived of the praise of righteousness; but a remarkable example is set before us in the person of one man, who stood firmly in the season of most dreadful dissipation; in order that, if we wish to live rightly and orderly, we may learn to regard God more than men. For the language which Moses uses is of the same force as if he had said, that Enoch, lest he should be drawn aside by the corruptions of men, had respect to God alone; so that with a pure conscience, as under his eyes, he might cultivate uprightness.

24. And he was not , for God took him . He must be shamelessly contentious, who will not acknowledge that something extraordinary is here pointed out. All are, indeed, taken out of the world by death; but Moses plainly declares that Enoch was taken out of the world by an unusual mode, and was received by the Lord in a miraculous manner. For לָקַח ( lakah ) among the Hebrews signifies 'to take to one's self,' as well as simply to take. But, without insisting on the word, it suffices to hold fast the thing itself; namely, that Enoch, in the middle period of life, suddenly, and in an unexampled method, vanished from the sight of men, because the Lord took him away, as we read was also done with respect to Elijah.

Since, in the translation of Enoch, an example of immortality was exhibited; there is no doubt that God designed to elevate the minds of his saints with certain faith before their death; and to mitigate, by this consolation, the dread which they might entertain of death, seeing they would know that a better life was elsewhere laid up for them. It is, however, remarkable that Adam himself was deprived of this support of faith and of comfort. For since that terrible judgment of God, 'Thou shalt die the death,' was constantly sounding in his ears, he very greatly needed some solace, in order that he might in death have something else to reflect upon than curse and destruction.

But it was not till about one hundred and fifty years after his death, 255 that the translation of Enoch took place, which was to be as a visible representation of a blessed resurrection; by which, if Adam had been enlightened, he might have girded himself with equanimity for his own departure. Yet, since the Lord, in inflicting punishment, had moderated its rigour, and since Adam himself had heard from his own mouth, what was sufficient to afford him no slight alleviation; contented with this kind of remedy, it became his duty patiently to bear, both the continual cross in this world, and also the bitter and sorrowful termination of his life.

But whereas others were not taught in the same manner by a manifest oracle to hope for victory over the serpent, there was, in the translation of Enoch, an instruction for all the godly, that they should not keep their hope confined within the boundaries of this mortal life. For Moses shows that this translation was a proof of the Divine love towards Enoch, by connecting it immediately with his pious and upright life. Nevertheless, to be deprived of life is not in itself desirable.

It follows, therefore, that he was taken to a better abode; and that even when he was a sojourner in the world, he was received into a heavenly country; as the Apostle, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, (Heb 11:5,) plainly teaches. Moreover, if it be inquired, why Enoch was translated, and what is his present condition; I answer, that his transition was by a peculiar privilege, such as that of other men would have been, if they had remained in their first state. 256 For although it was necessary for him to put off what was corruptible; yet was he exempt from that violent separation, from which nature shrinks.

In short, his translation was a placid and joyful departure out of the world. Yet he was not received into celestial glory, but only freed from the miseries of the present life, until Christ should come, the first-fruits of those who shall rise again. And since he was one of the members of the Church, it was necessary that he should wait until they all shall go forth together, to meet Christ, that the whole body may be united to its Head. Should any one bring as an objection the saying of the Apostle,

'It is appointed unto all men once to die,' (Heb 9:27,)

the solution is easy, namely, that death is not always the separation of the soul from the body; but they are said to die, who put off their corruptible nature: and such will be the death of those who will be found surviving at the last day.

29. And he called his name Noah , saying , This same shall comfort us concerning our work . In the Hebrew languages the etymology of the verb ■■■■ ( nacham ) does not correspond with the noun ■■■■ ( noach ,) unless we call the letter ■ ( mem ) superfluous; as sometimes, in composition, certain letters are redundant. ■■■■ Noach signifies to give rest , but ■■■■ nacham to comfort . The name Noah is derived from the former verb. Wherefore, there is either the transmutation of one letter into another, or only a bare allusion , when Lamech says, "This same shall comfort us concerning our work." 257 But as to the point in hand, there is no doubt that he promises to himself an alleviation, or solace, of his labors.

But it is asked, whence he had conceived such hope from a son whose disposition he could not yet have discerned. The Jews do not judge erroneously in declaring Lamech's expression to be a prophecy; but they are too gross in restricting to agriculture what is applicable to all those miseries of human life which proceed from the curse of God, and are the fruits of sin. I come, indeed, to this conclusion; that the holy fathers anxiously sighed, when, being surrounded with so many evils they were continually reminded of the first origin of all evils, and regarded themselves as under the displeasure of God.

Therefore in the expression, the toil of our hands, there is the figure synecdochee ; because under one kind of toil he comprises the whole miserable state into which mankind had fallen. For they undoubtedly remembered what Moses has related above, concerning the labourious, sad, and anxious life to which Adam had been doomed: and since the wickedness of man was daily increasing, no mitigation of the penalty could be hoped for, unless the Lord should bring unexpected succor.

It is probable that they were very earnestly looking for the mercy of God; for their faith was strong, and necessity urged them ardently to desire help. But that the name was not rashly given to Noah, we may infer hence, that Moses expressly notes it as a thing worthy to be remembered. Certainly some meaning was couched under the names of other patriarchs; yet he passes by the reason why they were so called, and only insists upon this name of Noah. Therefore the contentious reader is not to be allowed hence to pronounce a judgment, that there was something peculiar in Noah, which did not suit others before him.

I have, then, no doubt that Lamech hoped for something rare and unwonted from his son; and that, too, by the inspiration of the Spirit. Some suppose him to have been deceived, inasmuch as he believed that Noah was the Christ; but they adduce no rational conjecture in support of the opinion. It is more probable, that, seeing something great was promised concerning his son, he did not refrain from mixing his own imagination with the oracle; as holy men are also sometimes wont to exceed the measure of revelation, and thus it comes to pass, that they neither touch heaven nor earth.

32. And Noah was five hundred years old . Concerning the fathers whom Moses has hitherto enumerated, it is not easy to conjecture whether each of them was the first born of his family or not; for he only wished to follow the continued succession of the Church. But God, to prevent men from being elated by a vain confidence in the flesh, frequently chooses for himself those who are posterior in the order of nature. I am, therefore, uncertain whether Moses has recorded the catalogue of those whom God preferred to others; or of those who, by right of primogeniture, held the chief rank among their brethren; I am also uncertain how many sons each had. With respect to Noah, it plainly appears that he had no more than three sons; and this Moses purposely declares the more frequently, that we may know that the whole of his family was preserved. But they, in my opinion, err, who think that in this place the chastity of Noah is proclaimed, because he led a single life through nearly five centuries. For it is not said that he was unmarried till that time; nor even in what year of his life he had begun to be a father. But, in simply mentioning the time in which he was warned of the future deluge, Moses also adds, that at the same time, or thereabouts, he was the father of three sons; not that he already had them, but because they were born not long afterwards. That he had, indeed, survived his five hundredth year before Shem was born, will be evident from the eleventh chapter (Ge 11:1); concerning the other two nothing is known with certainty, except that Japheth was the younger. 258 It is wonderful that from the time when he had received the dreadful message respecting the destruction of the human race, he was not prevented, by the greatness of his grief, from intercourse with his wife; but it was necessary that some remains should survive, because this family was destined for the restoration of the second world. Although we do not read at what time his sons took wives, I yet think it was done long before the deluge; but they were unfruitful by the providence of God, who had determined to preserve only eight souls.

#### Footnotes

253

"Il discerne les premiers hommes d'avec les autres, aus quels Dieu a prolonge la vie eu une facon singuliere: combien qu'ils ne fussent de si haute ne si noble race." -- French Trans.

It will be perceived that this translation differs materially in sense from that given above; but, after the fullest consideration, the Editor adheres to his own, as a more literal rendering of the original Latin, and as being more in accordance with the reasoning of the Author. -- Ed.

254

"Superiori capite." Doubtless a mistake. -- Ed.

255

Adam died at the age of 930.

Enoch was born when Adam was 622,

and was translated when he himself was 365.

Age of the world, 987.

So that Adam had been dead 57 years when Enoch was translated. Whence it would appear that either the word "centum," a hundred, had slipped by mistake from Calvin's pen; or which is more probably, that, though the two Latin editions before the Editor, have the mistake, the more early ones were free from it. For the French version and the Old English one are correct. -- Ed.

256

"S'ils fussent demeurez en leur premier estat." These words, in the French translation, have no corresponding passage in the original, but are so obvious an explanation of Calvin's language, that they are here translated. -- Ed.

257

See Schindler's Lexicon, sub voce ■■■■, No. III and also, sub voce ■■■■, as a proper name, where he derives the latter word from the former, "litera ■ abjecta, aut, quod consolatio sit quies, recreatio." -- Ed

258

This inference, that Japheth was the younger son, Calvin seems to have drawn from a translation of Ge 10:21, different from our own. In our version Shem is there called "the brother of Japheth the elder." But commentators are generally agreed that the English version is right. It not only gives the more natural sense of the original, but is confirmed by collateral testimony. For it is clear that Noah began to have children in his five hundredth year. Shem was one hundred years old two years after the flood, and therefore was born when his father was five hundred and two years old. Some one, then, of Noah's sons must have been born before this. Now we are told that Ham was the younger son, (Ge 9:24). Therefore Japheth must have been his first-born. -- See Patrick's and Bush's Commentaries, and Wells' Geography of the Old Testament. -- Ed.

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