

Thursday's reading from the First Book of Moses called Genesis, in Chapter 5, is remarkable in many ways. It recounts for us a number of Generations from Adam, by naming many sons, noting the birth of daughters, and listing some remarkable life-spans.

¶¹ This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. ¶² Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. ¶³ When Adam had lived a hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. ¶⁴ The days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years; and he had other sons and daughters. ¶⁵ Thus all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died.

¶⁶ When Seth had lived a hundred and five years, he became the father of Enosh. ¶⁷ Seth lived after the birth of Enosh eight hundred and seven years, and had other sons and daughters.

¶
8
¶

Thus all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years; and he died.

¶⁹ When Enosh had lived ninety years, he became the father of Kenan. ¶¹⁰ Enosh lived after the birth of Kenan eight hundred and fifteen years, and had other sons and daughters.

¶
11
¶

Thus all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years; and he died.

¶¹² When Kenan had lived seventy years, he became the father of Ma-halalel. ¶¹³ Kenan lived after the birth of Ma-halalel eight hundred and forty years, and had other sons and daughters.

¶
14
¶

Thus all the days of Kenan were nine hundred and ten years; and he died.

□ 15□ When Ma-halalel had lived sixty-five years, he became the father of Jared. □ 16□ Ma-halalel lived after the birth of Jared eight hundred and thirty years, and had other sons and daughters.

□
17
□
Thus all the days of Ma-halalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years; and he died.

□ 18□ When Jared had lived a hundred and sixty-two years he became the father of Enoch. □ 19□ Jared lived after the birth of Enoch eight hundred years, and had other sons and daughters.

□
20
□
Thus all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years; and he died.

□ 21□ When Enoch had lived sixty-five years, he became the father of Methuselah. □ 22□ Enoch walked with God after the birth of Methuselah three hundred years, and had other sons and daughters.

□
23
□
Thus 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.

One is tempted to ask the question, “Did they really live 905, 910, 365 and even 969 years (as in the case of Methuselah, mentioned in the next few verses)?” This is certainly intriguing, and many have made comments about it.

Several points are clear:

they lived for quite a time, and according to the next chapter, their (our!) lifespan was limited to 120 years.

Another helpful reminder, however, is that in the ancient world, they did not have the accurate calendar understanding that we have today.

Nevertheless, three truths remain:

1. At first they lived a L O N G time.
2. With the wickedness of the world, man's days were lessened, biblically to 120 years.
3. They died.

This, especially during the Lenten season, is perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of Genesis 5.

Read it again and hear, "And he died.

And he died.

And he died.

And he died."

Our mortality is present here in spades. This is quite important for us, since on average we live expecting, basically, that we will live forever, or at least til a ripe old age, outliving all about whom we care (spouse, children, etc.), since "we are strong" and "could better handle living without them, than they could without us." Meanwhile, we miss both the gift of true life *today* as well as the reality that *death could come this afternoon*.

Great Lent reminds us, through this reading, that we are mortal—can you hear the funeral hymn in your mind, "Thou Only art immortal, who hast created and fashioned man. For out of the earth were we mortals made.

And unto the same earth shall we return again, as Thou didst command when Thou madest me saying unto me: For dust thou art unto dust shalt thou return; whither we mortals all shall go, making our funeral dirge the song: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

The “take home” from this reading is not simply to ponder our mortality, but to change our life accordingly. First, to love God with all our heart, and conform our life to that of Jesus Christ, in light of his death and resurrection, so that our guaranteed death will not be permanent.

But secondly, it is to translate that into every day *life*, living today in the light of our own mortality, but in the comfort of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So, owe a debt to no one except to love, forgive all by the resurrection, call brothers even those who hate us, and don't let the sun go down on your anger.