

Genesis 5:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

And Noah was five hundred years old: and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth.... This passage belongs to the primeval history section (Genesis 1-11) which establishes universal truths about God, humanity, sin, and divine purposes before focusing on Abraham and Israel. These chapters answer fundamental questions about human origins, the spread of wickedness, God's judgment, and the preservation of a righteous remnant.

Recurring patterns emerge: human sin escalating from individual disobedience to societal corruption, divine patience followed by judgment, gracious preservation of a remnant, and covenant promises ensuring redemptive purposes continue. The genealogies connect historical persons, demonstrate the fulfillment of divine promises (blessing and multiplication), and trace the line leading to Abraham and ultimately Christ.

Key theological themes in this section include:

1. sin's destructive progression affecting all humanity
2. God's righteous judgment while preserving mercy
3. human pride and autonomy opposing divine sovereignty
4. cultural development as both blessing and potential idolatry
5. God's sovereign plan advancing despite human rebellion.

These narratives provide the necessary context for understanding God's calling of Abraham and the covenant promises through which all nations will be blessed.

Historical Context

The primeval history (Genesis 1-11) parallels ancient Near Eastern traditions including Sumerian King Lists (pre-flood longevity), Akkadian flood traditions (Atrahasis, Gilgamesh), and Mesopotamian city foundation myths. However, Genesis demythologizes these traditions, presenting monotheistic history rather than polytheistic mythology. The genealogies connecting Adam to Noah to Abraham provide historical framework absent in pagan myths.

Archaeological evidence confirms ancient urbanization (chapter 4's cities), agricultural development, metallurgy, and musical instruments emerging in Mesopotamia's early history. The Babel account reflects Mesopotamian ziggurat construction (stepped pyramid temples), particularly in Babylon. Linguistic diversity requiring explanation was obvious to ancient peoples, making the Babel narrative culturally relevant.

For Israel in covenant with Yahweh, these chapters explained their relationship to surrounding nations. All peoples descended from Noah, but Israel descended from Shem through Abraham—chosen for blessing all nations. The flood demonstrated God's justice and mercy: judging wickedness while preserving the righteous. This pattern would recur throughout Israel's history, assuring them that God's covenant faithfulness endures despite judgment on the wicked.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What theological truths about Genealogy emerge from this passage?
2. How does this passage challenge modern cultural assumptions about identity, purpose, or morality?

3. What connections can we trace from this verse to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection?

Interlinear Text

וְיַהְיָה בָּם שָׁנָה מֵא וּתְשׁׁוּבָה וְיָלֹד נָתַן אֶת
H1961 And Noah old was five hundred years begat And Noah H853
H5146 H1121 H2568 H3967 H8141 H3205 H5146

שֵׁם אֶת חָם וְיַפְּתָח אֶת שֵׁם
Shem H853 Ham H853 and Japheth H3315

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 6:10 (Parallel theme): And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Genesis 10:21 (Parallel theme): Unto Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder, even to him were children born.

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