

"Generations"

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There are many genealogies in Scripture, but two only "books of generation." Genesis 5 is "the book of the generation of Adam," a chapter over which the shadow of death is apparent in the oft repeated expression "and he died," a shadow universal in its effects (cf. 1 Corinthians 15: 22) and which the power of God, the living God, alone can remove. Blessed indeed to read in such a chapter that "Enoch walked with God . . . and God took him." By faith Enoch was translated that he *should not see death* (Hebrews 11: 5). The book of the *Old Testament* refers in the last verse of Genesis to a "coffin" (death) and in the last verse of Malachi to a "curse."

The *New Testament* commences — "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ" and in it the blessed God has been pleased to reveal the eternal secrets of His heart of love. In that scene of eternal splendour, the "excellent glory" obtained (2 Peter 1: 17); that glory together with a love surpassing all human thought is seen to be the atmosphere of eternal affections (John 17: 24); ineffable light and holiness are there, it is the dwelling of God!

From that realm of majesty and power One came whose Name adorns the first verse of Matthew's gospel. It is beyond the scope of this paper to enlarge upon the eternal importance and results of His advent. The purpose of God, adorned with the power and blessedness of eternity itself, depended for its revelation and its subsequent fulfilment upon the coming of Christ into this world. Creation shall be freed from the consequences of death and the curse; God's earthly people shall be brought into happy relationship with Himself — the enjoyment of millennial blessings their portion; as Son of David He shall maintain in the fullest degree the rights of God's throne and government; as Son of Abraham He shall be manifestly seen as the Yea and Amen of every promise of God.

Yet still more! Thoughts conceived in eternity — eternal in their scope and intent, need an eternal age for their manifestation and a generation marked by intelligence and affections beyond all human powers — the "generation of Jesus Christ" is in view!

Let us pause here with unshod feet! None but He who is *eternal in His Person* could fully make known eternal thoughts, and none but He could fill a universe with hearts capacitated to respond worthily to the blessed God from whom such precious matters spring. Blessed indeed to have part in such a generation, but from whence is it derived? Angels excelling in might, wonderful in intelligence, prostrated in adoration and worship are passed by. In the few Scripture references to the eternal state, where the supremacy of God is stressed, we are told (Revelation 21) that God will surround Himself with *men*.

"The generation of *Jesus Christ*" — it is His Name in holy Manhood. Stupendous thought! He, who in the eternity of His Person, created all things, sustains all things, by whom all things subsist, became Man, the firstborn of a new generation, those who through infinite mercy would be enabled to appreciate the atmosphere of eternity and respond in eternal praise. Beloved brethren, how full the Scriptures are of this blessed truth of the Incarnation! May it move our hearts in a spirit of holy and constant worship to God.

Yet still more! How could those forming part of a generation lying under the shadow of death and the curse be brought into living association with the glorious, impeccable, sinless Christ of God? We are again on most holy ground — albeit well known in terms. Let us hear His own blessed words —

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, *it abideth alone*". In Isaiah 53 the question is asked — "Who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living." Beloved that holy sinless life of Jesus stands out in its *uniqueness* — the delight of the heart of God — His "beloved Son." With adoring hearts we hear the Lord's further words in John 12 — "but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Here is the new generation — the product of His precious death and rising again.

Out of Thy death has sprung.

A mighty living throng;

All, all to Thee belong,

And in Thee live!

What wondrous love! What infinite mercy and grace! He is now the "firstborn among many brethren," the Leader of a Heavenly race! The truly magnificent language of Hebrews chapter 2 enlarges upon Peter's theme — "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Peter 1: 11). A generation of whom "He is not ashamed to call them brethren;" all of one with Himself; the many sons whom He is bringing to glory, whom He will present with joy to His God — "Behold I and the children which God hath given me;" and in the midst of whom He hymns the praise of God. A generation whose hearts have been opened to receive him, becoming thus the "children of God . . . which were born . . . of God" (John 1). The Apostle Peter says — "The Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1). In the next chapter he speaks of them as "living stones;" "a spiritual house, an holy priesthood." What precious results accrue from the reception of God's Word! — "Living stones" partaking of the character of *The Living Stone*," a people capacitated to "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ;" able to appreciate the unique preciousness of Christ Himself, and to "shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you (us) out of darkness into His marvellous light." Blessed indeed when affections are thus happily regulated towards God, towards Christ, and in testimony to men.

The word of the gospel, the reception of which has brought to light the "generation of Christ" is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 1 as the "preaching (word) of the cross." The word used is *logos* — indicating the expression of God's mind in regard to all that marks the generation of Adam, the *complete removal* of it from before Him, and the basis for the establishment of a new generation which shall *abide eternally* to His glory.

The inclusion of four women in the genealogy of Matthew 1 (indicating the *subjective* work of God in the heart) has often been remarked as magnifying the sovereignty of God's mercy. Is it too much to say that the features of those vessels of mercy are to be seen morally in the generation of "others also" with whom Paul desired Timothy to walk? *Righteousness* — Tamar (cf. Genesis 38: 26). See also the genealogy in Ruth 4, culminating in David the man after God's own heart. "Love" — Ruth; "Faith" — Rahab; "Peace" — the wife of Solomon the man of peace.

The end verses of the four gospel books indicate some of the privileges belonging to this happy generation. Matthew — "Lo, I am with you alway." The original language reads — "I with you am" -the saints enclosed in the clasp of the great "I AM." Mark — "the Lord working with them." Jehovah's Servant graciously identifying Himself with the labours of His own. Luke — their hearts filled with joy and worship as they accompany Him to Bethany — the house of victory, their thoughts, too, directed to His coming again (Acts 1). John — (John 20) the possession of eternal life through His Name.

May we, as helped of God appreciate increasingly the realms of blessing into which, as of His

generation, we have been brought -the embrace of the I AM to whom all power in heaven and in earth has been given; His abiding presence and support in our paths of service for His Name. The present joy of temple conditions with its outlet in holy worship, our hearts anticipating His soon return; eternal life our present portion — the region of Divine affections in which the Father and the Son are to be known (John 17).

Beloved brethren, let us rejoice that our names are inscribed in the "*Lamb's book of life.*" Scripture never speaks of any name being erased from *that* book — they are there because Jesus — God's Lamb — died, they will remain there to the eternal glory of God's blessed Son.