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## Lesson 12 — OLD as METHUSELAH



*“Thus all the days of Methuselah were 969 years, and he died.”*

*[Genesis 5:27]*

Old as Methuselah.

This modern idiom finds its roots in the early chapters of Genesis. Methuselah is the oldest known person recorded in Biblical history, living 969 years. Even Adam, the first man, only celebrated 930 birthdays, but Methuselah takes the cake!

Can this even be true? What are we to make of these extremely old ages in Genesis? Are the excessively long lifespans recorded in the Bible meant to be taken literally or perhaps symbolically? Did Moses grossly exaggerate these ages for some unknown reason? Did ancient man measure time differently, or could Moses had made a mistake?

Today, our average lifespan is somewhere between 70-80 years [*Psalm 90:10*], which creates a drastic discrepancy with the pre-flood numbers. Regardless, I believe we can interpret the long lifespans before the flood as reliable, historical records. Consider the following reasons.

### **REASON #1** — AGES ARE PRESENTED LITERALLY IN THE SCRIPTURES

The Biblical genealogies both have historical and theological merit and are quite valuable in determining things like the approximate age of the earth [6,000 years], the table of the original 70 nations, and the lineage of Jesus Christ Himself.

When specific ages are provided for real people in the Scriptures, there are no grammatical rules that allow for symbolic meaning. When the Bible says that Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born [*Genesis 21:5*], then we should understand his age literally, not symbolically. And so it is with the pre-flood genealogies. When the Bible says that Jared was 162 when he fathered Enoch or that Seth was 912 years old when he died, we should interpret these ages as being historically accurate. They are unusual, but not unbelievable.

### **REASON #2** — THE ORIGINAL CREATION WAS PERFECT

Upon finishing His work of creation, God declared the heavens and the earth and everything in them “very good.” Beyond that, Adam and Eve initially were created to **live forever** and placed in the garden with access to the tree of life. It was only after man’s sin that death,

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disease, and decay came into the picture and began to corrupt God's good creation. The bondage to decay adversely affected every aspect of creation, from the physical laws of the universe [i.e. entropy] to the genetic code of life itself [mutation].

Consider for a moment a few of the possible implications of a perfect environment.

1. Perfect harmony between man and nature
2. Perfect weather
3. Perfect ecosystems and symbiosis in nature
4. Human body operating at optimal levels without defect or flaw – no wasted energy
5. Increased oxygen levels in the atmosphere and oxygen saturation at the cellular level
6. Pure environment [air, soil, water] free from pollutants, toxins and contaminants
7. Abundant nutrient saturation in the soil, plants, food, and at the cellular level
8. Perfect genetic code and replication process
9. Rapid healing capabilities and maximum immune systems
10. Little to no harmful radiation

All of the factors that shorten our lifespans today would be mitigated or at least greatly diminished in a perfect, pre-flood world. No heart disease. No cancer. No viruses. No genetic mutations and birth defects. No environmental contaminants. Perfect hydration and oxygen saturation. Total nutrient absorption and utilization at the cellular level. Optimal cellular performance with little to no wasted energy.

These factors alone would exponentially increase our life span, so the old ages in the Bible are not a major problem when we consider the perfection of the original creation. Even after the fall of man and the curse upon the earth, the effects of corruption and decay likely would have been slow and gradual.

### **REASON #3 — GENETIC INTEGRITY**

We can make educated guesses about the conditions of the pre-flood world, but because the Bible provides so few details, it is difficult to know for sure what conditions allowed mankind to live so long. To say that the earth was different before the flood is a gross understatement.

We discover that many of the patriarchs lived to be 200-400 years old even after the flood, but lifespans drastically declined and eventually leveled off after the life of Abraham. Perhaps the best explanation for longevity of life involves the genetic integrity that would have been in place before the flood. The aging process and even death itself is primarily a genetic deficiency in the body's ability to replicate healthy cells over long periods of time.

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The curse of the creation has subjected these mortal bodies to a form of bondage to corruption that we cannot escape, as Paul says, “our outer self is wasting away.” [2 Cor 4:16]

*“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” [Romans 8:20-21]*

Perhaps we shouldn’t be amazed at how long our forefathers lived before the flood considering that God created man to live forever. The most sobering reality in Genesis 5 is that with the exception of Enoch ... they all surely died, just as the LORD had said.

Thankfully, the hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ includes God’s promise to redeem this physical universe once and for all, including our physical bodies in the resurrection [Romans 8:22-23], and restore man’s immortality — giving us everlasting life! *“For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.”* [1 Corinthians 15:53]

## **The Translation of Enoch**

It is important to pay special attention to Enoch considering the details provided in Genesis 5. He is one of two prophets we know of that was translated into the presence of God without dying a natural death — the other being Elijah. Enoch becomes a mysterious prophetic figure in Scripture and also in the ancient extra-biblical book that bears his name. The pseudepigraphic book of *Enoch*, or *1 Enoch*, must be considered a valuable extra-biblical resource that provides insightful commentary and context for the early chapters of Genesis. Furthermore, both Peter and Jude reference Enoch in their writings, demonstrating that it was considered a legitimate resource in the Jewish community in their day.

- ❖ Read Genesis 5:21-24 and Hebrews 11:5-6. What can we learn about Enoch in these passages? What do you think is meant by the phrasing, God “took him?”
  
- ❖ Read Jude 1:14-15. Who does Jude quote in this passage and what is the substance of this prophecy?
  
- ❖ Although the book of 1 Enoch traditionally was not recognized as inspired Scripture by the community of faith, it retains substantial merit. I encourage everyone to take time to read it and become familiar with the content, especially for our upcoming lesson in Genesis 6. You can read it here - [https://www.ccel.org/c/charles/otpseudepig/enoch/ENOCH\\_1.HTM](https://www.ccel.org/c/charles/otpseudepig/enoch/ENOCH_1.HTM)

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## The Gospel in the Genealogy of Genesis 5

The Genesis 5 genealogy has theological value in its own right, if only as a historical record of mankind before the flood. But when we take a little closer look at the names in Genesis 5 and their root meanings, something amazing happens. God — in His divine wisdom and perfect knowledge — has provided a hidden message of redemption within one of the most mundane passages of Scripture.

Proper names are rarely translated from Hebrew to English, but rather transliterated. The meaning of these Hebrew names in Genesis 5, therefore must be determined by referring to their basic root word. This exercise — which I credit to the late Chuck Missler and Koinonia House — is at the very least worth consideration.

<i>Hebrew</i>	<i>English</i>
Adam	Man
Seth	Appointed
Enosh	Mortal
Kenan	Sorrow;
Mahalalel	The Blessed God
Jared	Shall come down
Enoch	Teaching
Methuselah	His death shall bring
Lamech	The Despairing
Noah	Rest, or comfort.

Now let us put it all together.

**MAN IS APPOINTED MORTAL SORROW, BUT THE BLESSED GOD SHALL COME DOWN TEACHING. HIS DEATH SHALL BRING THE DESPAIRING REST.**

- ❖ What are the chances this message was interwoven into the text by accident? How does this hidden message validate the supernatural origin of the Bible?
- ❖ Read Genesis 5:29. How would God bring comfort or “rest” to mankind through Noah?