

Life and Death

12/02/2012

0 Comments



Genesis 5

At first glance, there might not seem like there's a lot to the passage. But my goal today to help you see that this is not just a list of hard to pronounce names and a bunch of begats. These verses contain a great deal of solid doctrine. And I hope that by the time we are done you'll see that this passage speaks volumes as it deals with one of our greatest problems as humans.

And as we begin, we really need to start with addressing the numbers we find in this text. For they may sound a little problematic.

I. The Supposed Problem in the text

When you read this and hear it saying that people lived to be 8 and 900 years old, it's likely that your first reaction is to say, "Is that for real?"

And I will admit to you that this one of the reasons that a lot of people don't actually believe the first 11 chapters of Genesis are truly legit. A lot of people out there today say that the first 11 chapters of Genesis are not to be taken as real history. They would say that this stuff is more legendary or mythological in nature; the real stuff starts up with Abraham in Genesis 12.

And it is agreed, we've got some pretty fantastic stuff in these first 11 chapters, don't we? We have an instantaneous creation. That God spoke and everything popped into existence sounds rather absurd to the modern man. To the guy who has been told that that kind of thing just simply cannot happen, it will sound a little loony.

And in a few weeks we are going to be talking about a world-wide flood that wiped out the world's population. That's rather hard to swallow for a lot of people. It sounds just a little too farfetched. And that is just another reason why they shy away from taking this stuff seriously.

And here, you have this tale of people living almost a millennium. That's a lot of candles on the birthday cake! To the modern man, that's going to be a little bonkers! It goes against all

If you would, turn to the person beside you and make sure that they are awake. We've come to one of those texts that, well, let's just say it's often skipped. If you are still awake, you're probably looking at your watch or wondering what in the world can be said about this passage.

A few weeks ago I got a text from Spencer. Every once in a while he will shoot me a question about a sermon. And it is great to see his involvement in the series. But I got this text and it said, "How you gonna preach the genealogy?"

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our experience. And they say, "We all know that people can't live that long, right? We know that you're lucky if you get to be 90 years old."

These numbers just sound a little too unbelievable to a lot of people. So a lot of people just say that these first 11 chapters are not a real recounting of actual history. They would rather say that these chapters are to be taken as neat little stories that have been made up to teach us some nice little faith lessons.

Now, there is another group of people that we should be aware of. There are others, who are a little more serious about the Bible. There are others who want to try and keep the integrity of Scripture. They don't want to write it off as fictional. But, they are not to the point where they want to accept it outright either. It still sounds a little too far fetched to them. So they say that what we have here is a textual boo-boo. These would say, yes these are real people with real lives, but they really didn't live 8 and 900 years. In their opinion, what must have happened is some overly zealous scribe somewhere along the line who tacked another number on the end or moved the decimal point. So, they say that Adam really didn't live 930 years. He lived **93** years. That sounds more reasonable, doesn't it?

So what do we do? Do we write this off as fiction? Or do we try and blame a monk for messing with the text? Or do we do something crazy and actually believe that what is said here is true? Could these men really have lived this long? Or do we try to find some other way around this?

Sure we can!

There is a very easy way to explain this. Why can't we say that men lived this long? I mean, we were originally designed to live forever! If you think about it that way, 900 years is not so long in comparison to eternity.

What's more, in this early stage of history the conditions could have easily allowed men to live this long. There would not have been a lot of disease at this point. Sin is still relatively new on the scene and its ravages probably have not yet come to full bloom.

What's more, the flood has not yet occurred. It may very well be that the flood, having the drastic effects on the world that it did, radically changed the environment. The tides that over ran the earth might have some how limited the living conditions and made it so that men could not live as long as they did prior to the flood.

So yes, men could indeed live this long. There is no problem with the text. And there is no reason to try and explain it any differently than what is actually recorded here.

What I find extraordinary is that these so called "scholars" miss the real problem in the text. You know, Spurgeon once said that most Ph.D.'s are fiddle-dee-D's. That's true. They make much out of nothing, and they completely miss the real problem that is leaping out of the text!

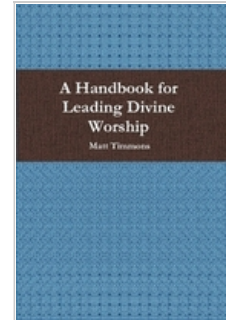
II. The Real Problem in the text

The real problem is not how long they lived; the problem is that they didn't live any longer!
The real problem is that they died!

The passage is a reminder of the curse of the fall and inescapable consequences of sin! You hear it again and again: And he died. And he died. And he died. You almost get the feeling that this isn't so much a genealogy as it is a record of names that you would find at a morgue or a cemetery. These are not so much records of births as it is records of deaths!



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This text forces you to come to terms with this dire reality. In the day you eat it you shall surely die. From dust you came, and to dust you shall return! This passage reminds us that the wages of sin is death. Death came through one man, and so all died.

And there is nothing you can do about it.

Even good old Methuselah! Here you have the oldest guy who ever lived. He chalked up 969 years. He is the epitome of human vigor. You would think that if anyone could do it, it was Methuselah. Now it took a long time, but eventually even he succumbed to it!

And this is a reminder to you that you are going to die. I don't care how many carrots you eat. You can jog 60 miles a week and take your multi-vitamin religiously every single day. But you cannot avoid the inevitable. You are going to die.

Lately there have been some rather preposterous proposals, to say the least. Not too long ago a certain scientific magazine came out and said that in less than 40 years technology will have advanced so far that we will achieve immortality. No kidding.

You can [check it out](#) for yourself. There are scientists who are saying that we will one day be able to preserve the neurological functions in our brains, long after our bodies wear out. They say that we are already able to make robots move with our brainwaves. It is said that there have been people who are paralyzed who have had implants put in their skulls. And they have actually controlled robotic movements in machines hundreds of miles away.

And they say that in less than 40 years we will be able to transfer our brains into a robotic body and therefore avoid the reality of death.

But I got news for you. It's not going to happen. Maybe there is something to what they say. But don't think for a moment that science or technological advancements will give you any hope of skipping out on dying.

That's because death is not just a physical, natural reality. It is not an evolutionary phenomena. It isn't just because our bodies just wear out with time. Death is unavoidable because it is a curse. It is due to the fact that there is this thing we call sin. We die because the wages of sin is death.

When I read this text I am reminded of what Don Quixote's side kick said in the book Don Quixote. Sancho said, "When death comes knocking at the door she is always in a hurry and nothing will stop her, not prayers or struggles nor scepters or miters."

It is true. We might be able to put it off for a while, but eventually it will come.

And were it not for what is said here about Enoch, this text would be very dismal.

III. The Proposed Solution

You noticed that in this list there is one man who never enters the graveyard. It is the story of Enoch, which is found in verses 21-24. It says, "Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him."

There is a ray of hope for us here in this passage. In the midst of all the corpse—in the midst of the graveyard, there is one man still standing. In fact, the oldest man in the Bible is not Methuselah. It's Enoch. Because Enoch never died.

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What is said here almost makes it sound like he was stolen. It says that "God took him." The book of Hebrews records for us that "Enoch was taken up so that he could not see death and he was not found." ([Heb. 11:5](#))

It reminds us that though death be a bold faced reality, it is not the last say for the Christian. This passage doesn't just remind us of death. It reminds us that our flesh is in heaven.

Just think how this was a testimony to the saving graces of God back then. People are dying all around, but one day Enoch is out with his family; Methuselah and his other sons and daughters were no doubt hanging around with him doing their normal activities. And all of a sudden they see him being taken up into the sky.

Right there they are reminded that the gospel promise is real and true. God will redeem us. Sin will be conquered and death will be vanquished.

Of course, we know the rest of the story. We know that this event points us to the resurrection. Our bodies will one day come up from the grave because Jesus himself was raised from the dead.

Technically Enoch is not allowed in heaven. God demands that there be death. He has to die. There has to be death. And that is why this passage points forward to Christ. Jesus Christ died in his place. And Jesus conquered death by rising again. Then, in the book of Acts, we are told of how Jesus ascended into heaven. Jesus replicated what happened right here with Enoch.

And this is what makes Enoch's entrance into heaven legit. And it is what gives us hope that we too will one day overcome death and see the redemption of our bodies.

1st Thessalonians reminds us that one day we will all will be raised. When Christ appears, those who are dead shall be lifted out of their graves. And we who are left will be taken up, just like Enoch, to meet the Lord in the air. On that day we shall all say, "Where O death is your victory? Where O death is your sting? Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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