

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XXXI

May 16, 2021

No. 20

## Why Did People Live So Long In Genesis?

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**O**ur current life span in the United States is a little over 78 ½ years. Some parts of the world like Hong Kong and Australia can boast of over 80 years as a current life span in their parts of the world. On a world-wide scale, life expectancy has steadily increased in recent years, dramatically so since the 1800 and 1900's. Today, 97,000 in the United States are at least 100 years of age. While 100 may become the new 80, this number is not as staggering as the life span of those in the Book of Genesis.

Adam lived 930 years, Seth 912, and Methuselah, the oldest, lived 969 years. Noah experienced 950 years on earth. After the flood his son, Shem, lived 600 years. Terah, the father of Abraham, lived 205 years. Abraham lived 175 years, Isaac 180, and Jacob died at the age of 147.

Was the atmosphere different before the flood that helps explain why men lived at least 300 years longer than those who lived after the flood? Some have suggested that when the flood emptied the water “above the firmament” of heaven through the “windows of heaven” (*Genesis 1:7-8, 7:11*), man was now subject to stronger ultraviolet rays, and void of life benefiting effects of greater oxygen levels coupled with increased air pressure.

As we proceed through the Old Testament, we learn Moses lived to be 120, and Joshua, his successor, died at the age of 110. After the period of the Judges, David lived 70 years and Solomon died at the age of 80, which for 3,000 years now equal our modern life span. Inspired of God, Moses wrote, “*The days of our years are three score years and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore years; yet is their pride but labor and sorrow; for it is soon gone, and we fly away*” (*Psalms 90:9*).

While we are not told explicitly why men lived so long in the first chapters of Genesis, Jacob may offer us some divine pointers: “*The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained unto the days of the years of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage*” (*Genesis 47:9*).

After sin entered the world in Genesis 3, God allowed Jacob's forefathers to live long lives, longer than Jacob's 130 years, his age when he spoke to Pharaoh. We would not consider Jacob's years on earth as “few.” But he did in comparison to his forefathers, living 200- 900 years on earth. It may be that God wanted Jacob and us to understand that life on earth was

originally designed to be everlasting. Death was God's promised punishment if man sinned (*Genesis 2:17*). When man sinned, God kept man from the tree of life, to keep him from eating and living forever on earth (*cf. Genesis 3:22*). From this point, man's life on earth has continued in a downward trajectory to our present 70 to 80 years of labor and sorrow.

When sin entered the world through Adam, all of creation was “subjected to vanity” or futility (*Romans 8:20*). God subjected it in hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ. God ordained such so man would be delivered from the “bondage of corruption” into “the liberty of the glory of the children of God” – which is the redemption of the body from the grave (*Romans 8:21-23*). Death is connected to corruption and life is short. It is like vanishing vapor, and withering grass (*James 4:14, 1 Peter 1:24*). David invokes God to help him number his days, allowing such measurement to prove how frail he is (*Psalms 39:4*).

Maybe God allowed man to live long lives soon after sin entered the world to offer yet another perspective. He wants us to have these reminders of long life showing us in terms of years how far we have fallen from God's glory. Immortality now is only offered in Jesus Christ (*2 Timothy 1:10*).