



# **METHUSELAH**

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## **Introduction**

Last year I was so privileged to be asked to preach at a church in Indiana. The minister told me to speak on what was on my heart. That's always nice, as most preachers I think would agree. But then again, it might seem to be much easier if I was assigned a text or topic. So, I began to seek the Lord in prayer and for over a period of a month, I had nothing. It was when my mind was not even thinking about what to preach when God spoke through His written word and the inner prompting of the Holy Spirit. *Hebrews 9:27*, "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment."

I assume that the subject of death and judgment would not be a home-run sermon coming from the guest speaker. However, from a Christian worldview, such death and judgment should provoke a response on our part. That is growth in holiness knowing the great day of God's wrath is approaching. In this short exposition, we will look at three important truths regarding Enoch's firstborn son Methuselah and how as long as he was, living judgment was withheld but when he died, "it shall come."

## **Expository Unit**

Genesis 5:25-27:

"Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years and became the father of Lamech.

Then Methuselah lived seven hundred and eighty-two years after he became the father of

Lamech, and he had other sons and daughters. So, all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years, and he died.”

### **Historical Context**

In regards to Genesis chapter 5, a brief description of the historical and socio-cultural context will be necessary to properly exposit the text. We learn in this great genealogy that God always has a remnant of godly individuals in an ungodly age. All but a few had gone the way of Cain (Gen. 4:16-24). There had to be teaching and pleading going on by Adam, Enoch, Methuselah, and Noah. These were the early preachers of God’s grace (Gen. 3:15, Jude 14, 15, 2 Peter 2:5). Martin Luther in his commentary on *Genesis* states regarding Genesis 5: “Moses has drawn up this (chapter) for two reasons. In the first place, because of the promise of the Seed that was made to Adam (Gen. 3:15). In the second place, because of Enoch.” So looking at the life of Methuselah we can learn a few important truths: *First*, it was at the time of his birth, that his dad Enoch began to walk in fellowship with God (Genesis 5:21-22). *Second*, Methuselah lived a very long time, 969 years. *Third*, His name means in Hebrew, “when he is dead, it shall come”. So, whether Enoch received a revelation from God regarding the name or if it was an act of faith nevertheless, while Methuselah lived, the global flood would be held back. But when he died: “it shall come”.

### **Biblical Chronology**

I want to attempt to show briefly how the name Methuselah, and the very long period before the global flood fit together. I think the New Testament does reinforce the names in Genesis 5 because Luke’s gospel if anything teaches us to take the Genesis 5 genealogy with

great seriousness. Luke 3:36-37, Matthew 1, 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 6:3-14, and Ezra 7:1-5 genealogy's give names but on the contrary Genesis 5 lists years which is very helpful. This is helpful because it tells us who is alive and who is dead. In his commentary on the Pentateuch, C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch comment on this line of Seth that began to call upon the name of the Lord (Gen.4:26). They note: "Now if we add together the ages at the birth of the several first-born sons and the hundred years between the birth of Shem and the flood, we find that the duration of the first period in the world's history was 1656 years." So here we learn that the flood came in 1656 after the creation of Adam, which is precisely the year Methuselah died, history bears then the meaning of his name. As long as Methuselah was alive, the global flood was on hold, but when he died it came!

### **The Patience of God**

Methuselah would have been a walking, living testimony of God's grace. You say how? I say because it was not a mere chance he lived as long as he did. In the New Testament, Peter tells us, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2Pet. 3:9). It seems that Peter was writing about the coming of Christ although many, many years later it still serves as a commentary during the time of Methuselah's life. Peter's readers were being scoffed at regarding the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus. Peter is writing about God's judgment; reinforcing the global flood. They were taunting the early Christians saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Pet. 3:4). That is the same attitude that dominates the minds and hearts of people today as well. Peter responds to this by referring to the previous judgment, the flood. During that time there

was willful ignorance (2 Pet. 3:5-7), they did this by willfully ignoring history (Romans 1:28). But Peter also says the reason for the delay is the patience of God waiting and hoping that all might repent (2 Pet. 3:8-9). But at the end of the day, the Divine Judgement of God is unavoidable. In regards to the main point of Peter's passage it happened once so therefore it will happen again (2 Pet. 3:10). Peter said, "the Lord is not slow"

### **Life Application**

As we have looked at this godly line of Seth, I do strongly believe grew in personal holiness as the great day of the global flood was approaching. The name of Methuselah was a living testimony to the truth of God and the truth of God's judgment. As day by day and year by year of sawing and hammering away on the ark's construction, I am sure that actively encouraged the godly line to live sensibly, holy, righteously, and godly in their present days. So, the relevance is, how much more for me and you! I am referring to the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus Christ. Always remember the name Methuselah means, 'when he is dead, it shall come. Dear friend, this is so true for every one of us. If we don't live to see the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ then we will live to see the casket. Let us remember, "and inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment." (Hebrews 9:27). We die, it shall come. Either He is coming here or we are going there, it makes little difference. Judgment will come.

### **Conclusion**

So, we see in this list of names in Genesis chapter 5 the grace of God and the judgment of God all played out in and through the name of Methuselah. The grace was seen in those who were in the godly line of Seth. The judgment was seen in the ungodly line of Cain. So too, we

are reminded in the life of Methuselah the two-fold response Christians will have in effect to our holy living and holding fast the faith word (Titus 1:9). The apostle Paul mentions the two-fold response in 2 Cor. 2:15-17, he says: “For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one, an aroma from death to death (judgment), to the other an aroma from life to life (grace)”. Let us who are “*in Christ*” always be that aroma of life and grace.

## **Bibliography**

1. The Holy Bible, NASB, Copyright 1960, *The Lockman Foundation*
  
2. Luther, Martin, *Luther's Works*, VOLUME 1, Lectures on Genesis 1-5, Copyright 1958 by Concordia Publishing House Saint Louis, Missouri, pg. 332
  
3. C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Vol. 1 '*The Pentateuch*', Copyright 1973, pg.121 (The Father's Before the Flood-Chap. V.) a chronology of Genesis 5 chart.
  
4. *Vincent's Word Studies in The New Testament*, VOL. 1, Copyright 1886, pg. 705 - (βραδύς) "Only here and 1 Tim. iii. 15. The word is literally *to delay or loiter*. The word implies, delay, the idea of lateness with reference to an appointed time.

