

In search of...

Truth & Right

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Methuselah

Ask most twelve year-olds who holds the record for living the longest and they will likely turn to the *Guinness World Records* and proclaim "Jeanne Louis Calment of France" who lived to the ripe old age of 122 years, 164 days. With all due respect to Ms. Calment, she is far from being the record-holder. She is not even in the top ten. In Genesis 5:27 we discover the true record holder. The text reveals that "all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years, and he died."

Nine hundred sixty-nine years old?!

Is that possible? Think for just a moment about the vast old ages given for the patriarchs. For instance, we know Adam lived to be 930 (Genesis 5:5). What happens when our children or grandchildren open up the pages of God's Word and begin reading about people who lived to nearly one thousand years old? You can just imagine them looking up, and with child-like innocence asking, "Mimi's not **that** old is she?" What is our response? Were these literal ages? Or did they not measure time the same way back then? Living in a time in which one hundred years is considered a newsworthy accomplishment, these ancient ages may cause some to view the early chapters of Genesis as a myth or fable.

Consider that the Centers for Disease Control listed average life expectancy in the United States in 1900 as

47.3 years. With the advent of antibiotics, vaccines, and a full understanding of Louis Pasteur's Germ Theory of Disease, the average life-expectancy age had jumped to 68.2 by 1950. Life expectancy has continued to needle its way up over the last fifty years. We have mastered the art of invasive surgery under sterile conditions. We can even transplant organs that have failed. Each advancement incrementally increases the average life expectancy of man. For instance, by 1995 the average life expectancy was 75.4 years. Children born today in the United States have a life expectancy of 78 years. From 47.3 to 78 years in just over a century is a tremendous advance. This advancement can be attributed to two factors: better living conditions and scientific advancements. In the United States most citizens have clean drinking water, sanitary housing, and a better diet than those living 100 years ago. As such, our bodies are in better shape to fight off or withstand infections and viruses. In addition, scientific advancements in the medical field have made it possible for individuals to have procedures such as coronary by-pass surgeries that add several years to the life of individuals. However, these ages pale in comparison to those recorded in Genesis chapter 5.

Could the ancient patriarchs have

really lived over nine hundred years? A quick calculation of the genealogies listed in Genesis 5 brings to light the **average** age of the patriarchs (excluding Enoch who was taken directly by God at the age of 365—Genesis 5:23-24) was 907. How was this physically possible? After all, they didn't have the medical knowledge we possess today.

Skeptics have used the vast old ages listed in the Bible to plant seeds of doubt in the minds of students. They ridicule the very notion of humans living that long and thus call the entire text of God's Word into question. But are their claims valid? Do these ages call into question the inspiration of the Bible? When answering this charge, it is important to keep in context the time which we are discussing. In modern times these ages seem impossible—because we do not see it happening around us today. But we are not living in the same conditions. The first thing we must establish is that the Earth then was vastly different than it is today.

At the end of God's creative activities, everything was pronounced "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Consider that there were no pollutants. We had not yet filled homes with lead paint. We had not clear-cut rain forests. We had not yet filled our schools and factories with asbestos. We had not dumped raw sewage into rivers and oceans. We had not sprayed DDT on the ground, or covered our own troops with Agent Orange. We had not yet experimented with thalidomide on pregnant women in an effort to cure morning sickness. Every single thing was "very good."

Today when we ask the question of why people die, we are often given a long laundry-list of reasons. The notion of death brings to mind diseases and disorders such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, cancer, congestive heart failure, and the list goes on and on. Scientists have identified over 1,600 harmful genetic mutations that have found their way into the human gene pool. A quick reflection on your extended family will probably reveal that at least one of these harmful genetic mutations has found its way into your genes. Conditions like diabetes, high blood

pressure, and cancers of all types are running rampant through the human genome. **But stop and consider this one question: How many of these harmful genetic mutations were in existence when God first placed Adam and Eve in the Garden? Answer: There were none!** Everything was considered "very good."

A physical analogy would be similar to having a pristine original word document and then making a Xerox copy. We then take the "copy," and using it, we make another copy. We keep doing this twenty or thirty times—each time using the new "copy"—and we begin to see degradation over time. The contrast and sharpness of that final "copy" varies dramatically from the original. Now consider the replication and copying processing of human DNA. One can see that after many generations how these harmful mutations could have come into existence.

When discussing these vast old ages with family or skeptics, we must also point out **how long were Adam and Eve designed to live?** Had they not sinned, they would still be with us today. God created them "very good" and allowed them access to the Tree of Life. Their decision to disobey God introduced death to mankind.

But human physiology was not the only factor to consider. We must also consider the condition of the Earth itself. It too was "very good". In Genesis 1:6-7, Moses described a firmament or heavenly expanse around the Earth. The term there used for firmament is the Hebrew word *raqia* which means simply the sky above the Earth. The Bible equates "firmament" with the "heavens" (Psalm 19:1). So what would the phrase "divide the waters which were under from the waters which were above" describe? The waters below the firmament are still all around us today: lakes, creeks, streams, oceans. Moses' description of waters above the firmament is a good biblical indication that there was once a canopy of ice crystals or water vapor around the Earth.

Think for just a minute of all of the positive affects this canopy would have given men. We all know the damaging effects of the sun and the harmful ultraviolet rays. Thankfully we have an ozone layer in

place that helps acts a filter to filter out some of those harmful rays. But consider what would happen if the Earth had both an ozone filter and this canopy in place to filter out harmful UV rays. Additionally, this canopy would have increased and stabilized the global temperature reflecting back down some of the sun's rays, thus providing the Earth with more warmth—creating a tropical rain-forest-like environment. Additionally, there is strong scientific evidence that there was increased oxygen around during this time, which would also play a tremendous role in allowing those patriarchs to live to vast old ages.

Having established with our children the scientific truth that this Earth was different back then, we then turn to the Bible and demonstrate an example of this fact. We could show our children the account of Abraham and Sarah going down to Egypt. The text reveals that they journeyed south, for there was a famine in the land. Just prior to their entering Egypt, Abraham turned to his wife and remarked: "Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance. Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live" (Genesis 12:11-12). Abraham knew that the Pharaoh would want Sarah. And that is exactly what happened according to the text. Sarah was taken into Pharaoh's house, and that's when the plagues rained down on Pharaoh. But do not miss the point. Have you ever stopped to calculate Sarah's age when Abraham makes this statement? She was pushing seventy years old and yet Abraham was worried about the Pharaoh taking her because of her beauty. Indeed, things were different back then, and we need to make sure our children and grandchildren understand that fact.

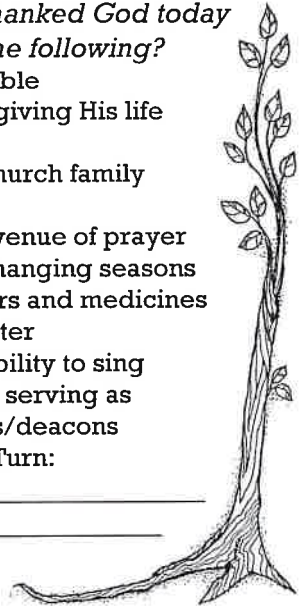
We are making vast strides in increasing the life expectancy of man today—strides that are possible because Almighty God created man with the ability to learn and grow in wisdom. However, **nothing will compare to the genetic gift God bestowed upon Adam and Eve.** Their genes were the original copies that all human DNA have descended from (Genesis 3:20). Was it possible for them to live to the vast old ages described in God's Word? Absolutely! The scientific and biblical evidence confirm and demand it.

Brad Harrub

God gave you a gift of 86,400 seconds today. Have you used one to say THANK YOU?

*Have you thanked God today
for any of the following?*

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- Jobs
- The avenue of prayer
- The changing seasons
- Doctors and medicines
- Laughter
- The ability to sing
- Those serving as elders/deacons
- Your Turn:



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Grace through Faith

L F Y Z Z P K Y H G E G D D H J I O P V
 S S L C Q N E L T K B T O G E T H E R J
 R G F N R Z R N R P S H U E D X R N E T
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 G Y C Y U Q I G L A X G D S V N M F E V
 V Q N N X Z D N T T B H H P G F U E D P
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 A S Y R V L I V E D Q W B S W G T S S K
 I X R G G H S S D B B L O S U L V S I L
 S K R J P H F W C W A L K E D G M E X K
 E M Z P V A K I N D N E S S M W W N W E
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 Y S Z I I L C C W Q U Q H Q I O P P O B
 I A T A L L H Y F S R I V I S I I B D K
 L K R M C E D A G X W U G W R P V L Y I
 B C A D S T U Q A U H C Y U F L X G W B
 T P I G H X H O R C M L K E S H S Y O E

DIRECTIONS: Look up the scripture in the Bible, and find the answer in the crossword above.

Eph. 2:1, *And you were dead in the _____ and sins...*

Eph. 2:2, *...in which you once _____, following the course of the world,*

Eph. 2:3, *among whom we all once _____ in the passions of our flesh,*

Eph. 2:4, *But God, being rich in _____, because of the great love...*

Eph. 2:5, *...made us alive _____ with Christ...*

Eph. 2:6, *and _____ us up with Him and seated us with Him*

Eph. 2:7, *so that in the _____ ages He might show the immeasurable riches...*

Eph. 2:7, *...of His grace in _____ toward us in Christ Jesus.*

Eph. 2:8, *For by grace you have been saved _____ faith.*

Eph. 2:9, *not a _____ of works, so that no one may boast.*

Eph. 2:10, *For we are His workmanship, _____ in Christ Jesus for good...*

Eph. 2:10, *...works, which God _____ beforehand, that we should walk in them.*