

Methusaleh

Methusaleh may be one of the most famous people in the Bible. Most people know that there was some guy in the Bible who lived longer than anybody else – in fact, almost a 1000 years. And this is, in most people’s mind his claim to fame.

Methusaleh’s name was given to Enoch, his father, by God. The name that God gave him was a sentence. And we studied this just a few weeks ago. So here is this little baby, and his name describes the child’s relationship with God, a reflection of the parents’ relationship with God.

So God told Enoch to name the baby Methusaleh. And in the Hebrew ‘Methusaleh’ means, “when he is dead it shall come.” Now that’s a heck of a name. “When he is dead it shall come.”

Enoch didn’t know precisely what “it” was, but he knew that it was some type of judgment that would cause sweeping changes in civilization as he knew it. And from that point on Enoch walked with God. At that time the earth and its inhabitants were humanistic, self-sufficient, God - denying people. They believed that they were the center of the universe. They had, in effect, fired God – they had declared their independence from God. And since they lived so long, and were so narcissistic, they produced a civilization that carried sin to the extreme. And in chapter 6, this extreme sinfulness included active, visible demonic activity.

Methusaleh belonged to that part of the family that came from Seth. Seth was the one that received the promise from God that a deliverer would come and crush the head of the serpent. And this promise was passed down from generation to generation, from father to son. It came to Enoch and he gave it to Methusaleh.

And in this entire ante-diluvian world, and that means millions of people, only this one family believed in God and the promise. Everybody else has abandoned even the idea of a God.

And let’s face it, they were probably viewed as a little strange. I mean it says, “He walked with God.” That means that Enoch was out of step with the

entirety of the rest of the world. And he gives his child this strange name, “when he is dead it shall come.” How would you like to show up at kindergarten that your name is Methusaleh. And remember that you would be doing it in Hebrew, and that means that you announce that “when I’m dead it will come.”

And then when Methusaleh is 223 years old, his father disappears. He goes for a walk with God and never comes back. Where’s the body? I mean these people are a little different.

And this man, Methusaleh comes to identify with his name; he comes to be the embodiment of this name. He comes to be the embodiment of God in some sense, because God gave him his name. He accepts this name and lives his life accordingly – that is, he knows that when he dies “it shall come.” So he lives life very loosely, very relaxed – in other words, he lives in and through God.

And you know, there is something very ominous about his name – “when he dies it shall come.” Something is coming and it won’t be good. We have to face the judgment aspect here. And remember that we studied sin – it is missing the mark, missing the target. So sin is “self for self.” But God’s love and God’s creation is “self for others.” And God IS life – so “self for others” is life, and “self for self or sin” is death.

So we are forced to acknowledge hell, damnation and judgment because of the very name of this man – BUT you have to fight your way through the love of God to get there! Because God does everything, – everything in His power, short of coercing your free will – to try to save mankind.

So Methusaleh’s name speaks of the flood. But also in this name is the love of God, the mercy of God, the patience of God, and the longsuffering of God toward the human race. For when he was born the world was bad enough to wipe it out. But God said I am going to plead to this generation and pull them with my love as long as this child lives.

So this child became a register of God’s mercy.

This child became a description of my unconditional love, of my patience. Because God said He would wait as long as this child lived. This child, then, became a living testimony that there is a God, and that He is calling you and warning you as to what is coming.

Now look at this – when God decided to embody his mercy in a human life – that life was the longest that ever lived on the planet. Have you ever thought about that?! God said I will show you how long my patience is – how great my love is. So this is the picture: the judgment is about to come, and God says no! Give them ten more years, and ten more years. For Scripture says that “God is not willing that any should perish.” So God’s love and God’s patience keep putting it off, and putting it off. For 969 years!

So Methusaleh keeps getting another 10 years, another 10 years, another 10 years. In the book of Exodus, it says that “God is slow to anger.”

So in a world that has fired, dismissed, discharged – laid off – God, here stands a man whose very name reminds you that God is here and that God has the last word.

Methusaleh gets married and has a son named Lamech. And the promise of the coming deliverer is passed on to Lamech. Then Lamech has a son, and old Methusaleh sees something special in this child. And this child is called Noah; and Noah means “rest” or “comfort to our heart.”

And at this time, then, there are only twelve believers in God on the face of the earth. Methusaleh and his wife, Lamech and his wife, Noah and his wife, and Noah’s three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth, and their wives. This is all that is left – things are getting worse.

Methusaleh is 749 now – and the relatives are checking up! How are you feeling today? For “when he is dead it will come,” you know. Noah is 480 now; and he has a revelation and God tells him what “it” is. To Noah, God says “it” would be a deluge – the oceans would come up and the sky would fall in and the whole earth would be covered in water until the highest mountains are covered.

And remember that the Virgin marry is a descendant of Noah, through Shem. And Noah is told that the flood will come in 120 years. So Methusaleh knows that he has a 120 years left to live. And when he dies “it” shall come.

So here is this little family - 12 people – living around a faith in a God that has revealed Himself

to them. These people are out of step with the rest of the world – they do not just march to the beat of a different drummer – they are marching to the beat of a drum that comes from the other half of the universe.

They’re driving up a one way street the wrong way – or perhaps they’re driving the right way, but all the signs have been turned around by Adam. Adam turned the arrows around when he sinned. He went his own way.

When Lamech is 777 he dies. It is five years till the flood. And old Methusaleh knows he has five years left. And then when he is 969 years old, Methusaleh quietly died. And the next day, the heavens fell in and the floods came up.

And you know, we live the same type of world – almost. And I, for one, many times feel the way this small family must have felt. Like a stranger in a strange land. Like – “is there anybody else left?” Do you know that feeling? You remember what Elijah said, “I, only I, am left.” And God told him that there were 7000 others – that he was not the only one.

You and I, then, are Methusaleh in this world. We are the embodiment of God – we are the embodiment of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Just like the prophets of Israel – they did not just preach a message, they became the message.

Remember Hosea? And the way that he was taught how to love? And in the end, he said that that is how God loves you. And now, through the Holy Spirit, He is embodied in us. That is why we are called the “Body of Christ.” Christ lives in us. As Methusaleh was the embodiment of the character and patience of God. So with you and I: our identity is the Gospel, our identity is the love of God that has come to us by means of Christ.

Have you ever stood in front of a mirror and said to yourself – there stands one that was made in the image of God. I mean – you have the ability to think, you have the ability to choose – we call it free will – and you have the ability to work. This is the image of God. Not your physical flesh, but the part that resides in your soul – the real you. That is made in the image of God.

People who believe in evolution – they believe that they are just sophisticated animals – so they act like animals. But when you know that you are made in the image of God – that changes things.

Look – take baptism. What is baptism about? Baptism is the declaration that the Holy Spirit has iden-

tified you with the death of Christ and His resurrection. So that as far as this world is concerned, you were translated out of the kingdom of darkness in the Kingdom of God. You are no longer part of that old mankind. You have left the world.

You know, in the early church they would ask you three questions when they baptized you: Do you forsake the world? Do you forsake the flesh? And then, do you forsake the devil and all his works? And they would turn to the west (you know, the sun rises in the east and sets in the west), and spit – a holy spit. And they would announce “I renounce forever Satan and all his works.” Then they would plunge you into the water – the declaration: you die with Christ, you rise with Christ.

And why did they do this? Why is baptism important? Because you don't just make a decision for Christ. You don't cast a vote for Jesus, as it were. Like in a voting booth. No! It is far more than that! You were regenerated – you entered a new creation – you died – you were buried – you rose sharing the very life of Jesus Christ.

The Bible says, “He put His hand on you and said this one is mine.”

Scripture says that after the Holy Spirit comes upon you, “you shall be witnesses.” It doesn't say DO witnessing. In other words, your lifestyle. And it doesn't say perfect. It says that God's love and forgiveness start to become part of you. And then you DO witnessing because you are a witness.

Just like Methusaleh was a witness in his very length of years to the longsuffering of God. God will have the last word. And when Methusaleh died, “it” came – just like his name said it would. And the “it” was so great, so catastrophic – that they forgot about his name – for “it” became history. And the history became greater than his name. So I have to stand up here and tell you what Methusaleh stands for. God did have the last word.

Remember, God is not willing that any should perish – so He lengthened the days of Methusaleh so that all might have chance after chance to change their minds.