

# Back to Bible Basics

## Issue 20

### WHY DID MEN IN THE DISTANT PAST LIVE LONGER?

Every Bible student knows that oldest man in the Bible was 969 years old when he died. Since man does not live as long today, it is difficult for modern man to believe that anyone in the distant past lived over nine hundred years. However, the Bible is not the only ancient record that attributes long lifespans to prominent historical figures. The ancient Sumerian king's lists claim that their monarchs lived for thousands of years. I believe they exaggerated the age of their kings, but it may be a reflection of the fact that early men lived longer than modern men. How do we explain the long lives of these Patriarchs? Why don't men live today live as long as their ancient ancestors? The answer to these questions is found in the makeup of our atmosphere.

The sun provides long wavelength electromagnetic radiation which provides the necessary energy for life. Much of the harmful ultraviolet radiation is filtered by the ozone layer. After reading the previous statement some may tempted to think that God's design for the atmosphere was flawed. If God did design the atmosphere why would He allow any harmful radiation to reach the earth? It is true that the atmosphere is not a perfect filter. It is also true that the harmful ultraviolet radiation that passes through the atmosphere causes a breakdown in

cellular structure that results in mutations and cancers in organisms. "Maybe God was just a bad designer?" Athiests offer up this argument in an attempt to humiliate those who believe in divine creation. However, the Bible clearly indicates that the structure of the atmosphere today is not what it was when God created it. The original structure of the atmosphere was clearly diminished when God sent the flood upon the earth. The Bible describes a water canopy that surrounded the earth before the flood. In Genesis 1:7 we read, "*Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the WATERS WHICH WERE ABOVE THE FIRMAMENT; and it was so.*" The book of Genesis indicates that the atmospheric water canopy collapsed when God flooded the earth. This collapsing canopy of water helped to feed the waters of the flood (Genesis 7:11).

The loss of the water canopy would make the earth more vulnerable to cosmic radiation. It also would expose mankind to genetic mutation and other diseases. Some have speculated that the water canopy would have served as a giant hyperbaric chamber which would have slowed down the ageing process. This would explain why people lived longer in the past. Those in the past would also not have been subjected to the diseases and genetic flaws which trouble mankind today.

When God initially created the atmosphere it was perfect for the job it was designed to do. You might say that the loss of the perfect protective atmosphere in Noah's day was part of the punishment for man's rebellion. The ongoing consequence for the crimes committed against God, and humanity by those of Noah's generation, are still being felt today.

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## THE PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND TARES

Matt 13:24-30

In **Matthew 13:24:30** we read the Parable of the Wheat and Tares. In this parable, Jesus spoke of a man who planted a crop of wheat in a field, **but while men slept**, his enemy came and planted tares among the wheat. Since, in their early stage, tares were difficult to distinguish from wheat, by the time they were discovered, the tares had become so deep rooted that they could not be pulled up without uprooting some of the wheat. The Lord therefore said *“Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, **Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.**”* (**Matthew 13:30**). Jesus later explained the meaning of the parable to His disciples (**Mathew 13:36-43**). Let us briefly examine His interpretation.

**There were two different sowers and two different seeds.** *“He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one”* (**Mat. 13:37-38**).

The **“good seed”**, which was planted by the Lord, represents the **“children of the kingdom”**. These were Christians, members the Lord’s church which began after His death on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. On that day 3000 people were added to the church, after hearing the gospel preached and being baptized for remission of sins (**Acts 2:41, 47**). As the gospel was preached, the church spread throughout the world in the apostolic era (**Acts 1:8, Col 1:23**). This church was not a denomination, but the true church which Christ built (**Matthew 16:18**).

The **“tares”** were planted by Satan. They represent the **“children of the wicked one”**. Since the wheat represents Christians, members of the true church, the tares can represent nothing else but the thousands of different denominations that we see in the world. They came into existence as the result of false teaching

that was gradually sown throughout the years by Satan, **while men slept** (**2 Tim. 4:1-4; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Thess. 1:1-11**). Denominationalism is so deeply rooted in the DNA of Christendom that the only way society can define a Christian is by asking them what denomination they belong to. Anyone who says that they belong to the true church of Christ is often laughed to scorn.

The fact is, however, the wheat and tares in the parable are mutually exclusive. They represent **two distinctly different plants**. They came from **different seeds**, were planted by **different sowers** and have **different destinies**. Since all saved people on earth are in the church that belongs to Christ (**Acts 2:47, 20:28; Ephesians 5:23**), we are left with the logical conclusion that there are no saved people in any denomination. Every denomination has its own founder, its own creed and began centuries after the original church was planted in Jerusalem in AD 33.

The parable teaches that wheat and tares will coexist on the earth until judgment day. This, thankfully, indicates that the true church **still exists**. When the pure gospel seed is planted, it can produce **nothing but a Christian**, a member of the Church of Christ (Luke 8:11). When any other seeds are planted, they can produce nothing else but “children of the wicked one”

We all need to think carefully about the Lord’s words on the Sermon on the Mount when he said *“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you**: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* (**Matthew 7:22-23**). These sincere people lived their life thinking they were children of the kingdom, but found that they were actually tares. We must remember the sobering words of the Lord who said: *“Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up”* (**Matthew 15:13**).

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