Two Different Fates – Methuselah and Enoch

Introduction

Genesis chapter 5 contains information about the early patriarchs – that is, the first 10 generations of men after Adam. Two of the most famous of those patriarchs are Methuselah and Enoch.

Both Methuselah and Enoch had very interesting events happen to them, at the very end of their lives. In other words, both of those patriarchs had interesting “fates”. Let’s see what Scripture has to say about the fates of those men.

Background on Methuselah

The patriarch Methuselah has the distinction of being the longest-lived person recorded in Scripture - he lived to the ripe old age of 969.

Recently, I discovered a relatively interesting fact about Methuselah. Here are some of the items that are listed about Methuselah and his descendants:

Genesis 5:25 (ESV):

25 When Methuselah had lived 187 years, he fathered Lamech.

So, Lamech was born 187 years after Methuselah was born.

Genesis 5:28-29a (ESV):

28 When Lamech had lived 182 years, he fathered a son 29 and called his name Noah

Lamech was 182 when he became the father of Noah. 182 + 187 = 369. Therefore, Noah was born 369 years after Methuselah was born.

Genesis 7:11-12 (ESV):

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. 12 And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

Noah was 600 when the flood began. 600 + 369 = 969. So, the flood began 969 years after Methuselah was born.

As mentioned above, Methuselah died 969 years after he was born. In other words, Methuselah died in the exact same year that the flood began.

As a result, it is possible that Methuselah - Noah’s grandfather - was killed by the flood!

Of course, it not guaranteed that Methuselah was killed by the flood; because he may have died earlier in that same year.
However, if Methuselah did die in the flood, then that may be one reason why God closed the door of the ark (rather than Noah closing it) - because if Noah had to close the door, then he would have had to condemn his own grandfather to drown in the flood.

There are two other items that arise, from this initial information about Methuselah.

**Noah’s other relatives**

First, it seems strange to me that only Noah - and his immediate family - were saved from the flood. One might expect that at least one other member of Noah’s family - brothers and sisters, cousins, nephews and nieces, etc - would have been influenced by Noah’s good behavior; and would therefore warrant being spared.

Of course, Scripture tells us that the time right before the flood was extraordinarily filled with wickedness:

Genesis 6:5-7 (ESV):

5 The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, 6 And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. 7 So the LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.”

Note verse 5: “every intention … was only evil continually.” If that statement is literally true, then the wickedness of that time period must have been unimaginable to us.

Even if that statement is not literally true, Scripture certainly seems to be emphasizing the point that wickedness and sin were rampant during that period, to an amazing extent. Of course, all of us are influenced by the people around us - so if everyone (or even most people) around us are constantly practicing sin, then that will have an extremely corrupting influence on us.

So, the extreme wickedness of that time period may explain why none of Noah’s other relatives - other than his immediate family - were saved from the flood. In other words, all of his other relatives - including Methuselah - may have been “corrupted” by the sinfulness of that period.

**What about Enoch?**

The second item regards another one of Noah’s relatives: his great-grandfather, Enoch. Almost all of the patriarchs listed in Genesis 5 lived until they were over 900 years old. Enoch is the big exception in that group. Here is what Genesis 5 says about Enoch:

Genesis 5:21-24 (ESV):

21 When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah. 22 Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. 23 Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. 24 Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

So, Scripture tells us that “all the days of Enoch were 365 years” - far lower than the normal 900+ years of the rest of the patriarchs in Genesis 5.
Hebrews chapter 11 - the famous “heroes of the faith” chapter - has this to say about Enoch:

Hebrews 11:5 (ESV):

5By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God.

That verse states that “Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death”. That seems to indicate that Enoch ascended into heaven - so that he did not die at all. However, that understanding is contradicted by other Scripture.

First, Jesus explicitly told us that no one has ascended into heaven, except Jesus himself:

John 3:13 (ESV):

13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

The only person who has ascended into heaven is Jesus - not Enoch! So, Enoch cannot be in heaven now.

Also, Hebrews chapter 11 goes on to say that all of the heroes who are listed there - including Enoch - actually died:

Hebrews 11:13 (ESV):

13 These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

Some people may claim that the above verse only applies to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph – because those are the people who are mentioned immediately above that verse; and because the verse states that “they did not receive the things promised”. In other words, some people claim that that verse is only speaking about Abraham dying, without inheriting the promised land. However, take a look at what is stated in verses 39 to 40:

Hebrews 11:39-40 (ESV):

39 And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised,
40 since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

The individuals who are mentioned immediately prior to that passage are: Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets. Did those individuals inherit the promised land? In other words, did they live in the promised land, after it had been conquered by the Israelites? Yes! So, it certainly appears that Hebrews 11:39-40 – as well as Hebrews 11:13 – do not only apply to Abraham; instead, those verses apply to all of the heroes listed in that chapter – including Enoch!

As a result, it appears that Enoch actually died - just like all of the other heroes mentioned in that chapter (Abraham, Moses, David, etc.)
Conclusion

So, what can we make of Hebrews 11:5, when it states “By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death”?

Well, here are some facts about this overall subject:

1. Scripture tells us that Enoch “walked with God”, and “was commended as having pleased God”. As a result, I would expect that Enoch would live a very long life - that is, longer than his contemporaries lived.

2. All of the patriarchs listed in Genesis 5 lived for at least 777 years - except Enoch. Enoch had a much shorter life than all of the other patriarchs - which is exactly the opposite of what I would expect!

3. Apparently, everyone who lived during the time of Noah - except Noah and his immediate family - became corrupted by the wickedness of that time. As a result, everyone else who lived during that time was killed by the flood.

4. The fact that Enoch had such a short life means that he did not live during the time of Noah. As a result, Enoch did not have a chance to become “corrupted” by the wickedness of Noah’s time.

So, here is one possible understanding of what Hebrews 11:5 means:

“Since Enoch had great faith, God ended Enoch’s life prematurely - so that Enoch would not get corrupted by the wickedness of Noah’s time - and wind up being killed by the flood.”

In other words, when that verse states that Enoch “should not see death”, it may mean that Enoch “should not see death in the flood.”