

The Eight Old Men.

IT is related of a certain libertine, a most profligate and abandoned character, that he happened once to enter a church at the time that Scripture was being read. And as the chapter proved to be the fifth of Genesis, it was not, if judged by a human standard, one of the most interesting portions of the Word of God; nor would any truly converted person have considered it to be a likely one to be used of the Spirit of God to the blessing of this wretched man's soul.

But as my reader may not have his Bible handy, I will just say that the chapter is that which begins, "This is the book of the generations of Adam," and which gives the genealogy down to Noah.

It is chiefly filled with names and ages; and one who is not convinced of the value of the whole Word of God might account it dry and unattractive, while even an evangelist might find it difficult to preach the gospel from such a Scripture. Yet from all eternity had it been ordained, in the counsels of the God of grace, that this apparently mere historical record should be the means of bringing everlasting blessing to the soul of this poor abandoned profligate.

It was one little expression occurring eight times over in the chapter that wrought this blessed result. It consisted of but three words, and three shorter words you would scarcely find together anywhere in your Bible. They were these—"AND HE DIED."

There are *eight old men* spoken of in the chapter. One of them lived to be 777 years old, above ten times as old as men of full age generally live now; but the end came, "*and he died.*" That was Lamech, the son of the oldest man that ever lived, and the grandson of a man who never died at all! but Lamech died.

Then another of these old men, Mahalaleel, lived to be 895 years of age; yet we read, "*and he died.*"

Enos, his grandfather, lived ten years longer, but "*he died.*"

His son surpassed him by five years; this was Cainan, but he also "*died.*" Cainan was a most remarkable man, for about 250 years before his death he could have said, what no man but he could ever say, that he was the great-grandson of a man who had *never been born* (Adam, whom God created), and that his own great-grandson had gone to heaven, but had *never died* (Enoch, whom God translated). But as I have said, "*he died.*"

Seth, the brother of Cain and Abel, lived no less than 912 years, "*and he died.*"

Adam lived 930 years, but he had no childhood and no youth; and it would appear that the years of his manhood were therefore more in number than those of any man who ever lived, yet of him also it is recorded, "*and he died.*" Physical death had been pronounced of God to be the direct effect, both to him and to his seed, of the sin he had committed, and this chapter is full of the testimony which each death afforded of the truth of the divine verdict and the reality of the divine penalty upon man's transgression.

Jared, the father of Enoch, lived to be 962, "*and he died.*"

But Methuselah, Enoch's son, lived to the unprecedented age of 969, lived to be nearly a thousand

years old ! Why, if a man were to live to such an age now, men would say he would live for ever ; but God never forgets. It is appointed unto men to die, and even Methuselah was no exception ; for we read, "*and he died.*"

It was the reading, then, of this remarkable Scripture which was proceeding in the church, and thus eight times over fell upon the ears of this poor profligate, "AND HE DIED."

These eight old men lived on an average over 900 years each, but they died, every one of them, and he who listened to the brief narrative of their lives and their death, felt so deeply impressed with the fact that *he also must die*—in other words, the Spirit of God so drove these three words eight times over in upon his soul that he could never forget them or escape them.

His conscience was stirred to its depths. The ploughshare had penetrated his soul, and He who made those deep furrows did not forget to pour the oil and the wine of His richest, sweetest grace into the gaping wounds He had made.

Thus a Saviour's precious love and a Saviour's precious blood were apprehended by faith. The sinner's heart melted under the discovery of God in grace having given His Son to die on behalf of those who were on the highway to an eternal hell, and that Son of His bosom, the blessed Man Christ Jesus, having agonized under the terrible load of our sins, His ^{life} and His life's blood given for our redemption, the Just One having thus died for the unjust to bring us to God.

This blessed discovery gave peace to his conscience, the work done upon the cross was so precious and so complete ; and He who did that work became thenceforth an object, a worthy, blessed object, for the present and eternal rest of his heart.

Dear reader, I will only add one thing more from

that fifth chapter of Genesis.

There are not only in it the eight old men who died, but there is one mentioned who left this scene a comparatively young man; this was Enoch, and he is spoken of in a way that none of the rest are. It is recorded of him that he "WALKED WITH GOD: AND HE WAS NOT; FOR GOD TOOK HIM," and this is put in instead of the words, "and he died."

He lived just 365 years (or a year of years, that is exactly as many years as there are days in an ordinary year), but what a blessed, if a comparatively short, life was his! *He knew God*, or he never could have walked with Him, for that implies intimacy, and instead of dying, God exempted him from the common penalty. And by Hebrews xi. 5, we learn that *he pleased God*, and this was the distinguishing feature of his life.

Now, dear reader, if you know God, which is the privilege of all who come to Christ, and if you please God, which is the privilege of those who have faith in Him, then you also can, like Enoch, look forward to being translated without seeing death; for though death is the penalty of sin and the common heritage of sinners, yet Christ has said, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." And thus when He comes, which may be at any moment, we who have believed, and are alive and remain, shall be caught up in a blessedness even greater than Enoch's and shall *see Him*, be *like Him*, and be *with Him* for ever! This shall be the undying portion of all those who have believed unto salvation, and who are waiting for the Lord Jesus when He comes.

May you, through His love and grace, be among that blood-washed and eternally-happy company.

W. R.

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