

# Why Did People Live For About 900 Years Before The Flood?

<http://www.creationscience.com/onlinebook/FAQ226.html>

Feb 23, 2014 – Dr. Walt Brown

*Note from Pastor Kevin Lea: This handout by Dr. Walt Brown was referenced during our Sunday morning service on Feb 23, 2014, covering Hebrews 11:5-7. This study included verses in Genesis about Enoch and Noah and touched on an explanation for their long ages before the flood. You can listen to the study by going to our sermon archive link.*

Life spans suddenly began decreasing after the flood, at least for the patriarchs whose ages are listed in the Bible. [See Figures 223 and 224.] This “ski slope” type of decline (called an exponential decay) is one that engineers and scientists see frequently. It occurs when a system, in equilibrium (balanced), moves toward a new, suddenly produced, lower equilibrium state.

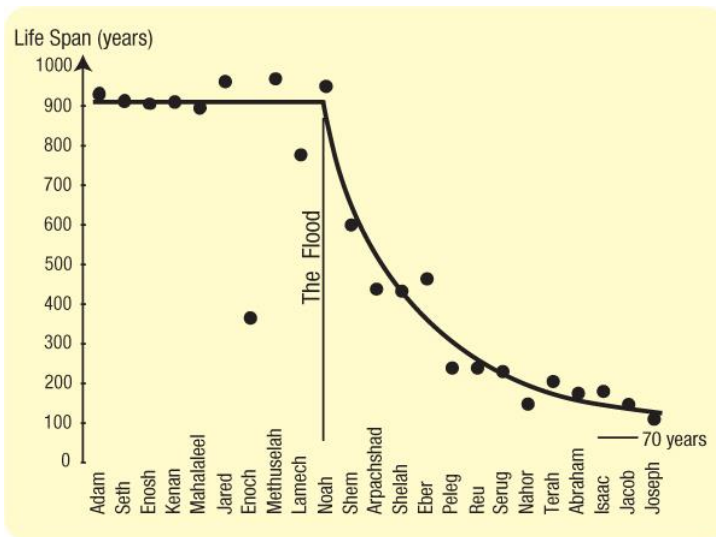


Figure 224: Declining Postflood Longevity. Notice the sudden downward trend in postflood life spans after of the flood. This type of downward declining curve (an exponential decay) strongly suggests that man’s environment underwent a drastic change which reduced human life spans.

Many people have speculated on the cause of this decrease, but few proposals fit all the following facts. The decline:

- began at the flood
- fits an exponential decay<sup>1</sup>
- affected Shem, who carried pre-flood

genetics

- affected the entire postflood population, regardless of latitude, elevation,<sup>2</sup> diet, nationality, or customs

Some say the decline in life spans was caused by the “genetic bottleneck” (a population shrinkage) occurred at the flood. However, Shem avoided that bottleneck, because his genetics were fixed, a century earlier—at his conception. Yet, his drop in longevity was the greatest of all the patriarchs listed in Figure 224. Genetic bottlenecks also occur (a) in pioneering families or other small groups isolated for generations, and (b) in hundreds of breeding experiments with different animals. But to my knowledge, no one has observed an exponential decay in their life spans.

While genetics certainly plays a role, it is not as large as some may imagine. Identical human twins who die of natural causes typically die more than 10 years apart. “Two studies of human twins attribute most (>65%) of the variance to non-shared environmental factors.”<sup>3</sup> Genetically identical laboratory animals give similar surprising results.

Unfortunately, proposals that do fit these facts cannot be tested experimentally, including mine. However, the flood events I have already described fit all these facts and would automatically and greatly reduce longevity.

A previous frequently-asked question (pages [464–467](#)) concerns radiocarbon dating and the rapid buildup of carbon-14 in the atmosphere beginning at the flood. As explained in “**The Origin of Earth’s Radioactivity**” (pages [351–396](#)), during the flood, powerful electrical (piezoelectric) currents inside the fluttering crust released small, but significant, amounts of carbon-14. Also produced were a few thousand other new isotopes—chemical elements that were unusually light (or heavy), because they had fewer (or more) than the normal number of neutrons.

To illustrate what contributed to some extent to decreased life spans after the flood, let’s first consider carbon-14—just one of these few thousand new isotopes. A different aging mechanism will then be given for all other isotopes produced during the flood.

Imagine a person weighing 160 pounds (72,575 grams). About 18% of his body (by mass) is carbon. Every 12 grams of carbon contains  $6.022 \times 10^{23}$  carbon atoms. One carbon atom out of a trillion ( $10^{12}$ ) is carbon-14. Carbon-14 has a half-life of 5,730 years. When carbon-14 decays, it becomes nitrogen-14. Therefore, a 160-pound human experiences 2,500 carbon-14 disintegrations every second!

$$\frac{72,575 \times 0.18 \times 6.022 \times 10^{23} \times 0.693}{12 \times 10^{12} \times 5,730 \times 31,556,736} = 2,500 \frac{\text{disintegrations}}{\text{second}}$$

Note: There are 31,556,736 seconds in a year, and the number 0.693 ( $-\ln 0.5$ ) converts half-lives to rates of decay.

What happens when a carbon-14 atom in your body suddenly decays and becomes nitrogen? It’s not good. That nitrogen bonds differently with other tissues, producing distortion (or wrinkling) at the atomic level—aging! Also, if any carbon in your DNA or RNA suddenly becomes nitrogen, the affected genes may not work properly. Both effects age you very slightly every second, with clocklike precision. Which organs finally break down or become diseased will depend partially on the genetics you inherited. The negative exponential curve in [Figure 224](#) is a mirror image of the positive exponential curve (line C) in [Figure 222](#) on page [464](#). Did that postflood carbon-14 increase cause decreased longevity? Perhaps.

What about the few thousand other new isotopes produced during the flood that slowly worked their way into the biosphere over the centuries?<sup>1</sup> Those isotopes sometimes produce defective proteins in trillions of your cells. Here’s why. Most cells in your body contain tens of thousands of ribosomes—absolutely amazing and complex manufacturing plants that produce your body’s proteins. The new isotopes you eat, drink, and inhale are sometimes incorporated into amino acids that are brought into your ribosomes and hooked together (according to the instructions in your DNA) into long chains. When that chain exits a ribosome, the electrical charges on the chain fold it in multiple ways simultaneously. That tight, very specific, three-dimensional shape determines what the protein will do in your body. If the protein misfolds—due to light (or heavy) isotopes that either speed up (or slow down) a particular fold—the protein will be defective and an organ in your body might suffer. These defects build up over time, so your proteins steadily, but imperceptibly, degrade. A fascinating animation of this complex folding process in a bacterium can be seen at:

[www.mrc-lmb.cam.ac.uk/ribo/homepage/moves/translation\\_bacterial.mov](http://www.mrc-lmb.cam.ac.uk/ribo/homepage/moves/translation_bacterial.mov)

Every second, isotopes produced during the flood are slowly aging us at the atomic level, so our organs deteriorate. Which of the thousands of new isotopes are the chief culprits (mild poisons) and what mechanisms and repair systems play a role are open questions.

Scientists are starting to recognize some of this. For example, Dr. Thomas Kirkwood, Director of Aging and Health at Newcastle University in England, writes:

Many scientists believe that the aging process is caused by the gradual buildup of a huge number of individually tiny faults—some damage to a DNA strand here, a deranged protein molecule there, and so on. This degenerative buildup means that the length of our lives is regulated by the balance between how fast new damage strikes our cells and how effectively this damage is corrected. The body’s mechanisms to maintain and repair our cells are wonderfully effective—which is why we live as long as we do—but these mechanisms are not perfect. Some of the damage passes unrepaired and accumulates as the days, months and years pass by. We age because our bodies keep making mistakes.

We might well ask why our bodies do not repair themselves better. Actually we probably could fix damage better than we do already. In theory at least, we might even do it well enough to live forever.<sup>4</sup>

Besides asking “why our bodies do not repair themselves better,” we should ask why our cellular machinery started malfunctioning—and when.

- The new isotopes (heavy or light) produced during the flood are mixed with all that we eat, drink, and breathe. On rare occasions, these “strange isotopes” interfere with our very complex genetics and cellular machinery. (Such disruptions during the first few generations after the flood may have produced different characteristics in the various created kinds—microevolution.)
- At the atomic level, this damage accumulates in a somewhat random manner, even among identical twins, because the “strange isotopes” that we take into our bodies become “bullets” in tiny but rapid versions of “Russian roulette.” The potential damage during each roulette game is extremely small; however, we each play thousands of games a second. We, and all living things, are slowly aging.<sup>5</sup> But aging is qualitatively different from radiation damage which produces deformities and lack of fitness.

## References and Notes

1. If the life spans of the postflood patriarchs (recorded in the Bible) had been mistranslated, randomly selected, or made up by someone with no knowledge of higher mathematics, a linear fit would be much more likely than an exponential decay.

However, the thousands of isotopes produced—some harmful—in the fluttering crust during the flood would exit the crust and enter the biosphere and living organisms at a rate proportional to their concentration in the crust. So, the concentration of these harmful isotopes in the biosphere and within organisms would rapidly increase initially, but would level off after some period of time. In other words, life spans would experience an exponential decay.

Why was Noah’s life span apparently unaffected by the postflood environment? Many years were required for significant quantities of the harmful isotopes produced in the fluttering crust to work their way into the biosphere and the food, water, and air we take into our bodies. Then, more years were required for sufficient damage to build up in Noah’s already mature organs.

2. Some say that a canopy shielded the earth from deadly radiation and that the canopy collapsed during the flood, so lifespans decreased. If that were true, people living today at lower elevations and higher latitudes would be shielded by more atmosphere and should live longer. That is not the case. [See “**Drop in Longevity**” on page [474](#).]

3. Caleb E. Finch and Rudolph E. Tanzi, "Genetics of Aging," *Science*, Vol. 278, 17 October 1997, pp. 407–411.

4. Thomas Kirkwood, "Why Women Live Longer," *Scientific American*, Vol. 303, November 2010, p. 35.

5. Aging is not the same as our 20 years or so of development from conception to maturity, so the time required to become a mature adult has probably not changed too much. Therefore, people living before the flood spent a much greater percentage of their lives as productive, mature adults than we who live after the flood. Indeed, Noah had children after he was 500 years old. [See Genesis 5:32.]