

How old was Noah when he died?

According to Genesis 7:6, “Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth.” This is reiterated in verse 11. The flood lasted about a year, and in Genesis 8:13 we find that “by the first day of the first month of Noah’s six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth.” Genesis 9:28-29 sums it up: “After the flood Noah lived 350 years. Noah lived a total of 950 years, and then he died.”

Noah is the last of the long-lived patriarchs of old. Genesis 5 gives a list of men who lived incredibly long lives, most of them over 900 years. After the flood, the ages to which people lived began to drop precipitously. Genesis 11 gives another list of men after the flood, and, by the time of Abraham, the average was around 200 years, which is still incredibly long by today’s standards. Abraham lived to be 175 (Genesis 25:7).

Much later, Moses lived to be 120 years old (Deuteronomy 34:7). His successor, Joshua, lived to be 110 (Joshua 24:29). However, even in Moses’ time, this may have been an exceptionally long life because Moses writes, “All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan. Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away” (Psalm 90:9-10).

Over the years, the average life expectancy reduced even further in many parts of the world due to disease and warfare. Today, in developed nations, the average life expectancy has increased and is now somewhere in the 80s.

The long lives of the ancient patriarchs are a stumbling block for some. The ages recorded in the first part of Genesis seem to be impossible and mythological. However,

scientists today tell us that our cells have tremendous ability to regenerate. Our bodies are capable of renewing themselves indefinitely, and the only thing that makes us age is the harsh environment that we live in. According to the Bible, the harsh environment came as a result of the fall. Our bodies are constantly bombarded by harmful rays from the sun, chemicals (both naturally occurring and man-made), viruses, bacteria, and damage caused by accidents, injuries, and hard work. Recent research on cancer suggests that many of our cells may replicate in a faulty way but that normally our immune system attacks and kills these cells before they can do any damage. However, over time, deficiencies in our immune system may allow some of these renegade cells to reproduce and cause problems. The older we get, the more likely this is to happen—the more likely it is that some of our cells will replicate in a faulty way and that our immune system will allow them to survive. It stands to reason that people who lived closer to the pristine environment of the original creation would experience fewer external and environmental problems. If there was a significant change in climate or atmosphere after the flood, then lifespans could have shortened even more rapidly.

All of that aside, when the Bible says that Noah lived 950 years, we can accept what it says as truth.