

Your Epitaph

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[0 : 00] is that saying on a tombstone that is right below the name. And if you look around at graves, you'll see some interesting ones.

Jesse James, his says, murdered by a traitor and a coward whose name is not worthy to appear here. Betty Davis, the actress, hers says she did it the hard way.

There's a Maryland grave that says, here lies an atheist all dressed up and nowhere to go. And George Johnson in Tombstone, Arizona, bought a horse that had been stolen.

He didn't know it had been stolen, but he couldn't persuade him that he didn't know it at the time. And so his stone says, here lies George Johnson hanged by mistake 1882.

He was right, we was wrong, but we strung him up and now he's gone. Lester Moore got shot when he delivered a damaged package.

[1 : 07] Wasn't his fault, but they shot him and realized later that it wasn't his fault. It says, here lies Lester Moore, four slugs from a 44, no less, no more.

Frank Sinatra says, the best is yet to come. And Frank, I hope that was the case. Rodney Dangerfield says, there goes the neighborhood. Merv Griffin that had a late night talk show said, I will not be back after this message.

And the great boxer, Jack Dempsey's grave says, a gentle man and a gentleman, even though he was a boxer. We kidded Dawn years ago and said, we's going to put on her tombstone.

And I told you I was sick. And she replied and said, on yours, we're just going to put, phew.

Because that's what I make, that noise I make every night when I get home and rest.

I heard about one that didn't want an epitaph on his grave. Matter of fact, he didn't want his name on his grave. He didn't like his name, never did. His name was odd. And he said, when I die, don't put my name on the stone.

[2 : 20] Because I hate my name. I just want you to put the day that I was born and the day that I died. And that's all. And that's exactly what they did.

And when people walk by that grave, they look at it and go, hmm, that's odd. That's odd. That's odd. Some of y'all will get that about lunch.

I want us to look this morning at the life and the passing of a few people and the statement that their lives left. Genesis chapter 5, beginning in verse 21, it says, when Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah.

Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters.

Thus all the days of Enoch were 365. Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him.

When Methuselah had lived 187 years, he fathered Lamech. Methuselah lived after he fathered Lamech 782 years and had other sons and daughters.

[3 : 35] Thus all the days of Methuselah were 969 years and he died. There's a genealogy as well in 1 Chronicles chapter 4 that has dozens of names in it, but it gives more detail about one name.

It's in 1 Chronicles 4, 9, and 10, and it says this, Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called him Jabez, saying, because I bore him in pain.

Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying, oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my border and that your hand might be with me and that you would keep me from harm so that it may not bring me pain.

And God granted what he asked. Jabez and his prayer have been a part of Scripture for thousands of years, but most didn't recognize it until the year 2000 when Bruce Wilkinson wrote a little book called The Prayer of Jabez.

He sold 9 million copies. It encouraged people to pray the prayer of Jabez, and he got thousands of letters from people that told them that that prayer worked and that God had blessed them.

[5 : 00] But I want to be clear this morning. God didn't answer Jabez's prayer because it was worded correctly. That's not why God answered his prayer. He answered it because Jabez lived an honorable life.

He answered it because Jabez relied upon the Lord in prayer and that he prayed deliberately and plainly enough to recognize when God's hand was at work.

Jabez stood out among the rest in a lot of baguettes in the genealogy, and he got more than just a baguette. In our passage today, we see at least one stand out, and I want to point out a couple of others as well.

This man Enoch lived like few others did and left like few others have because only four have left like Enoch left, to my knowledge.

It said he walked with God and was no more. So there's Enoch who left mysteriously like that.

Scripture also tells us about Elijah who left in a fiery chariot from this life.

[6 : 16] Jesus himself who ascended into heaven after he had resurrected. And my dog Boo, back in Christmas of 2010, I had an old dog, 16 years old, and he could hardly walk across the yard.

Did not see very well. He didn't go out for very long. I had a younger dog that was on one of those collars that kept her in the yard, and so we had the back gate open in the backyard and let that dog go back and forth.

And old Boo was so old, he wasn't going anywhere. And I was in the process of bringing in Christmas decorations and those type things. And a little while later, we realized he wasn't around. Poor dog wasn't even able to walk across the yard, but yet he had walked somehow, somewhere. And so we just said he walked with me and then was no more. I mean, we sent out search parties. It was in December. It was sub-freezing weather that night, and we were tore up. And if you don't have a dog, you don't relate to any of this.

And if you do have a dog, you realize the horror of all of that. And we still never saw a sign of him. I had a guy in the church that owned a monument business. And I said, I'd like to get, you know, like a footstone or just something to have my dog's name on it, you know.

[7 : 36] And man, we got a stone that, a huge stone, and it simply had his name and his dates, and it said Genesis 5, 22. He was no more. Because we don't know what happened to that dog.

Never did find out. Now, I'll tell you what we do know about Enoch. Enoch walked with God. Now, to walk with God means that you spend time with God daily.

To walk with God means that you live cleanly before the Lord. To walk with God, it means that you obey him faithfully, that you let nothing hinder your relationship with the Lord.

Nothing hinder that fellowship that you have with God. What a life he lived. Name after name is listed on this page.

And there's no description of their life. All we know is the children that they had. And the reality is, we don't know a lot of that either. Because I'll tell you this, some genealogies in Scripture, and if you see similar ones that are not consistent, this is why.

[8 : 41] Some genealogies in Scripture skip generations. And you know why they skip generations? Because that generation didn't have an impact. So they just skipped right over it.

Completely. The people are not even listed. Then there's people in these genealogies that have other children that are listed and some that are not listed.

Either it was the first son that's listed, or it's the one that made the impact, or the one that's in the lineage of one who made an impact. So I want you to get this.

Enoch never died. Hebrews chapter 11 verse 5 says that by faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found because God had taken him.

So before he was taken, he was commended as having pleased God. God took him physically, bodily, to heaven without dying.

[9 : 43] One man complained to Mark Twain one time and said, I'm just afraid this world is just coming to an end. And Twain replied, well don't worry about it. You'll never get out of it alive anyway.

And yet, you probably won't, but you might. Enoch had a departure, not a death. He had a transition, not a tomb. Elijah did the same, and those who are alive when the Lord returns, praise God, will do the same as well.

Enoch would have been remembered for whatever his life consisted of. And if he had a tombstone, and he didn't because he wasn't buried, his epitaph would have been, he walked with God.

I want you to notice this morning a confusing matter to take note of. In Genesis chapter 4, we have the genealogy of Cain's descendants, and in Genesis chapter 5, we have the genealogy of Seth's descendants.

Remember, Cain was Abel's son that killed his brother Abel in a spiritual jealousy. Seth was the third son, and his descendants are the ones that God used more mightily.

[11:00] It can be confusing because some of the people have the same names, they've used them again, and Lamech is one of those names that's used twice. But I want to focus on the Lamech that's in the line of Cain because Lamech stands out for a couple of reasons.

In Genesis chapter 4, verse 19, it says, And Lamech took two wives, the name of the first was Adah, and the name of the other was Zelah.

And then it goes on to say, in verses 23 and 24, Lamech said to his wives, Adah and Zelah, Hear my voice, you wives of Lamech.

Listen to what I say. I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold.

Now, that passage, in that little brief explanation, tells me that Lamech had some problems.

[12:14] The first problem he has, he had two wives. Not only was that ungodly, but it was also unwise. If you listen to the great theologians, the Oak Ridge Boys, they sang years ago, trying to love two women is like a ball and chain.

Sometimes the pleasure ain't worth the strain, it's a long old ride, and it'll tire your mind. But apparently Lamech didn't listen to the Oak Ridge Boys, and so he tried to love two women. Lamech was actually a man that couldn't control himself.

Not only was he not a one-woman man, but his life was marked by violence and pain. And that speaks a lot of Lamech. And it not only speaks a lot to Lamech, but it also speaks a lot to Cain.

Do you remember what Cain did after he killed his brother? We talked about Cain and Abel weeks ago, but I didn't deal with this matter. But what happened to Cain after he killed his brother?

Genesis 4 verse 16 says, then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord. Now let that sit for a minute. Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Node, east of Eden.

[13:36] The word Node there in the Hebrew means wandering. So in other words, he was wandering outside of the presence of God.

And based upon what he told his wives, his violence led him to, excuse me, Cain's violence led him to wonder on the wrong path.

And based upon what Lamech said to his wives, his descendants, Cain's descendants did that as well. The truth of the matter is what Lamech said was that he was violent.

But it says he is violent because somebody else started it. In verse 23, he said somebody wounded me. But Lamech was determined to finish it.

And verse 24, when he speaks like he does and says if Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is 77-fold.

[14:37] When he says that, I want you to understand what he's saying. He's bragging. That's a boast. He'd have made for a good mid-Atlantic wrestler that got up afterwards and made their comments.

He's bragging about the fact that if you mess with me, it's going to be handed to you. Lamech probably didn't have a message on his gravestone.

But if he had, it would have said this. He didn't walk with God. I would rather have on my stone and on my life what I suggested would have been Enoch's stone.

And that is he walked with God. What a way to be remembered. The only thing that's really said about him is that he walked with God. But I want you to notice something about Enoch's life.

It was not always that way. He didn't always walk with God. I want you to look at Genesis 5, 21 and 22 again.

[15:48] And it says this. When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah. Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah, 300 years.

And had other sons and daughters. I want you to notice from that passage that the first 65 years of his life, it simply said that he lived.

There was really nothing to make any different from anyone else. And then he had a son. And his son was named Methuselah.

And something changed in Enoch's life. Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah. Now, sometimes having children is a wake-up call.

I've seen it many times in my years of ministry. When a young couple has a child, there's a decision that's made in one way or the other. It's definitely a time of decision for the churchgoer.

[16:57] Either that young family will become committed to the church and to make sure that that child is raised in the admonition of the Lord and that they will be committed to the church and make sure that kid has every opportunity that he or she can to know of the love of Jesus Christ.

Or something else happens. Or they'll be, they won't be committed to the church because they're too busy trying to take that kid everywhere else.

Let me be clear. I don't care what this world may promise you. Jesus said, if you gain the whole world yet lose your own soul, what have you gained?

So listen, do all you can to give your children as much of Jesus as you possibly can while they're still under your roof. Don't let anything distract you because the devil will try anything.

The devil will try everything. You want to tear down a country? Tear down a family. You want to tear down a child?

[18:17] Make sure their parents are not committed to follow the Lord Jesus. Don't let anything distract you because I promise you when their knees are blown out and their career is over, they're still going to need Jesus.

When hearts are young, when hearts are tender, it's not hard to nurture that child in the Lord.

But over time, hearts grow hard. And the shot don't come as easy the longer it goes. Don't, don't miss the shot that God gave you.

And another message, empty nesters with that smile on your face. Don't abandon church when the kids leave the house.

Invest in the next generation. Volunteer, undergird, support. Have I mentioned VBS? Help with VBS.

[19:31] Don't miss the shot that God gives us to influence young lives for the Lord Jesus. Enoch didn't. Enoch didn't.

Something changed when Methuselah came along. And what was it? Well, I think I know the answer. I'm not positive about this. You can argue with me afterwards, but you got a right to be wrong.

But I think I know. I think the clue is in the name Methuselah. His name meant it shall be sent when he dies.

It shall be sent when he dies. Now listen to this. It shall be sent when he dies. What shall be sent?

Well, let's play a little math game for just a few minutes, okay?

You might want to write this down if you want to check me on it. Genesis chapter 5 verse 26 through 28 tell us that Methuselah lived 782 years after the birth of Lamech.

[20:34] When Lamech was 182 he had Noah. So Methuselah was to live after Noah was born 600 more years.

And Genesis chapter 7 verse 6 tells us that when Noah was 600 years old the flood came. So in other words Methuselah had 600 more years to live when Noah was born and Noah was 600 when the flood came.

Then Methuselah died in the same year as the flood. And when I first read that and didn't know his name I thought they left Grandpa out of the boat. How in the world could they do that?

Yeah. But then I went back to the meaning of his name and his name means it shall be sent when he dies.

What shall be sent? The flood. The judgment of God. The cleansing of the earth. Who named Methuselah?

[21:46] God gave the name to Enoch and when he gave that name to Enoch Enoch began to walk with God.

He heard the warning shot of God and the warning shot of God changed his life and from that day forward he followed the lead of the Lord.

Now I told you his epitaph would be he walked with God but it might be he followed the lead of God.

I thank God that Enoch made a change in his life and I'm also thankful that God gives us examples of those who do not live for him and make a mess of their lives because I believe he puts it all there for us to learn from it for us to gain understanding from their example so we don't have to go

through the same things they did or because we want an example before us to live by and that's why these lives are placed before us in scripture.

But what matters is what kind of impact that has on us. That's what I mean let's just be honest what really matters to us is not how they lived what really matters to us is how we live.

What are we going to do with our lives? I mean let's be honest with God. Can it be said of you he walked with God?

[23 : 17] God? She walked with God or is it said does he really walk with God?

Does she really walk with God? Now I want to be honest with you we can't control what people say. We can't control that. God. So I'm a little less worried about what people say.

The question is this. Do we walk with God? or do we fail to walk with God?

Bigger than that when God speaks a word of direction to our lives when he gives us a word of warning about our lives like he did Enoch through the name of his son how do we respond to that? Is our lives marked by us changing the direction that we're going in when God guides us with new knowledge?

[24 : 37] Or when God guides us with personalized truth? When God speaks down deep into our hearts and to our lives? Are our lives marked by such as that?

So my question is this. What is the spiritual epitaph of your life? I purposely left room on the front of the bulletin so that you could write down what would my epitaph be?

Write it down. And consider today your warning shot. Enoch was 65 years old when God awakened him to his real circumstances.

And he changed. something so powerful happened in that man that he is described like nobody else is in scripture.

That he walked with God and was no more. I am so glad he listened to the Lord when he spoke.

[26 : 13] God and it's been my prayer all week that God would speak through the power of the Holy Spirit and through his word to your life and that you would respond in obedience to follow him.

There may be somebody here this morning who's never come into a relationship with the father. Never has. God to forgive you of your sins.

You've never asked him to come into your life. You've never asked him to change you. You've never committed your life to follow him. Now maybe many people think you have and maybe nobody thinks you have. But the reality is if you've never committed your life to Christ you've never asked him to forgive you of your sins and to come into your life and to change you to empower you with his Holy Spirit.

That has never happened. I don't care if your name is on the roll. I don't care if you've been baptized. If you've never committed your life to Christ it's your warning shot.

It's time to just surrender your life. Dear Lord forgive me of the sins that I've committed. I'm sorry for what I've done and from this day forward I want to live for you. And I'm thankful for what Christ has done for me on the cross.

[27 : 35] I commit my life to you today. Today could be the change that affects the rest of your life if you'll surrender your life to Christ Jesus. Maybe you're here and you've done that personally privately but you've never let other people know about that publicly.

You've never done that. And Jesus by his commission and by his example showed us that we follow that up by letting people know and announce that of sorts through baptism. And if you've never done that I encourage you to come.

I'd love to guide you in that process. maybe you're here and God's drawing you to this church.

God's blessed us mightily in recent days and maybe you feel like God's leading you to be here as well.

You're a believer in the word of God. You've given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus and you want to join the church and join hands with us and let us do our job for the Lord Jesus until he comes.

And if he's leading you in that way you come. I'd love to guide you in that process. But even more today are people who know that they have a relationship with the Lord and are members of this church.

[28 : 44] But you know in your heart this morning God's given you a warning shot. He's awakened you to something. And whether you do it in your seat where you are or whether you do it at this altar or whether you do it with a pastor praying for you.

Let's don't let God give us the knowledge of the state of our soul and us ignore it. Let's just trust him and do exactly what he's told us to do.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus I ask your God that you'll help us to learn from other people's examples and that Father you'll bless us right now with the power and the strength to obediently follow in Jesus precious name.

Amen.