

## Time

Let's say that one day you decide that you're going to read the entire Bible cover to cover. This is quite a task: even if you read three chapters a day, every single day without fail, it's still going to take you an entire year to read through all 66 books! The Scriptures are quite lengthy and contain a *lot* of information. It's really not something that you can just plow your way through over the course of a long weekend.

At first your effort will probably go fairly well. Genesis and the first half of Exodus are easy to read. Things will get harder in the second half of Exodus, when Moses begins talking about the details that surround the construction of the Tabernacle. After this the reader is faced with the daunting task of reading Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy – three books that are quite difficult to get through, let alone understand. However, if you persist things will eventually get better: Deuteronomy is followed by Joshua, which is a really fascinating account of Israel's invasion of Canaan. This is followed by a lot of other historical books that are easy to understand.

Eventually, however, you will come to I Chronicles, where you will be greeted by page after page of genealogies. You'll encounter verses like these:

**I Chronicles 1:11:** “And Mizraim begat Ludim, and Anamim, and Lehabim, and Naphtuhim,  
12 And Pathrusim, and Casluhim, (of whom came the Philistines,) and Caphthorim.”

I suspect that nearly everyone who encounters these lists of names ends up skipping them entirely. No matter how firm their intention might be to read every last verse in the entire Bible, people will make an exception when it comes to the first few chapters of 1 Chronicles. After all, people can't even *pronounce* these names (who names their child Naphtuhim?), and, to be quite honest, no one cares that Mizraim has six sons. So people skip over these verses entirely, believing that these lists of names are completely and utterly useless. Oh, they may have been useful back in the day, but let's be honest: are there really deep spiritual truths buried in the fact that Mizraim had a son named Ludim?

In fact, for that matter, why is this information even in the Bible at all? I've never met anyone who was passionately concerned about Mizraim and his offspring, and I've never heard a sermon about him either. Over the course of my life I have heard thousands of sermons and I believe I can safely say that not a single one ever focused on the fact that Mizraim had a son named Pathrusim. I have a feeling that everyone who is reading this paper can say the same thing. The truth is, no one cares about Mizraim or most of the other people in these long lists.

But we *should* care because there really is an important truth buried in these chapters. There is something absolutely vital about all of this that *can* change the way we live, if only we will take the time to stop and see it.

You see, the reason no one cares about Mizraim and his six sons is because he died thousands of years ago. Mizraim is mentioned four times in the Bible (Genesis 10:6 and 10:13, and I Chronicles 1:8 and 1:11), and each of the four times is in a genealogical record. If it weren't for these verses he would have been forgotten about entirely.

To be more blunt about it, these verses are *all that is left of his life*. All of his possessions were destroyed long ago. If he had a house it is certainly no longer standing. All of the people that once knew him are long dead. Anything that he ever accomplished in life has been forgotten about. In fact, if the Bible had not recorded his name *no one alive today would have ever known that he even existed*. His life would have been entirely forgotten about.

Mizraim may have been a millionaire. He could have been a powerful individual that controlled

vast tracts of real estate. He may have had vast farms, herds of cattle, and the best that life had to offer. But now, today, all of that is gone. Time has destroyed everything that he had and everything that he did. These four mentions in the Bible are all that is left of him – and even that doesn't do Mizraim any good, because you and I just skip over his name as a bothersome annoyance.

The fact is, all of these people were once alive. Mizraim was born, lived, and died. He had hopes, dreams, a family, and children. He had problems, triumphs, and losses. As the son of Ham he was the grandson of Noah, and it's quite possible that he was famous, or at least prominent in his day.

But today none of that matters. Everything he had and everything about him has been lost. The passage of time has destroyed it all.

We don't like to think about it, but one day that will be true for us as well. We spend our whole lives trying to get all the stuff we can lay our hands on – cars, houses, money, power, fame, you name it. We think that the rich have got it made and we covet their success. We devote our waking hours to the pursuit of *things*, and we put all of our energy into it. If our neighbor has nicer things than we do then we've got to have them too. So on and on we go, until eventually we die.

But we *will* die – everyone does. Then time will destroy every last thing we ever possessed and will erase our name from history. After enough time has passed everything we've ever owned will be gone and everything we've ever done will be forgotten. There are a few people whose names linger on long after they die, but for the vast majority of the human race that doesn't happen. If we're extremely lucky we'll eventually become like Mizraim – a name in a genealogy list. If we're unlucky then we'll be forgotten about entirely, and from the point of view of those who are still alive it will be as if we had never existed at all.

But there is one other side to all of this – a very important side that is too easily missed. This Mizraim that we read about in I Chronicles 1:11 may be dead, but he is *not* gone. The truth is that *everyone lives forever*; the only question is where they will spend eternity.

You see, if Mizraim followed God – if he responded to God's call and believed Him – then he has been in Heaven for a long time now. He is with his Savior and with the rest of the family of God, living in Paradise, enjoying a life that the apostle Paul said was far better than the one we have now. He hasn't gone off into utter oblivion; instead Mizraim has been living in a place where there is no sin, disease, or death. He has been enjoying an existence that make the wealthiest men today look like paupers.

However, if Mizraim did not follow God – if he refused to believe the Lord or tried to save himself by living a good life – then he has spent thousands of years being tormented in a place of fire and brimstone, where there is no rest or relief from his agony. All he has to look forward to in the endless ages of eternity are even greater agonies and pains. At this very moment Mizraim longs for just a single drop of water, but even that is forever beyond his reach.

The fact is, there is just one thing that matters to Mizraim now, and that is *the relationship he had with God while he was still alive*. The same is true for every one of us. Yes, it's true that if the Lord does not return in our lifetime then one day we will die, and eventually the living ones will forget about us. But when that day comes *all* of us will still be alive somewhere, and that somewhere will be entirely determined by *what we did with Jesus*. Those who repent of their sins and believe in Jesus will be granted forgiveness and everlasting life. However, those who refuse to accept God's forgiveness and refuse to believe will be faced with the unending wrath of an angry God.

The Lord freely offers everyone forgiveness and grace. Those who accept it will find mercy, and those who reject it will find wrath – and they'll have no one to blame but themselves, for they *chose* to reject God's offer of forgiveness. And that decision will matter for all of eternity.

As human beings we spend a great deal of time chasing things that don't matter. People spend

their entire lives trying to get all of the wealth, power, and fame that they can possibly obtain – but this is ultimately a meaningless pursuit. Even the richest and most famous person will still die, and when that day comes he will find out that he can't take any of his riches with him. What *will* matter in that day is his relationship with God, and that is the one thing that people tend to neglect. We vainly seek things that we cannot keep, and we neglect the things that will matter *forever*.

If we have come to Jesus and begged for mercy then we will still be around through all the ages of time. The world may have forgotten about us, just as it has forgotten about Mizraim, but when it does we'll be in Paradise, enjoying blessings that far outstrip the greatest riches that this world has to offer. (Plus we have a Resurrection to look forward to!) When our lives are judged we will learn that the hours we spent building our own fame and fortune were simply wasted time, but the effort we put toward building God's kingdom will be richly rewarded and never forgotten. One day we will die and lose everything that we have in this life – but if we've taken our resources and invested them in God's kingdom we'll find a rich inheritance waiting for us.

All of us are faced with the same choice: what are we going to do about Jesus? Are we going to ignore Him or worship Him? Are we going to ask for His forgiveness or are we going to claim that we don't need to be forgiven for anything? Are we going to make Jesus our Lord or are we going to reject Him and follow our own desires instead?

The difference between these choices is the difference between life and death. Things that seem so urgent now aren't going to seem important at all when we're standing before God. There are a lot of things in this world that we can spend time on, but when we reach the end of our life there will be just one thing that really mattered: what did we do with Jesus?