

Chapter Seven

ENOCH

Hebrews 11:5 *By FAITH, Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."*

The story of Enoch is very briefly recorded in Genesis 5: 18 - 24.

Another children's Bible Quiz question asks, "Who was the oldest man who ever lived who died before his father ?" Methuselah, the son of Enoch !

Enoch lived on Earth for three hundred and sixty five years, walking with God before 'God took him'. This walking with God was a walk of faith, without which it is impossible to please God. He knew what it was to fellowship closely with his creator, to hear His voice and to know His guidance. How sweet that fellowship must have been! Although all creation about Enoch showed evidence of the fall of Adam and Eve, he still enjoyed the presence of God. Today also, when all around us might seem corrupt and evil appears to prevail, the child of God who walks by faith can still have sweet fellowship with his Lord. History is replete with stories of believers whose circumstances were most difficult, but whose testimony was radiant because they knew the Divine presence.

By FAITH Enoch was *translated* - a better understanding would be "taken up".

What does this mean ? Surely it is not that Enoch believed so much that he would be taken up, that God did it for him! Instead, it was God's sovereign act that translated Enoch, in order to teach us a great truth.

The hope of Resurrection

What Biblical principle can we learn from this short account that has meaning for us today ? Clearly, there is the principle of ETERNAL LIFE.

For those who walk with God in faith, there is the promise of resurrection, or rapture at His second coming,¹ unto eternal life. Both Paul and Peter, when standing before the people, declared that this is the **hope** of all believers. Indeed, Paul knew this was the main cause of his persecution. "*I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead.*" (Acts 23:6). Other religions might teach reincarnation or a salvation based upon works of righteousness. Our message however, is unwavering in its declaration of a resurrection unto eternal life for all who walk with God, by faith.

¹ 1 Thessalonians 4: 17

This hope for which Paul and Peter, and all the apostles, were willing to die, is based on a fact - as is all Christian hope, unlike the hopes of the world. I remind you that Christian hope is best defined as **“an eager expectation for that which is certain”**. Our hope of resurrection is founded in the most glorious event of all history - the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. When one looks objectively at all the stories, theories, opinions about that first Easter Sunday, he must come to the conclusion that the most attested fact of all history is that Jesus of Nazareth, having been crucified on a Roman cross, and buried in a borrowed tomb, rose from the dead, resurrected into new life.

He appeared to the disciples and many others. The apostle Paul records that more than 500 brethren were eye witnesses of His new life, almost all of whom were still alive to testify to that fact at the time of the apostle's writing many years later. These men had nothing to gain by perpetrating a lie and everything to lose by insisting on the truth. There was great persecution of the believers, many of whom lost their lives because they would not deny what to them was fact. Tradition tells us that all but John, of the apostles, were martyred for what they knew. Jesus rose from the dead! Now they understood what He had meant when He taught them, *“Just a little while and the world will not see Me, but you will see Me; because I live you will live also”* (John 14:19). This was to be their hope - an eager expectation for that which is sure - and the promise exemplified in the testimony of Enoch.

The resurrection of Jesus is the fundamental argument of our Christian belief. Without it, there is no Christianity. Such a religion is no different to all others in that it can offer no hope. It is also important for the following reasons:

It shows the justice of God who exalted Christ to a life of glory, as Christ had humbled Himself unto death. (Phil 2: 8,9)

The Resurrection completed the mystery of our salvation and redemption; by His death Christ freed us from the penalty of sin, (Romans 5:8), by His suffering He freed us from the curse of the Law (Galatians 3:13), and by His Resurrection He restored to us the most important privileges lost by sin (Rom 4: 25).

By His Resurrection we acknowledge Christ as the immortal God, the efficient and exemplary cause of our own resurrection (1 Cor 15: 21; Phil 3: 20,21) and as the model and source of our new life of grace (Rom 6: 4-6; 9-11). (Catholic Encyclopedia)

Paul's testimony

It was because of their hope of resurrection to eternal life that the early believers were persecuted. The Scripture records for us the testimony of the apostle Paul, standing before the chief priests and the Council on trial. “I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!” (Acts 23:6) The Council was made up of two main parties; the religious Pharisees, believers in a resurrection of the law-keepers, and the political Sadducees, non believers. Naturally, there was dissension at Paul's words, so the troops were ordered to take Paul back to his cell. Now a political conspiracy arose with the purpose of assassinating the apostle, but the Roman military commander was made aware of the plot so he ordered that Paul be taken to Antipatris where

Felix, the Roman governor, had his palace. Before the governor, Paul repeats his hope in the resurrection, both of the righteous to life, and the wicked to judgement (Acts 24:15; 21).

Not knowing what to do with Paul or how to appease his accusers, Felix kept him in prison until, two years later he was succeeded by a new governor, Festus. Now the apostle was made a spectacle, being called to speak of his *foolish* belief before Festus and his guests, King Agrippa and his wife Bernice. Paul is not backward before this audience. Again he asserts, “ I am standing trial for this great hope, O King. Why should it seem unbelievable to you people, that God should raise the dead ?” Later he would appear before Caesar where we can be sure, he did not hesitate to give the same testimony, even though it resulted in his death. But why should he fear death ? He had already written *“Behold, I show you a **mystery**; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (1 Cor 15:51-57).

This is not a new truth but a ***mystery***. Whenever Paul writes about a mystery, he is referring to ***a truth that has always been, but which is only now being revealed*** (Rom 16:25,26). It was Jesus who first spoke about the mystery of the kingdom (Mark 13:11) but Paul uses this expression many times. A good theme for personal Bible Study would be to examine the following references: mystery of the ‘grafting in’ of the Gentiles (Rom 11:25); mystery of His will (Eph 1:9); mystery of Gentiles (Eph 3:3); mystery of marriage (Eph 5:32); mystery of the Gospel (Eph 6:19); mystery of Christ in you (Col 1:26,27); mystery of Christ Himself (Col 2:2); mystery of iniquity (2 Thes 2:7); mystery of the faith (1 Tim 3:9); mystery of godliness (1 Tim 3:16).

This mystery, this truth, this glorious hope of resurrection to eternal life, was first revealed to us in the testimony of Enoch.

Summary

“By faith, Enoch was translated.” so that we might know this principle:

1. We have a glorious hope - that of eternal life.

This is not a New Testament doctrine, but has always been part of God’s purposes for His people.