

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” (Hebrews 11:13)



They Died in Faith

The 11th chapter of Hebrews provides testimony about the lives of a great number of the faithful of old. They have become a great cloud of witnesses, (Heb 12:1) and their example is intended to encourage us to run with patience the race for eternal life.

Enoch is one of this group of witnesses. We are told in 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.”

It is apparent that Enoch was among those who “died in faith”. The record from Genesis also tells us that the days of his life ended when God took him. “All the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years.” (Genesis 5:23)

It is interesting to note that Enoch was translated in the period just before the flood. Wickedness was becoming great in the earth but Enoch separated himself from the evil and “walked with God”. God was pleased with Enoch and He removed him from the evil before he had lived out his normal lifetime.

“He did not experience death”

(Hebrews 11:5 NIV)

The authorized version states that Enoch was “translated” and some of the more modern versions replace this with the words “...taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found.”

In order to remain consistent with the truth of the Bible, this modern language must present the idea that Enoch was taken away quickly and did not experience either the deterioration of old age, the terror of impending tragedy or the suffering of painful disease. He was spared from the normal trauma that is a part of the death process for all men. He is now resting, (sleeping in death), in an undisclosed location, waiting for the period of the resurrection. His next conscious moments will be during the final stage of his translation into the coming Kingdom of God on this earth.

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“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.” (Hebrews 11:5) “...taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away.” (NIV)

Enoch walked with God

“And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” (Genesis 5:21-24)

The story of Enoch presents us with one of the mysteries of the Bible. We know that Enoch was a good man, he “walked with God”, and pleased Him. We know also that he was “translated.” (Taken away so he did not experience death.) But what does that actually mean?



Enoch’s Translation

The word “translated” is a word meaning “transport” or “carry over”. Where was he transported to? Wherever he was taken, it is apparent that his life had ended and that he “was not”.

The record in Genesis 5 tells us that “all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years.” If he was still alive, his days would be an undetermined number.

In our quest to explain this mystery, we must be consistent with the whole council of God. There is ample evidence in scripture to prove that all men, including Christ, are subject to death. It would be inconsistent to exempt Enoch from this process. We will dedicate this issue to an examination of the scriptural evidence related to the subject.

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“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”
(Rom 5:12)

Why did Enoch have to die?

All men are subject to the sentence of death as the result of the sin in the Garden of Eden. Enoch was born into a world that was under this condemnation. Romans 5:12 clearly explains this unfortunate reality.

The Psalmist emphasizes this truth by adding: “**What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?** shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.” (Psalm 89:48)

In Enoch’s day, the way to the tree of life was guarded and man was not allowed access to life eternal.

“And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever. Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.” (Genesis 3:22-24)

The Tree of Life

The way to the Tree of Life was to be restricted throughout the course of history. Eating of the Tree of Life is still a future promise for those who overcome the deeds of the flesh. If they are found worthy of grace, then they may be granted eternal life at the return of Christ in his Kingdom.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” (Revelation 2:7)

These simple facts of truth from God’s word help us to dismiss all of the myths about man and immortality. Man is a mortal, dying creature. His only hope for immortality is in the promises of God. These promises are keyed on the salvation which is only available in and through faith in Jesus Christ. They require a good understanding of the gospel of Christ and obedience to his calling. (See Acts 4:12, Romans 1:16)

Enoch did not have access to the Tree of Life nor do we. All men are under the same death sentence. Even Christ had to die and be resurrected before the way to life eternal could be opened, first for himself and then for those who accept him as the way, the truth and the life.

Christ was the firstfruits from the grave and the first one to be granted immortality. If Enoch were able to remain alive, never to experience death, it would suggest that eternal life was possible without the redeeming sacrifice of Christ. This would be completely inconsistent with God’s revealed plan.

“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, **and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:**” (Colossians. 1: 12-13)

TRANSLATED INTO THE KINGDOM

When we read that Enoch was “translated that he should not see death” we tend to be confused by the implication that the translation process was immediate and complete. The reference above from Colossians 1 helps us to put this expression into prospective.

We also have been delivered from the power of darkness, that is the certain and final death that comes upon all mortal men who have not made a covenant through Christ.

When we are baptized into Christ, believing the one true gospel of salvation, we are no longer in the family of Adam and Eve and subject to a perishing death. We are translated (carried over) into the family of Christ, now having hope for a place in God’s coming Kingdom.

The language in Colossians 1:13 makes it sound like the translation process is completed. God knows the end from the beginning and in His mind, such may be the case. He knows our hearts and in His foreknowledge, He also knows whether we will abide faithful until the end.

Without God in the world

Before our baptism, we are said to be without God, having no hope in the world. It is a real translation of our position to be “made nigh by the blood of Christ”. Once in Christ, we then have the opportunity and the hope for the final stage of our translation into the Kingdom of His son when he returns to the earth to judge his saints. (See Ephesians 2:11-13.)

Alive and Remain?

We now have before us two possibilities, both having some comparison to the story of Enoch. We may be “alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, in which case we also will not see the first death.” (See 1 Thess. 4:14-15)

The other possibility is that we may be taken away. That is, we may fall asleep in death, which would end the number of the years of our life. Enoch was taken away from the increasing wickedness that was developing in the ancient world prior to the flood. We live in a similar period of time and the modern world, in all of its wickedness, is reserved unto fire. (See 2 Peter 3 and Isaiah 26:20-21.)

Enoch was certainly a special person and God spared him from the wickedness of his day. There is however, nothing in his story that is in any way inconsistent with the whole council of God. Enoch certainly died in faith even though no man knows the location of his grave.

When his translation is complete, in the Kingdom of God, the testimony suggests that he will not see the second death. Let us follow the example of Enoch, walking with God in the hope that we also may escape from seeing the second and final death.