

## God Took Him

A very short story about a man's life is found in Genesis. It is the story of Enoch, a patriarch of the sixth generation from Adam. It does not tell us of great accomplishments or acts of valor expected of the great men of history. He is later mentioned by the Hebrew writer and Jude, who wrote a short letter in the New Testament. Two phrases in these passages have caused many to think about what pleases God and what happened to Enoch. The scripture says Enoch "was not." Other passages refer to people who "were not" or "they are no more." Why did God want us to know these stories describing people who are no longer present?

The story of Enoch is found in (Genesis 5:19-24). *"At the age of 162 years, Jared fathered Enoch"* (Genesis 5:19), *"Enoch lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Methuselah. Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had other sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him"* (Genesis 5:21-24). Enoch was removed from the land of people and placed into the spirit world God prepared for His servants by a means known only to the creator.

The only other Old Testament person to receive a similar transformation was Elijah the prophet. That Elijah was to be taken was well known to the prophets and the sons of the prophets. *"And it came about when the LORD was about to take up Elijah by a whirlwind to heaven, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal"* (2 Kings 2:1). *"Then the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, 'Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?'" And he said, "Yes, I know; be still"* (2 Kings 2:3). At Jericho, Elisha was asked again, *"Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" And he answered, "Yes, I know; be still"* (2 Kings 2:5). Elisha was to remain without the teacher, mentor, and guide in walking as God's prophet.

We are not told how Enoch was taken, but the departure of Elijah was witnessed by Elisha, if not others. A chariot and horses of fire separated the two prophets and took Elijah while leaving Elisha. The Hebrew writer refers to fiery ones like these. *"And of the angels He says, 'who makes His angels winds, and His ministers a flame of fire'"* (Hebrews 1:7). The rhetorical question is, *"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?"* (Hebrews 1:14). Later, Elisha and his servant were protected by a multitude of fiery horses and chariots from the Arameans who came to kill him (2 Kings 6:17).

The reason given for taking Enoch is found in Hebrews 11. *"By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him"* (Hebrews 11:5-6). The faith of Elijah is recognized by Jesus when He calls John the Baptist *"the Elijah who is to come"* (Matthew 11:14), and later, in his appearance with Moses at the transfiguration (Matthew 17:3).

The third individual to ascend into heaven was not like Enoch and Elijah. They were mortal men whose spirits were given to them while they were still inside their mothers. But Jesus was the eternal being who created the universe. He was not the pro-created being of two earthly parents but the product of the Holy Spirit and a young woman. *"And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 'He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the*

*Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:31-35). After completing all the work God had given Him to do, to teach, to give His blood for people's sins, and raising from the dead, He rose into heaven (Acts 1:9-11).*

Although our transition into the spiritual realm will not be like Enoch's or Elijah's, it will depend on our faith in God. Let us cling to the saving power of the Gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16-17) and remain strong in "The Way, The Truth, and The Life" (John 4:6), which leads us to heaven.