

WALKING WITH GOD

“When Jared had lived 162 years, he became the father of Enoch. After he became the father of Enoch, Jared lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Jared lived a total of 962 years, and then he died. When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked faithfully with God for 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enoch lived a total of 365 years. Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.”
(Genesis 5:18-24)

When you come up for communion you may notice the kneelers here that were needlepointed 45 years ago by women who are now all with the Lord. I



remember being told here when I got here in 1984 to never get dirt or wax on them or else I should take the first bus out of town. They depict the life of Jesus. One of them which looks like this, which is for Jesus' Ascension. It shows the chariot of fire which took Elijah into heaven, a story that is often used as the Old Testament lesson for Ascension. According to 2 Kings Elijah did not die, but was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire as witnessed by his successor, Elisha. In the whole of Scriptures there is only one other person who did not die—Enoch. Unlike the story of Elijah's ascension, Genesis simply tells us. “Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.” There is no description of how it happened.

Wouldn't it be great to avoid death like Elijah and Enoch? People have often stated that it is not so much death that they fear, but dying. Even if we try to keep our lives busy to not think about death, it still hits us, not just thinking about our own, but about loved ones who have died or those who seem likely to. There would be no life insurance, no estate court, no undertakers, much less concern about medical problems. But would it be great?

Romans 6:23 tells us, “The wages of sin is death.” We see this as a punishment, but it is also the result of sin. Sin ultimately means separation from God. Death, in Scriptures, does not mean so much the heart stopping pumping and the lungs ceasing to breathe, but separation from God. That is what happened when

Adam and Eve broke from God. All humanity at that point was dead, willingly separating ourselves from God. God then allowed Adam and Eve to later die physically. Later in Genesis 6 we read:

When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years."

God shortened the length of how long people would live. We know that the decade of age 100-110 is one of the fastest growing in the world, but no one lives past 120. Before God said that we hear of those like Adam, Methuselah and Noah living over 900 years. This was punishment against sinners, but it also did something else.

Imagine our world if people did not die. I am not thinking of the issue of overpopulation. Think of what would happen in our sinful condition. It is bad enough what we do wrong and fail to do right in at most 100 plus years, imagine what it would be like in eternity. There is a word that describes that. It is hell.

Instead in His love God puts a check on sin by allowing us to die. It does not turn our hearts to God. But it definitely puts a check on it. People are held back from doing wrong by the fear of punishment, a fear that goes back to the primal fear of death, the desire to survive. But it also shows how desperate our situation is. It's the law that turns us to receive the Gospel, the good news from God.

Enoch and Elijah did not die. We hear about Enoch that, "He walked faithfully with God." It doesn't mean he was perfect. Scripture makes it clear that Jesus is the only human who can claim that. But "walking with God" meant he was in communication with God. The same was true for Elijah as the prophet who spoke God's Word and who had that wondrous experience of having God talk to him not in the earthquake, fire, or wind, but in "a still small voice." How great that would be!

But what about us? The hymn, "In the Garden" speaks about how God "Walks with me and talks with me," but He doesn't. At least I can't be sure of that. But instead, as Hebrews tells us, "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son." As close as Enoch and Elijah were to God, there is no way to get

closer to Him than through Christ Jesus. In Jesus we see God stripped down to what He really is—the God who loves! There is no clearer view of Him than Jesus dying on the cross and rising from the dead!

So why the story of Enoch not dying? At least with Elijah we can say that his ascension helps to put a rubber stamp on the truth of his prophecy. But what about Enoch?

I would like to show a parallel in the events surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection. When Jesus went to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, He told His disciples to get a donkey and its colt for Him. They do it. This would be like going into someone's car and driving off with it. When the owner of the animals asked the disciples what they were doing, they said as Jesus commanded them, "The master has need of it." The owner let them go on. That week when Jesus saw a fig tree with no fruit, He cursed it. Later the disciples saw that it was withered. When Jesus told the disciples to prepare for the Passover, He told them to follow a man carrying a pitcher to a place where they would have the meal. That may not seem like a big deal to us, but in those days normally only women carried water. The disciples did find such a man and did prepare the meal there. As Jesus was arrested, Peter cut off the ear of a servant. Jesus stopped Peter and restored the ear to the man. Just as Jesus predicted Peter denied Jesus three times before the rooster crowed and Judas betrayed Him. As Jesus died the sun was darkened, the earth trembled, the curtain in the temple was ripped in half, and dead people came out of their tombs. All these individually may not seem like much, but added together they show that God was at work. They are "little signs" that point to the big one—Jesus rising from the dead.

"Enoch walked faithfully with God." He got to converse with Him. If you look at the Bible it begins with the story of creation. That story is not so much about how the world began, but about God and His Word. What God says happens. Jesus is God's Word, God is making this happen. We have that Word, the Word that tells us God made us, He condemns our sin, He forgives us, we have eternal life with Him, and above all that, He loves us. That is walking with God.