

## TAKEN: THE LIFE & LEGACY OF ENOCH (Hebrews 11:5-6)

One of my favorite actors is Liam Neeson. He has played so many varied and interesting characters through the years. Despite his age, he has become one of Hollywood's leading action stars.

According to Neeson, there was one certain movie that turned him into an action star. This single movie did so well at the box office that it was turned into a trilogy. The first film appeared in 2008, the second in 2012, and final one in 2014. Those films are known as *Taken*, *Taken 2*, and *Taken 3*.

In each one, Neeson portrays Bryan Mills, a loving family man who happens to be a CIA operative who possesses a particular set of skills. In the first movie, it is because of those skills that he is able to track down those responsible for his daughter being kidnapped. His skills also enable him to rescue his daughter and exact revenge on the bad guys. In the second and third installments of the trilogy, Bryan Mills continues to use his skills under different scenarios with much the same result—the good guys are rescued and the bad ones pay a high price.

In the *Taken* trilogy, the word *taken* refers to something bad that happens—an abduction, a kidnapping.

In Hebrews 11:5 the author uses the word *taken* three times. In each instance, it refers to something remarkably good that happened to a man named Enoch. We are going to look at Hebrews 11:5-6 this morning. The title for the message is *Taken: The Life and Legacy of Enoch*.

Oddly, the NT says more about Enoch than does the OT, and the OT doesn't say much. If we dismiss those passages which are just genealogical in nature, we have one major passage about Enoch in the OT and two passages about him in the NT. Using the text of the NIV, the single OT passage spends 51 words telling us about Enoch while both the NT passages combine to give us 94 words about him.

Let's start with Genesis 5:21-24.

In his expositional commentary of Genesis, James Boice wrote, "Enoch walked with God in an age when practically no one else did." Enoch cultivated a close relationship with his Creator. He sought and enjoyed fellowship with God. This made Enoch different than most. Another thing that made him different is that he did not live nearly as long as most were living back then.

Enoch and his contemporaries lived in what is known as the *antediluvian* age. *Ante* means "before" and *diluvian* is a word that means "deluge." It refers to the great flood. So, *antediluvian* means "before the flood of Noah." Prior to the flood, people characteristically lived enormously long lives.

Enoch's father, Jared, lived 962 years. Enoch's son, Methuselah lived to be 969. In contrast, Enoch only lived to be 365. Genesis 5:24 says something of Enoch that is said of no one else in this chapter. Eight separate times in this fifth chapter we are told several facts of an individual—his birth, who he fathered, how long he lived, and then we read the words: "and he died." Eight different times we are told that. In Enoch's case, however, we read, "and he was not, for God took him."

What does the author mean by that? Were it not for Hebrews 11:5, we might think that was just a poetic way of saying, “He died.” We say something similar when we speak euphemistically of death. “Poor Aunt Sally. She fell ill, and God took her home.” We might think that is what is going on here in Genesis 5, but we are told otherwise in Hebrews 11:5. Let’s read that verse and the one that follows.

With the time we have, let’s ask and answer just three questions concerning this passage.

### **What Does It Mean for One to Be Taken?**

Let’s begin with what it doesn’t mean. It doesn’t mean “to die.” That is clear from v. 5 where we read, “By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death.” Taken cannot mean *to die* because Enoch was taken precisely so that he wouldn’t die.

The first time *taken* is used in v. 5, it is followed by the preposition *up*. That gives us a good clue as to what the word means. Enoch was taken up. The word literally means “to remove from place to another.” The KJV uses the word *translated*. The only other time this word is used in the NT is in Colossians 1:13. Listen to that verse: “He [God] has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.”

What God has done for us spiritually, He did for Enoch physically. He said, “Enoch, these days are too dark for one like you. I’m give you a transfer. Instead of serving Me down here where it is so dark and sinful, I am taking you to be up to be with Me in My Kingdom of Light.”

One day, God will do for us literally what He did for Enoch physically. I am speaking of what we commonly call the rapture. The Bible never actually uses the word *rapture*. You can go to a concordance and look up the word *rapture*, but you won’t find it because it is never used. The words *raptured* and *translated*, however, mean pretty much the same thing. When Jesus returns, all those who are His will be removed and taken up to be with Jesus.

That is what happened to Enoch. He was taken up to be with God in the abode of heaven. He didn’t pass “Go.” He didn’t collect \$200. He went straight to heaven.

There is only one other person written of in the Bible who went to heaven without first dying. Do you remember who that was? It was Elijah. We read of that in 2 Kings 2. Elisha, like a puppy dog is following his teacher, Elijah, wherever Elijah goes. Somehow, Elisha knows that God is going to take Elijah from him, and he doesn’t let Elijah out of his sight. Wherever Elijah goes, Elisha follows.

Finally, the time comes. We read in v. 11, “Behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.”

We are not told how, but we are told that God took Enoch to heaven while Enoch was still alive.

You may be wondering what the point is in rehearsing these old stories. I assure you that my goal is not simply to help you do better in a game of Bible trivia.

No. Listen to what Paul wrote, “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

What hope does the story of Enoch and Elijah's respective translations to heaven give us? Hope. Our hope is this: What happened to them will happen to us when Jesus comes back. Listen to the words of Paul once again: "Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore, encourage one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18).

## What Are the Reasons for Being Taken?

In other words, why did God choose to take Enoch when He did? We are told twice in Genesis 5 that Enoch walked with God. He began walking with God after becoming a father to Methuselah when he was 65, and he walked with God for 300 years; i.e., three centuries or 30 decades of walking with God, communing with Him.

The passage in Hebrews doesn't even mention that Enoch walked with God. It focused on something different; yet, it is entirely related. The author of Hebrews writes, "Now before he was taken, he was commended as having pleased God."

Those who walk with God are those who please God. It takes faith to walk with a God you cannot see and a God you cannot touch. It takes faith to walk with God; and thus, it takes faith to please God.

What does it take to walk with God? Yes, it takes faith, and we will comment more about that later, but what else does it take? The prophet Amos asked the question, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

For you and I to walk with God, there are some points of agreement we must have with God. **One, we must walk in the direction of His choosing.** Quite often, we try to get God to join our bandwagon, our cause du jour. The fact is, God may not be the least interested in joining your crusade. He may not want to take up your cause, as good as it may seem to you. He is more interested in you joining in on what He has going on. God has a part for you to play in the epic drama He has written and that is presently in production.

This book is just the Cliff Notes. If you and I are going to understand our part and learn our part, we've got to spend time with the Director, and we will have to learn to take His direction. Otherwise, we are just going to adlib our way through it, and that will not be pleasing to Him. Walk with Him. Spend time with Him. Consult the Cliff Notes often.

In addition to walking in the direction of His choosing, there is a second thing for us to do. **Two, we must walk at the pace God is walking.** Unfortunately, we are prone to one of two errors. Either, we walk faster than He is walking or we need to get it in gear and catch up with Him because we have fallen behind. God is not going to walk at our pace; we must adjust our pace and walk at His. He has much better timing; so, we need to pace ourselves according to His pace.

Which do you need to do? Do you need to slow down or do you need to pick up the pace? Let me just remind you, you can't walk with God while seated. We must get up and move.

One person said, "You won't be found standing on the promises if all you are doing is sitting on the premises." I would add, "You can't walk with the Father as long as you are

lounging in the parlor.”

Get up! Get going! There are things God wants to do through you, through me, and through us.

Then, there are those with the opposite problem. They need to slow down. They are traveling through life at 90 MPH. They are experts at checking off their to-do list. Make sure, friend, that the items on your to-do list are in fact the responsibilities that God gave you rather than ones you chose on your own. God is under no obligation to bless your plans and your agenda. He can't help but bless His; so, get in on what He is doing.

If you are going 90 and God is walking at 5 MPH, you are going to have a difficult time of walking with Him. One of you is going to have to change his pace. Guess who it will need to be?

We read in Galatians 5:25, “If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.”

If we are to walk with God, we must enter into His presence, walk in the direction of His choosing, and then walk at that pace He is walking.

If we do those things, that will please God.

There is one more passage concerning Enoch that we have not yet examined. Oddly enough, it is found in the second to last book of the Bible. Look at the short letter of Jude. Notice vv. 14-15. Who were the “these” about which Enoch spoke? I think they are well-characterized by what we read in v. 16. In short, they were the evil people who lived in Enoch's day. Enoch was an OT prophet. He spoke for God, and he spoke to the many in his day who were living in disobedience to God. He delivered to them a message of coming judgment.

Enoch's words were not idle ones. The judgment of which he warned came. That judgment came in the day of his great grandson—Noah.

Notice what Enoch says in v. 15 beginning with the words “to convict.” In a span of about 30 words, Enoch uses the word *ungodly* four times. It would not be a stretch to say that the theme of his preaching was ungodliness. He lived in a day of ungodliness, and he called out the ungodly for their ungodliness.

If Enoch lived and preached in our day, do you think he would have to change his preaching much? No. I think his sermons would match well with the culture in which we live. We live in the midst of ungodliness, but I don't hear much about the coming judgment of God against the ungodly. I hear a lot of self-help sermons, a lot of “God wants to bless you” sermons, but rarely do I hear sermons warning of the judgment of God that will soon fall upon the unrepentant.

Look with me at the preaching of Jesus in Matthew 24:37-39. I think it is quite likely that we live much closer to the coming of Jesus in judgment than Enoch lived to the coming of judgment through the flood, but are we warning the ungodly of our day about that judgment?

The late James Boice asked, “Should not our preaching and witnessing be as filled with condemnation of sin as was the preaching of Enoch and equally as insistent in warning people to flee from the wrath to come?”

Enoch walked with God, and as a result, he was able to take up the role God had for him.

The same can be true of us. If we will walk with the Lord by faith, drawing close to

Him daily, he will make known to us the role we are to have in the grand production He is overseeing. As we learn and play our part, He will be pleased.

That brings us to the last verse of our text and to this matter of pleasing God. Look at Hebrews 11:6. This verse brings us to our third and final question.

### **What's the Main Lesson in Being Taken?**

V. 5 ends with us being told that Enoch was *commended* as being one who pleased God. In the very next verse, the author of Hebrews emphasizes the one, critical ingredient that goes into living a life that pleases God. Of course, that indispensable ingredient is faith, and this chapter is all about faith. Those who please God are people of faith. That's the lesson. If you want to please God, you must live a life of faith.

The latter part of v. 6 outlines what it is that we are to have faith in. First, we have to have faith that God exists. That doesn't sound like a tall order, but we need to be clear as to what the author means when he says that we must believe that He exists.

This means more than simply acknowledging that there is a Supreme Being. That is a good start, and there are a lot of people in our naturalistic culture who haven't even gotten there yet. It is not enough, however, to simply renounce atheism.

According to Scripture, there is not a single demon who is an atheist. More than that, every demon in the universe is trinitarian in their theology. They all believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that he was born of the Virgin Mary, that He performed miracles upon the Earth, that He died on a cross, and that He arose from the grave. Every demon knows the truth of which the Bible speaks. They know the truth; they just don't want you to believe the truth. There is a difference between knowing the truth and embracing the truth.

While they know the truth, the demons have not given their allegiance to God, and they are living in rebellion against Him.

You see, it is quite possible to know the truth and not order your life by that truth. It is possible to acknowledge the truth and not be changed by it.

When you live by faith, however, you believe the truth, and you allow the truth to change you.

Our text proclaims, "For whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists." Let me ask you a question. Which word should we emphasize in that sentence? I think most people would emphasize *exists*. I don't think that is the word that should be emphasized. Rather, we should emphasize the word *He*. The God who had revealed Himself in the OT, the God who has acted on our behalf in the person of His Son, Jesus, that is the God who exists. We are to believe in reality of the One who had displayed His power and made known His graciousness, and mercy, and patience, and kindness, and love. He has also revealed His holiness, and justice, and wrath, and righteous indignation. We are to believe in the One who has shown who He is both in the pages of the Bible and the pages of history.

One thing He has shown about Himself is that He rewards those who seek Him. We are to believe that, too, and we show we believe that by seeking Him, by drawing close to Him, and by walking with Him.

As I was studying for last week's message on the faith of Abel, I came across

something I had never before noticed. We know that Enoch came through the line of Seth. Eve gave birth to Seth after his brother Abel was murdered by his brother Cain. We also know that Enoch fathered Methuselah, and Methuselah fathered Lamech. All of these were part of the line of Seth.

With that in mind, go back to Genesis 4. In this chapter we see the line of Cain. Look at v. 17. Cain fathered another child named Enoch. According to v. 18, one of that Enoch's children fathered a Methuselah, and that Methuselah fathered a son named Lamech.

What's going on with the same names in different lines? Let me make some observations. Earlier we read Jude 14 that mentions Enoch. There is a phrase in that 14<sup>th</sup> verse that we didn't take note of, but the phrase serves an important purpose. The phrase identified Enoch as the seventh from Adam. In other words, if Adam was the first generation, and Seth was the second generation, Enoch belonged to the seventh generation.

The Enoch whom Cain fathered was the third generation.

Judge is saying, "Don't get the wrong Enoch. I am talking about the Enoch of Genesis 5, not the Enoch of chapter 4." Cain's son Enoch was not a godly man. His grandson, Lamech, was a murderer just like Enoch's father, Cain, was a murderer.

Boice explained the significance of the same names in the two different lines of Adam. He wrote:

There is a parallel between those who are God's people and those who are the Devil's, and it encourages us always to imitate God's people. Let me spell it out. The devil has his men and women, and God has His men and women. The devil has his doctors; God has His doctors. The devil has his convicts; God has His convicts, who by His grace are lifted out of a life of crime. The devil has his lawyers; God has His lawyers. The devil has his housewives, who gossip and flirt and sometimes commit adultery; God has His housewives, who establish godly homes and raise their children in the knowledge and love of Jesus. The devil has his teachers; God has His teachers. The devil even has his preachers, whose sin against knowledge will produce the greater damnation; God has His preachers, who speak the truth. God wants us to see this contrast and pattern our lives after the lives of the godly.

God wants you and I to look at godly Enoch and say, "I want to be like him. I want to live by faith. I want to walk with God. I want to please Him."

Is that what you want?

If you and I want to be taken by Him on the day Jesus comes back, we must become so taken with Him that we choose to walk with Him by faith.