

The First Vanishing

Heroes, Part 4

Hebrews 11:5-6

It's not unusual to talk to someone who has resisted the gospel message until something dramatic occurred.

Our church is filled with many people who were brought to their knees through some kind of difficulty, which opened the heart to the gospel message. God in His mercy allowed them to go through a deep valley of suffering or loss in order to bring them to place where the gospel was received.

I remember visiting a young man in the hospital several years ago who had heard and rejected the gospel for years, but after being shot by a rifle and narrowly missing death, his tough exterior had been replaced with tender openness and he trusted in Christ.

The body of Christ is filled with testimonies of believers who were coasting, until something traumatic happened in their lives to bring them to a point where they really committed their lives to some aspect of obedience or surrender to the will of God.

Not too long ago I read the biography of John MacArthur, a pastor who has faithfully preached now for more than 40 years in the same church. Many of you have heard John on the radio or you've read any number of his books and commentaries.

He was interviewed on his 40th anniversary and I read much of the transcript. He tells of the incident where God really got his attention. He was in the passenger seat of a car that was speeding down the road with five other college aged students, doing about 75 miles an hour. The driver lost control and the car ended up flipping over on its roof and it skidded down the highway the length of a football field.

Nobody had seat belts in those days, but none of the other kids were thrown from the car when it flipped over. John said, the reason the car didn't continue rolling over was because his door had opened up when the car flipped over, and the door acted like a brace, keeping the car from flipping over any further. John was the only student literally thrown out of the car. He says he remembers sliding down the highway on his back next to the car. He said, "I could see it spinning beside me" as we both skidded down the road. He didn't break any bones – but he would spend months in the hospital recovering – literally the entire back of his body was embedded with asphalt and some portions of his back and lower body scraped to the bone.

He says in this interview that it was *then* that he came to terms with God's design for his life.¹

I guess so . . . that'll get your attention, won't it? Here am I, send me!

I have no doubt that we could go around this auditorium with a microphone and you all could tell your own story of what God did to either open your eyes to the gospel, or break down your will as a believer in some area and bring you, by His goodness, to surrender to His will in that area.

In fact, I'm sure that what troubles us more than anything is that we don't walk with God as consistently as we'd like to walk with God. And let me tell you – the fact that you're troubled about that is a wonderful evidence of genuine desire to walk with Him.

You want more than anything for the legacy of your life to be that statement. He or she walked with God.

You attend a funeral and hear people trying to make meaning out of some deceased friend's life. In fact, sometimes you hear such glowing statements about that person that you think you might have wandered into the wrong funeral – you recheck the name on the program.

You see, it's at moments like those⁴ where we are confronted with what matters most. It hits us that no one is getting up there behind the podium and eulogizes, "He made a million dollars a year . . . I never saw him drive a used car . . . she always wore the best clothing on the market . . . you should have seen her kitchen."

Oh no . . . we're looking for evidence that this person knew and lived for what really mattered in life.

They walked with God.

Lord we need help with what that looks like . . . we could use a hero made out of flesh and blood who demonstrated that kind of legacy for us.

Which God just so happens to provide in this next hero of living faith.

His name is Enoch and he's found in three different passages of scripture – *He's next in line here in Hebrews 11 and verse 5; he's also mentioned in Genesis chapter 5 as well as in the little one chapter letter by Jude.*

What I want to do today is reconstruct Enoch's personal biography by putting together the biblical pieces from these three passages.

And I want to do it in consecutive order – as he would have lived it out.

With that in mind, the Letter of Jude records the first chronological statement of Enoch's biography; and it's this;

1. Enoch was the seventh generation from Adam

We're told in *verse 14 that Enoch was the seventh generation from Adam.*

Now why in the world would that matter? I mean, is that supposed to be some kind of impressive pedigree kind of statement? Like, he's a descendant of one of the Mayflower families; or, he's a distant relative of a former King or president. Well, that isn't the point here.

If you spend time studying the descendants of Adam, Enoch was from the godly line of believers. He was the 7th Patriarch descending from the line of Seth, the son of Adam.

And this particular phrase nudges us to notice that Enoch was the counterpart to the seventh generation from the line of Cain, Adam's son as well. The 7th Patriarch in the line of Cain was Lamech.

And there was a world of difference between Enoch and Lamech.

Genesis chapter 4 gives us the descendants of Cain and *Genesis chapter 5* gives us the descendants of Seth. And don't be confused when you study these two family lines, because both lines have sons named Enoch and Lamech.

So you'll need to make sure you observe whether or not Enoch and Lamech descended from Cain – the ungodly line – or from Seth – the godly line of believers.

Lamech, the descendant of Cain, was the epitome of ungodliness. He boasted that he had killed a young boy for offending him.

In fact, he brags in *Genesis 4* that he's 70 times more wicked than his forefather, Cain, who was the world's first murderer – phhfff . . . Cain's nothing, compared to me.

Add to that the fact that Lamech was the first man to begin the practice of polygamy – violating the God-created ideal for marriage.

All that to say – Lamech represented the fallen corruption of man – he was a self-centered, brutal, ungodly man who defied the authority of God.

So when *Jude* reminds us here that Enoch was the 7th in the line of Adam, it informs the Bible student that Enoch's life is running parallel to that of Lamech's . . . which informs us that Enoch was living during days of great ungodliness.

So Enoch represented those who followed God and Lamech represented those who defied God. Enoch will represent how to go to heaven and Lamech will define what it takes to go to hell.

Enoch will represent eternal justification and Lamech will represent eternal judgment.

2. Enoch was the father of Methuselah

Now, the second piece of Enoch's biography is found in *Genesis chapter 5 where we're told in verse 21 that he lived sixty-five years and became the father of Methuselah.*

Now there's more to this story than at first meets the eye.

Back in Jude, we're given another observation that I want to reserve for a few minutes yet; but I need to mention it here.

We're told that Enoch became a prophet. In other words, he received revelation from God – in fact, as we'll see in a few minutes; it was specific revelation about a coming future judgment.

What we also know is that this revelation from God actually caused him to name his son, Methuselah.

For Methuselah means, "When he is dead, it will come."ⁱⁱ

It's a reference to a coming judgment. Enoch the prophet was given revelation from God which he would end up preaching to his generation – judgment from God was on its way.

The last page of this transcript provides a list representing the chronology of Patriarchs from Adam to Noah.

If you study the descendants of Adam and take at face value the years that we're given by God in His revelation of Beginnings – which is what the word, Genesis, means, Adam was created in the first year of creation – we know from scripture it was on the 6th day of creation.

And Adam lived for 930 years. Some believe that in these days before the flood, a water canopy in the atmosphere shielded the earth from harmful rays -- creating a greenhouse effect -- watering the earth daily by heavy dew for rain had yet to fall on the planet as we know it today.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Bible isn't perfectly clear on this issue and we are not told *how* mankind lived such long years; however, the Bible *is* clear that they *did*.

If you explore Genesis chapter 5 you discover that the Patriarch Jared was born 460 years after Adam – they no doubt knew each other – all these patriarchs were well aware of one another.

Then Enoch was born – and compared to the rest of the Patriarchs, he died a very young man at the age of 365.

That was young.

In fact, at the young age of 65, he and his wife had their first child – a son. And although we're not given the details, God visits Enoch in some fashion and informs him of coming judgment.

He also informs him that his son's life will be the measurement of God's final years of patience – for when this boy dies, God promises to judge the human race.

So name your son, Methuselah . . . not so he'll be embarrassed at graduation when his full name is read and everybody says, "What kind of name is that."

Give him that name because he's going to become a living demonstration of the name . . . "When he dies, judgment will come."

Is that what happened?

If you look further, on your chart, you'll notice that Noah is the last patriarch listed according to Genesis 5. The clues of this chronology place Noah's birth in the year 1056 and we're also told he lived 950 years.

We're given even more information than that. According to **Genesis 9:28**, we're told that Noah lived 600 years before the flood and 350 years after the flood came; which is such a wonderfully helpful verse of scripture because it allows us to date the actual event of the flood to the very year it happened.

And that year was 1656 – which just so happens to be the exact year Methuselah dies.

Can you imagine, you are in the delivery room and God informs you that you're holding in your arms the length of God's fuse . . . and guess what – the fuse just got lit . . . and you don't know how long it'll take before the explosion.

As long as this boy lived, the judgment tarried.^{iv}

Now keep in mind that we have no record of Enoch being told how long his son would live. I'm sure he would have been surprised to know that Methuselah would live to be 969 years old.

As far as he knew, his son might die in infancy. Surely he wouldn't live long.

Already the human race was involved in demonic worship and astral worship; living in utter rebellion and depravity . . . a human race marked by murder and brutality and sin – men were now boasting of killing children; polygamy and all its sexual abuses of women were now in vogue . . . Enoch must've been thinking, "My son isn't going to live for very long."

As far as Enoch knew, his son might live 2 months or 2 years.

The third description of Enoch's biography now comes into play:

3. Enoch walked with God

The event of his son's birth changes everything! Like sliding down the interstate on his backside, or surviving a gun shot, or cancer or bankruptcy . . . the

birth of Methuselah dramatically altered the life of Enoch forever.

Listen, from the moment Enoch held little Methuselah in his arms, he was a new man.

In fact, God wants to make sure we don't miss the crossroads experience in Enoch's life. Because in *Genesis chapter 5 and verse 21 we read, "Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah.*

His entire outlook on life radically changed.

Frankly, that's a good thing for every man who becomes a father. That's the moment you're struck with the fact that you're now responsible for the next generation – you're going to be watched – you're going to be modeled – you're going to need to walk with God like never before.

It reminds me of the testimony of one man who struggled with alcoholism – nothing could get him to stop, not the financial struggles they had because of it or the pleading of his wife and the things she had to do without and the disrepair of their home. And then they had a little boy. You'd think that might have changed him, but it wasn't the boy's birth that impacted this man's heart. It was one winter day when this father slammed out of their house and began to walk through the snow toward a nearby tavern – he heard behind him his little boy calling out, "Daddy, slow down . . . daddy, slow down." This man turned around to see his son taking giant steps so that he could step where his father had stepped. He shouted, "Go back inside . . . whattya doing?" And his little boy said, "Look at me, Daddy; I'm big enough now to walk in *your* footprints." The father was thunderstruck with guilt . . . he walked over and picked up his son and headed back toward the house, saying more to himself, than to his son, "Well in that case, I had better change directions."

Now, you need to understand that Enoch was from the godly line of Seth. Enoch already followed God – we would call him a believer in our vernacular. He wasn't an idolater – in fact, no one would have been surprised to see God choose him to be one of his prophetic voices in the land.

Kent Hughes points out in his Old Testament commentary on the life of Enoch that the Old Testament distinguishes between people who walk before God and those who walk after God and those who walk with God – literally, by the side of God.^v

There's just a nuance of an implied difference between following God and walking with God.

They can be the same thing, but they might imply something different . . . something deeper.

We're not told what the issues were that changed in Enoch's life and heart, but before the birth of his son, his epitaph would not have read, "He walked with God".

But after his son's birth – whatever the obstruction to spiritual communion – whatever the lack in desire and passion – whatever the potential compromise or unyieldedness there were – Enoch evidently dealt with it began to not only walk after God and before God – he not only followed God, he began a close intimate walk with God.

Now let me stop here for a moment and answer a very practical question. What does it take to walk with God?

It's actually fairly simple to describe. Walking with God requires the same decisions needed for you and me to take a walk together.

For one thing, we have to agree on the destination.

If you want to walk around the block 5 times and I want to walk to Bojangles for a biscuit and sweet ice tea, we've evidently got to be go our separate ways. And you're going to miss out and I'm going to feel sorry for you.

We can't walk together unless we're walking in the same direction – we have to have the same purpose – the same goal in mind.

Secondly, we can't walk together unless we keep the same speed or pace.

I can't ring your doorbell and say, "Hey, how about a walk around the block," and you say, "Sure" and I say, tell you what, while you're getting your shoes on, I'll go ahead and get started.

If you walked around the block 10 paces behind me or 10 paces in front of me, we might be out on the street at the same time, but we're not in conversation – we're not enjoying each other's fellowship.

We're just in the same neighborhood – but we're not walking together.

To walk with someone, you have to have the same purpose in your spirit and the same pace in your step.

Something happened to Enoch's purpose and pace – and passion.

Hebrews 11 tells us that he began to exercise living, passionate faith in **two distinct perspectives.**

a. **First, Enoch began to trust by faith that God really exists.**

Notice *verse 6*. ***Without faith it is impossible to please Him.*** In other words, without trusting Him – as to your purpose in life and your pace in life – you can’t closely commune with Him – and he’s writing this to believers, by the way, not unbelievers.

He’s not talking about saving faith, he’s talking about a sanctifying faith that finds close communion with God the greatest treasure in life.

And what kind of faith is that? He goes on to write in *verse 6*, ***for he who comes to God must believe that He is.***

The first perspective in this walk of faith is living with the perspective that believes God exists.

Well don’t all Christians believe that? Sure they do.

The question is, do we act like it? Enoch began to *walk* like it.

The question is, do we really acknowledge Him in all our ways . . . do we lean upon Him for wisdom. Or do we act like He probably isn’t in *our* neighborhood and so we’ll walk at our own pace and for our own purpose and hopefully God will be okay with it.

Haven’t you been around that rare Christian and you walk away thinking to yourself, “Man, that guy really believes that God’s alive.”

b. The second perspective in *verse 6* is this; not only do you truly live as if God is truly alive and well, **you believe by faith that He’s actually involved.**

The writer of Hebrews adds, ***“you must believe . . . that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him.”***

This letter is written to Hebrew Christians who were suffering – they were impoverished; they were martyred; they were wondering if God was really out there – and even if He was, did He really care about them?

Enoch would be mocked for his commitment – he would preach for 300 years and his culture would only grow more depraved.

And then Noah would begin to build an ark and he picked up where Enoch left off in evangelistic meetings. Between Enoch and Noah you would have a combined evangelistic career of more than 400 years. And there were *no* results – *ever*.

I have little doubt that the readers of this eleventh chapter would be wondering if remaining pure, pursuing a walk with God and maintain a distinctive testimony surrounded by a depraved culture was really worth the effort?

Is God really alive and in control . . . is He really aware of my situation?

And isn’t that our struggle so often in your heart where no one sees and you wouldn’t dare let on . . . Lord . . . are You there? Lord, have You noticed what’s going on in my life . . . do you even care?

Every sincere Christian wants to strengthen his walk with Christ – he wants to commune with Christ – he wants to be pleasing to Christ.

How do you work up your walk of faith? How do you strengthen your legacy of faith in walking with God?

Begin to practice these two perspectives – live as if God is truly alive and act as if God really takes note of what’s happening in your life.

If I have enough time to add to my research and study, the devotional writings of Thomas Manton, a Puritan pastor who preached and pastored in the late 1800’s. He has a devotional commentary on Hebrews 11 based on his sermons and the book is 700 pages long.

You think I’m slow . . . Manton delivered several sermons and wrote more than 100 pages on these two verses in Hebrews 11!

In one section of his book, he provoked my thinking with this title – How to work up your faith. Five ways, he wrote:

1. **First, you work up your walk of faith by way of meditation.**

He wrote, “There is nothing you prize that you don’t allow your mind to run upon.” In other words, think about Christ – think about heaven and your happiness there; think about the glory and beauty of your future with Him . . . imagine it.

In our culture we would say, “Daydream about your future in heaven like you daydream about winning the lottery . . . even though you would never buy a ticket!”

2. **Secondly, work up your walk of faith by way of argumentation**

Now he didn’t mean to go out and pick a fight. What he meant was to actually argue with yourself

whenever you would wonder or doubt . . . get into the word and commit your mind to the truth of God's promises . . . argue with anything that rises up against the hope you have within you.

When's the last time you had a good argument with yourself?

3. Third, work up your walk of faith by way of supplication

He wrote, pray the Psalms and cry out with David, "Oh Lord, guide me with Thy counsel." "Let Thy truth and Thy light lead me."

4. Fourth, work up your walk of faith by way of [dedication]

He writes, "Do not men strive and war to step higher in the world? Do they not rise early and go to bed late, only to maintain their frail lives that are crumbling to dust?" Shall we do nothing for God? Should we not be more industrious?

I love this language!

If we want to work up our faith, we should do it by meditation and argumentation and supplication and dedication; then finally:

5. Number 5, we work it up by means of expectation.

Look for Him . . . long for His appearing as the believers were exhorted to do on the Island of Crete – *We are looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13)*

This is how you work up your walk of faith.^{vi}

And by the way, this kind of life doesn't pull you away from people – it doesn't lead you into isolation like some ascetic who withdraws from the world and the normal pressures of life and relationships.^{vii}

In fact, Enoch began to passionately engage with his generation – *because of his walk of faith.*

The next biographical insight we're given is that Enoch . . .

4. He warned of coming judgment

Jude's little letter informs us that Enoch prophesied in verse 14 that the Lord is going to come with thousands of His holy ones – that's you and me – to execute judgment upon all, and to

convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly.

You get the idea that he's calling his world a bunch of ungodly sinners?

How popular is that?

And he's prophesying that God is going to come and judge the world.

Now we know with our fullest record of Revelation that this event takes place at the end of the Tribulation – when the church and Christ return to judge the world as Christ sets up His kingdom.

But what Enoch doesn't know is that God is actually going to apply this judgment to an earlier event that will take place as soon as his son Methuselah dies.

And that worldwide judgment will be the Flood.

And we have every reason to believe that Enoch doesn't know how far away that coming judgment is. He just knows it's coming.

Imagine. By the time Methuselah turns 850 years old – Enoch has already died, by the way, and God comes to Noah and tells him to begin building an ark.

Remember, Methuselah is a living illustration of God's mercy and patience.

Isn't it interesting that the man whose death will bring judgment is the man that God determines will live longer than any other human being has ever lived.

That's how patient God is with unbelieving mankind.

Noah begins the construction and the crowds begin to mock.

Methuselah is 940 years old . . . Noah and his family is working on the inside of the Ark, creating compartments and food storage areas.

Methuselah is now 967 years old when Noah hangs the door on the hinges of that massive ark. Methuselah turns 968 while Noah and his family pack the ark with food.

Then . . . Methuselah turns 969 and animals start appearing in pairs as the ark is finished. The family is getting on board when they hear the news . . . Grandpa Methuselah has died.

By the way, he never reserved a seat on the Ark because he knew he didn't need to. His death would signal the judgment of God.

Every Patriarch from the line of Seth has now passed away, except for Noah.

And the judgment of God, promised nearly 1,000 years earlier now comes and for the first time in

human history, the sound of thunder is heard and rain begins to fall.

We'll discuss that in our next session in detail.

But for now, let's back up and notice as the last piece of Enoch's biography falls into place.

Enoch was not only the seventh generation from Adam; he was not only the father of Methuselah; he not only walked with God; he not only warned his world of coming judgment, but finally,

5. Enoch was the first human being to vanish from sight . . . taken into God's presence without dying

Hebrews 11 and verse 5 tells us that Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death – he was not found because God took him up.

This Greek word has the same idea of being raptured – being snatched away.^{viii}

Enoch suddenly vanished. We're not told how God did it – we're just told that He did it.

And the text indicates he couldn't be found. That means they sent out search parties . . . Enoch's family no doubt suspected foul play from the line of Cain.^{ix}

Who saw him last? Where was he before he disappeared? C'mon, this doesn't just happen.

Oh? Maybe today the same thing could happen – only this time, every person who has placed their faith in Jesus Christ will suddenly vanish . . . disappear.

One pastor wrote of this incident in his church when a Sunday school teacher wrote me a few weeks ago . . . she's also been teaching her 5 year old class about heaven and what it takes to get there . . . she decided to test them a couple of weeks ago, so she asked them, "If I sold my house and my car, had a big garage sale and gave all the money to the church, would that get me into heaven?" All the children said, "No!" She said, "If I cleaned the church every day, mowed the church lawn and kept everything neat and tidy, would that get me into heaven?" Again, the answer was a resounding, "No!" She wrote, "I was starting to smile – they were getting it." She went on, "If I was kind to animals and gave candy to children, and loved my husband, is that what I've got to do to get into heaven?" And they all shouted, "No!" She wrote that she was bursting with pride that they were learning so well and she asked, "Well then, what do

I have to do to get into heaven?" And one 5-year-old boy shouted out, "You got to be dead!"^x

Not necessarily!

Enoch becomes not only a prophet of the coming judgment from God upon the earth; Enoch also becomes the first to experience God's ability to move someone from earth to heaven.

He just vanished from sight.

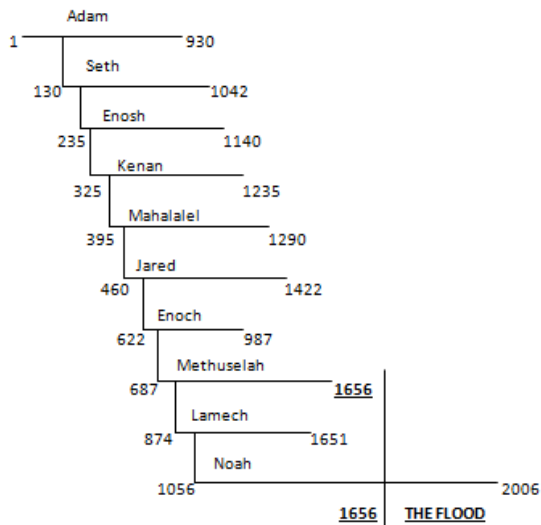
Warren Wiersbe writes that Enoch had been walking with God for so many years that his transfer to heaven wasn't even an interruption.^{xi}

His legacy is that he walked with God and that he actually walked away with God.

In G. Campbell Morgan's biography that I'm reading through these days – this expositor wrote in the early 1900's – and I close with his quote, "A little girl came home from Sunday School, after hearing the story of Enoch. She said: "Mother, we heard about a wonderful man today in Sunday School." The sensible mother let her child tell what she had heard. "His name was Enoch, and you know, Mother, he used to go for walks with God." The mother responded, "That's wonderful . . . but how does the story end?" "Oh, one day they walked on and on, and got so far, God said to Enoch, "You are a long way from home, now . . . you might as well come on to my home and stay with me."^{xii}

And so ends the biography of a man who left us a legacy of faith; a man who modeled what it means to walk with God . . . and to literally walk *away* with God.

Which happens to be His plan for us as well . . . every one of us who belong to Him will one day end our walk of faith by an invitation from our Lord to just come on to His house and live with Him there, forever.



Methuselah was born in the 65th year of Enoch's life, which was the year 687, and he lived 969 years or until the year 1656.

The last of the patriarchs was Noah, Lamech's son, who was born in the 182nd year of Lamech's life, which was the year 1056. He lived 950 years, 600 of which were before the Flood and 350 of which were afterward. By this reckoning, the Flood came 600 years after the year 1056 or in the year 1656.

The Flood came in the year 1656, according to the chronology of Genesis 5. But this is precisely the year in which Methuselah died.^{xiii}

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 9/30/2012 by Stephen Davey.

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i Excerpts from John MacArthur's testimony at Grace To You

ii James Montgomery Boice, Genesis: Volume 1 (Zondervan, 1982), p. 232

iii Henry M. Morris, The Genesis Record (Baker Book House, 1976), p. 60

iv Ibid, p. 235

v R. Kent Hughes, Genesis (Crossway, 2004), p. 120

vi Thomas Manton, By Faith: Sermons on Hebrews 11 (The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), p. 20

vii G. Ch. Aalders, Genesis: Volume 1 (Zondervan, 1981), p. 141

viii John MacArthur, Twelve Unlikely Heroes (Thomas Nelson, 2012), p. 18

ix Boice, p. 231

x Andy Stanley, How Good is Good Enough? (Multnomah, 2003), p. 8

xi R. Kent Hughes, Hebrews: Volume 2 (Crossway, 1993), p. 78

xii Adapted from G. Campbell Morgan, The Triumphs of Faith: Expositions of Hebrews 11 (Baker, 1980), p. 66

xiii James Montgomery Boice, Genesis: Volume 1 (Zondervan, 1982), p. 234