

Clockworks of Heaven
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Gen 5:24

(BHS)	(KJV)
וַיִּתְהַלֵּךְ עֲנוֹךְ אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֵינּוּ כִּי־לָקַח אֹתוֹ אֱלֹהִים:	And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

You may readily identify the name Enoch. It means “train up” or “dedicate.” 1 Kgs 8:63, “the people of Israel *enoched* the house of the LORD.” “*Enoch* a child in the way he should go ...” (Prov 22:6). He “walked” with God in the Hithpael stem: to walk or go about. Note that “God” has the article in line 1. Or, I could say, God has the. Line 2 is just the adverbial negative particle *'ayin* plus the pronominal suffix. (When I see *'ayin*, I think “ain’t”). See how one word in Hebrew requires four English words. As God “took” Adam to place him high on Mount Eden (2:15), from the mass of humanity God also “took” (same word) Enoch.

Enoch lived exactly 365 years (5:23), the same number as days in a year. (I wonder if that number might symbolize living a complete and satisfying life of righteousness?) Anyway, Heb 11:5 says that Enoch never died, and was “commended as having pleased God”—i.e., he “walked with God.” But when God took him, where did he physically go?

At the time of Jesus and for a few centuries earlier, there was a Jewish sect that had an answer to that. They wrote down various thoughts, some purporting to be revelations from heaven, and the composite work became the Book of Enoch. It is part of a collection of Jewish literature from this era called

the *Pseudepigrapha*. Enoch's book is considered canon by some Ethiopian Orthodox. It is sometimes called Ethiopian Enoch or 1 Enoch.

The "Enoch community" understood our verse to refer to angels. Look at line 1 again. Enoch "walked with the gods" until he was raptured into heaven. There he toured the clockworks of heaven and saw the ranks and stations of the luminaries, who keep God's commandments that regulate their cyclical journeys. The idea is, to understand righteousness and to know God one must go to heaven—as Enoch did. His book is a record of what he learned. (Amazing, isn't it? A community of followers, and a sizable scroll, inspired more or less by exploiting the ambiguity of the word *'elohim* in one verse of Genesis.)

Our verse is part of a genealogy that gives a lifespan for each man, and then ends with finality, "and he died." Adam lived, "and he died." Seth lived, "and he died." Generation after generation ends with this—except for Enoch. Enoch's unique place in the genealogy testifies to the fact that death is not the inevitable or necessary end for humanity. There is more to our lives than that. There is something more out there—but what?

I can't think of Enoch without imagining the celestial systems he saw in the legend. I also can't help thinking that the group who produced the Enoch corpus must have intuitively felt a deep need for a word from heaven beyond the Old Testament. They must have sensed that there was more out there, much more, to speak to the age in which they lived. They imaginatively filled that gap with secrets and revelations from Enoch.

But Paul the apostle actually made it up there, even if only in a vision. He traveled to the “third heaven” and heard unutterable things (2 Cor 12:2). But beyond even that there is Jesus, the ultimate “Man of heaven” (1 Cor 15:48 – 49). And after his earthly ministry was done, Jesus ascended to there. The Enoch circle yearned for this sort of leader but never had one in reality. But today, glory of glories, we actually have been made citizens of heaven, and from there “we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.” (Phil 3:20 – 21)

This joyous thought should outweigh all other concerns and sufferings that this life throws at us. Although we do grieve and doubt and are confused, we also have a great hope in heaven. When we are anxious or distressed (like the Enoch community was), we can remember that Jesus is up there. And he will come back to take us home someday.

On that day, you will experience what Enoch experienced ahead of time. You will be caught up in the clouds too (1 Thess 4:17). You will partake of all the supernal mysteries. Enoch will have nothing on you. We shall meet the Lord in the air, and be with him forever. It is to that hope we “dedicate” ourselves. Amen, Come Lord Jesus!