

call goes out from Jerusalem for the Jews, God's people, to leave Babylonian Europe to escape the judgements which will come upon that land: "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (v. 4).

The papacy has been making efforts to bring Judaism, along with other religions, within its thrall. The Jewish response to the election of Pope Benedict XVI was warm. As Israel Singer, the chairman of the World Jewish Congress, stated:¹

"We view Pope Benedict XVI as an outstanding intellectual, as an authentic Catholic and as a person who, despite his conservative and authentic views, had the ability to be able to reach out. He has spent his time over the

last 20 years speaking publicly against anti-Semitism and changing Catholic doctrine on that subject. So I have to take him at his word. He said that the passages in the Christian Bible condemning individual Jews that have been used to justify anti-Semitism should be regretted. I'm pleased to have a partner in dialogue as the head of a church of 1.2 billion people with that kind of view".

The work of Elijah will reverse the trend exemplified by this quotation. He will turn the hearts of the Jews away from the Babylonian harlot and to the wisdom of the righteous fathers such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

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1. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4469809.stm#singer>.

The translation of Enoch

Malcolm Edwards

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God" (Heb. 11:5).

THIS PASSAGE has caused much speculation, and not a little controversy, over the questions of where Enoch was taken and whether or not he actually died. Immortal soul believers sometimes cite this passage to support their view, and also the record in Genesis 5, which says: "and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" (v. 24).

In reply to this argument, it does not say in either passage that Enoch died, nor that his soul went to heaven; it seems to be implied that he was taken bodily. Hebrews 11:5 says he "was not found", which strongly suggests that his *body* was no longer on earth. Nevertheless, because Psalm 89:48 asks, "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?", and Romans 5:12 states that "death passed upon all men", there are some who believe that Enoch did actually die, especially since Hebrews 11 says later, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises" (v. 13).

It might be replied that, though these passages speak generally, God may make exceptions to His own rules if He so wishes. For example, although Romans 5:12 goes on to state that "all

have sinned", it is obvious that Jesus is excepted. It is very likely that "These all died in faith" does not refer to Enoch's times at all, but to the period from Abraham onwards, in keeping with the immediate context of the promises to the fathers. The link with the previous verse would support this: "Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable" (v. 12).

Nevertheless, it is possible that the expression "he was not" means that God buried Enoch secretly, as was the case with Moses. If this is so, we must try to explain what is meant by the phrase, "should not see death". It is suggested that it refers to Enoch being removed so as not to witness the death of Lamech son of Methusael, of the line of Cain, who was guilty of slaying a man (Gen. 4:23,24). The problem with this explanation is that Hebrews 11:5 does not specifically say, "should not see Lamech's death". Furthermore, the similar expression, "shall not see death", in Psalm 89:48, quoted above, clearly means 'shall not die'.

The view preferred by our pioneer brethren was that Enoch did not die. Brother Thomas had no difficulty in believing that he was taken up to God without experiencing death. He says in *Elpis Israel*: "Jesus was changed . . . into a spirit, and was therefore enabled to pass through it [the ether

or space] to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. Enoch, Elijah, and Moses, are also cases to the point" (p. 43, 14th edition). Most would disagree that this was really the case with Moses and Elijah, for there is no doubt that Moses died, and the fact that a letter came to King Jehoram long after Elijah was taken up (2 Chron. 21:12) suggests that he had only been transferred to another locality, like Philip in Acts 8.

In *The Visible Hand of God* Brother Roberts writes: "If we are told that God took Enoch, it is because he continued alive to be taken and was taken, and did not die" (p. 41). Brother John Carter in *The Letter to the Hebrews* concurs with this, and adds: "We might see here some parallel with what will happen in the day of the Lord's advent, when some are 'taken'" (p. 137). The concept of any person escaping the death sentence pronounced on Adam and his posterity is not easy for finite minds to comprehend, but Almighty God (and He only) can waive that sentence with whomsoever He desires.

Into what state Enoch was transformed we are not told. The original Greek gives us little assistance. The word "translated" is *metatithēmi*, meaning 'to change or transpose'. It is used again in Hebrews 7:12 in regard to the changing of the Law. All we can deduce is that Enoch was no longer in a mortal condition. Most importantly, the incident cannot be used to teach the immortality of the soul, since there was no death, nor decaying body. It seems to be a case where it is more honest to admit that we do not know, rather than resort to speculation.

But returning to the point that Paul is really making in Hebrews 11:5, here was one faithful patriarch who, in walking with God, was so in tune with Him that the Creator made him a special case. What it meant for Enoch we may never know for certain until our own natures are changed at the appearing of Christ Jesus and the establishment of his Kingdom, when we shall, perhaps, wonder with a smile why it was ever a problem to us.

Gleanings from the Land

False Christianity in Israel

ONE OF THE features of apostasy which the Apostle Paul warned of was asceticism. Writing to the Colossians he asks, "why . . . do ye subject yourselves to ordinances, Handle not, nor taste, nor touch . . . ?" saying that such self-imposed rules and regulations "have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh" (Col. 2:20-23, RV). In 1 Timothy he speaks of a coming departure from the faith which would involve, amongst other things, ascetic practices, "forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving" (4:1,3).

It was this manner of thinking that led in later centuries to monasticism. It began in the third and fourth centuries A.D. in the deserts of Egypt and spread throughout the apostate Christian world. It was eradicated from Britain during the Reformation of the sixteenth century, but the existence of the ruins of many monasteries and abbeys witnesses to its importance in the Middle Ages. The religious freedom of modern times has enabled it to come back to a small degree, but nothing like to its old extent.

Early monasteries in the Middle East tended to be established in deserts, remote from other humans. This was the case in Palestine, where, during the early days of rule by the Eastern Roman Empire, numerous monastic communities were established in the Judean Desert and elsewhere. As the scene of

Jesus's life, death and resurrection, there was a particular emphasis on establishing such communities in Palestine. The various independent churches which became established in the Middle East, such as the Coptic Church of Egypt and the Armenian Church, established their monasteries in the Land, as well as what became known as the Greek Orthodox Church. In more recent times other churches, such as the Roman Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church, have established their communities there as well.

The result is that a considerable number of monastic communities of various types exists in modern Israel. Though most of the Arab inhabitants of Israel are Muslim, there are quite a number of Christians of various denominations, especially in and around places associated