



The Gaza Strip. The hatched blocks show the main areas of Israeli occupancy before the recent pullout.

As the Jewish settlers withdrew, the journalist Con Coughlin reported in the *Sunday Telegraph* that poetry and art competitions were being organised by the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip to reflect on the significance of the events. One poem which was particularly commended was by a Palestinian called Ibtisam Mustafa. In this poem he wrote:

“O brigades, be prepared, Gaza has been restored. Start preparing to liberate the rest of the land. Drive the Zionists out. O Hamas, let’s liberate Jerusalem with the help of your soldiers and glorious rockets”.¹

When we compare the sentiments expressed in this poem with the prophecies relating to the Gaza Strip at the time of the end we can see that their fulfilment cannot be far away. The prophecies in Zechariah and Joel, which speak of Jews being taken captive in Jerusalem, and of Jews being expelled from the Gaza Strip to lands across the Mediterranean, match the desire shown in this poem. There may also turn out to be an ironic link between the removal of Jewish settlers from their homes and the fulfilment of these prophecies, for, according, to the BBC reporter Martin Asser, there is a plan to build “a sea port in Gaza (using rubble from the settlers’ homes)”.²

However, whatever the humiliation of the Jews being taken into captivity, even if this involves walking over the remains of their homes as they make their way to waiting ships, ultimately the Jewish people will be delivered. For when Christ returns he will be a latter-day Hezekiah, and will smite “the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof” (2 Kgs. 18:8) so that “they of the plain” might possess the land of “the Philistines” (Obad. v. 19).

1. Coughlin, C. (2005), “Hamas claims evacuation is victory for the suicide bombers”, *Sunday Telegraph*, 21 Aug., p. 25.
2. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4160026.stm.

Your Letters



The translation of Enoch

When considering Enoch ([Aug. 2005, p. 322](#)), the only other person who is said to have “walked with God” is Noah (Gen. 6:9). Much is said about him in contrast with the brief notice of Enoch. Noah was saved from death at the age of 600. This was achieved when God invited him into the Ark and then shut him in (7:1,16). He later died at the age of 950 (9:29).

The ages at death recorded in Genesis 5 were great, but of Enoch it says, “he was not; for God took him” (v. 24), which leaves the matter open with reference to whether he lived for only 365 years. In the Letter to the Hebrews the writer seems to quote from the Septuagint; compare “Enoch . . . was not found, because God translated him” (Gen. 5:24, LXX) with “Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him” (Heb. 11:5).

The Greek phrase “not see death” is also found in Luke 2:26, where we read that Simeon “should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ”. Surely in this instance “should not see death” means Simeon would not experience death till he had seen Messiah. That Simeon himself thought that this was so is indicated by his words, “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word” (v. 29).

May I add that, if men used lunar months in Enoch’s day, then an interesting feature emerges?

Twelve lunar months are about 354 days. From “the second month, the seventeenth day of the month”, when the Flood began (Gen. 7:11), to “the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month” in the following year, when the waters were dried up from the earth (8:14), was 365 days inclusive. This corresponds to the number of years of Enoch’s life given in 5:23.

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Did Enoch die?

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This article, like the letter above, was received in response to the article, “The translation of Enoch” (Aug. 2005, p. 322), and presents the alternative view that Enoch did in fact die.

ENOCH “was translated that he should not see death” (Heb. 11:5). However, it seems to me that the evidence of Hebrews 11 and the rest of Scripture is that Enoch is now almost certainly dead. This evidence is presented first; then the meaning of the statement above is shown to be consistent with Enoch’s eventual death; and finally, the circumstances leading to his translation are discussed.

Reasons for saying that Enoch died

There are three reasons for saying that Enoch died:

1 Enoch is one of only seven faithful people mentioned in Hebrews 11 before verse 13 says, “These all died”. It seems difficult to imagine that the universal “all” would have been used if an exception existed even within this small group, all named within the immediate context.

The point of the many examples of faith is clearly to encourage faith in the readers. In particular, the first readers of the epistle had “endured a great fight of afflictions” (10:32) and needed to be exhorted to endure further chastening (12:5,7). They had taken the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had “a better and an enduring substance”; therefore they “[had] need of patience, that [they] might receive the promise” (10:34,36).

The examples of faith in Hebrews 11 thus demonstrate faith in what is promised to come; faith in the better country prepared of God in heaven; above all, faith that overcomes death. It is notable that death is mentioned explicitly in connection with nearly every example; some are saved from death by God, like Noah, Moses and Rahab (vv. 7,23,28,29,31), whilst others (ultimately all) hope in God even beyond death, like Abraham, Jacob and Joseph (vv. 19,21,22). Enoch fits this pattern, since he also was saved from seeing death (v. 5). His case might thus parallel those of Noah, Moses and Rahab, giving readers hope of their lives being preserved by God through the current affliction.

But what encouragement is there if Enoch was in fact specially changed so as not to die at all, but instead to live for thousands of years waiting for Christ? Were the recipients of the epistle to have any such hope? Are we? If not, then there is no reason to include an Enoch who never died among the examples in Hebrews 11. Enoch must have been a normal mortal man for there to be any power in the exhortation based on him in this chapter.

2 The constantly repeated theme of Scripture is that mankind is mortal and in need of salvation through Christ—“death reigned from Adam to Moses” (Rom. 5:14)—and Enoch was thus one of its subjects. “In Adam all die”, and only “in Christ shall all be made alive”, says 1 Corinthians 15:22. Enoch thus could not have been immortal until immortality was brought to light in Christ (2 Tim. 1:10); and to suppose that Enoch’s mortal life continued for