

October 6, 2013
Weird Stories in the Bible

Enoch's Life

Genesis 5:21-24/Hebrews 11:5-6

Opening words: This is sermon number four in my newest sermon series, *Weird Stories in the Bible*. I will be glad to admit I did not select these passages of scripture. They came from our high school class, who assigned that task to one question-filled young man. He did a wonderful job of selecting some odd stories. This is the truth. They are stories that come from the Bible, but they don't sound like they should be found in the Bible. For this reason, they are not read annually like the nativity or the passion. This may be the only time you ever hear these scriptures read in church. Maybe that is a good thing?

Today's scripture lessons seem kind of tame in comparison to the last several scripture lessons. Today's reading does not mention drunkenness or sexual immorality. Today's story is weird for another reason. It deals with a man who never experienced death. It sounds like a theme that could be found on the sci-fi channel. Enoch was simply taken by God because he pleased God. I have to ask this question. How pleasing are you to God? May God give you ears to hear this morning's scripture lessons, Genesis 5:21-24 and Hebrews 11:5-6. Let me call this message *Enoch's Life*.

Genesis 5:21-24 ²¹ When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. ²² After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked faithfully with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. ²³ Altogether, Enoch lived a total of 365 years. ²⁴ Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.

Hebrews 11:5-6 ⁵ By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: "He could not be found, because God had taken him away." For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Let me begin this message with two Bible trivia questions. This is question number one: How many people were resurrected in the Bible? The answer is nine. How many can you name?

1. Elijah resurrected a widow's son (1 Kings 17:17-24)
2. Elisha resurrected a woman (2 Kings 4:35)
3. A man was resurrected when he touched Elisha's bones (2 Kings 13:21)
4. Jesus resurrected a widow's son (Luke 7:13-15)
5. Jesus resurrected Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9:25)
6. Jesus resurrected Lazarus (John 11:43-44)

7. Peter raise Tabitha (Acts 9:36-42)
8. Paul resurrected a young man (Acts 20:9-12)
9. Jesus, himself, was resurrected (Matthew 28:5-7)

How many of those resurrections could you name? Perhaps, you will do better with this question.

How many people in the Bible never experienced death? The answer is two. Can you name either one?

1. Elijah (2 Kings 2:11)
2. Enoch (Genesis 5:21-24)

Today, I want to talk about one of the two people in the Bible who never experienced death. How much do you know about Enoch? The answer is probably very little.

The other night, I received a text message from my sister in Colorado, Janet. We communicate several times a week by texting. Sometimes it is about something we have experienced during the day. Recently, it has been about baseball. That was why her text the other night caught me off guard. Her text simply read:

Hi! I am reading a book and one of the characters is named Genevieve. Did we have a relative by that name?

I remember the name from our family history, but her name is all I remember. I don't remember if she married. I don't remember if she had children. I don't remember where she lived or what she did with her life. I know she was from my father's side of the family, but I don't know if she was a Dart or an Adams? The only thing I know for sure is her name. Isn't that kind of sad? Your name is just your identification. There is more to life than a name. There is more to you than your name. Perhaps, that is the story of Enoch. There was more to Enoch than just his name.

Today, I want to examine what the Bible tells us about Enoch. No, we do not have story after story about him, but we do have some basic facts. Those facts are important because they bring his story to life. This is the bottom line. Enoch and you are more alike than you think. What does the Bible tell us about Enoch? First, the Bible tells us he had a long life. How long do you want to live? Second, the Bible tells us he had a full life. What do you want to do with the rest of your life? Third and finally, the Bible tells us he has eternal life. He earned his eternal life. Jesus is our only hope of eternal life. So if you are ready to begin, say, **"Amen!"**

Enoch had a long life!

First, Enoch had a long life! Look at the text with me. Verse 23 says, *"Altogether, Enoch lived 365 years."* I think that qualifies as being a long life. Ages in the Bible always seem to get people upset. Listen to what I am about to say. There is no secret formula to uncover Biblical ages. We are not talking about 'dog years'. Always try to read the Bible consistently. It is really not that hard. The Bible teaches us we must believe in the resurrection of Jesus to be saved. If I can believe Jesus came back from the dead after

three days, then I can believe anything. If I can believe Jesus came back from the dead after three days, then I can believe Enoch lived 365 years. How many 365-year-olds do you know? How much do you have to save for your retirement if you are planning to live 365 years?

How long do you expect to live? The other day I went on-line and I took one of those life expectancy quizzes. It did not take long, just a few minutes. It asked me all kinds of questions. It asked questions about me, my gender and general health. It asked questions about my family history, did my grandparents live beyond the age of 85? Do I exercise? Do I eat my fruits and vegetables? Do I have a pet? (Do pets make your life shorter or longer?) How many miles do I drive in a single year? How much do I drink? What is my education level? Am I easy-going or intense? I answered all the questions and hit the calculate button. According to that life expectancy quiz, I can expect to live to the age of 84. I didn't like that answer, so I looked for another quiz. The Social Security Administration tells me that men my age will live to an average of 84.5 years. That means I have 28 years left. Do you consider 84 a long life? When I was twenty-four I would have answered, yes! Now at fifty-six I am not so sure? How long do you expect to live? Remember, we are all terminal from birth. I hope you are like Enoch and have a long life. If you would like to have a long life, say, "**Amen!**"

Enoch had a full life!

Second, Enoch had a full life! Verses 21 and 22 say, "*When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked faithfully with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters.*" In other words, there was more to Enoch's life than longevity. There was quality. This is the question I always ask myself. Are you living, or are you just waiting to die? What do you still want to do with the time you have left?

Several years ago, I was called by one of the local funeral homes to officiate at a service for a gentleman who had died in the community. I met with the family and they told me about him. Professionally, he had excelled and was respected by his peers. He had been retired for more than twenty years, so I asked, "What did he do in his retirement?" The family grew quiet and looked at his brother. He looked at me and said, "On the first day of his retirement he came home, opened a beer and turned the television set on. That summarized the next twenty years."

Pablo Casals died in 1976 at the age of 96. He had an incredible life. He is generally regarded as the pre-eminent cellist of the first half of the 20th century, and one of the greatest cellists of all time. On his ninetieth birthday, friends came to visit him and found him practicing. They looked at him and said, "Pablo, you are considered one of the greatest cellists to ever have lived. You are ninety years old. Why are you practicing?" He responded by saying, "Because, I think I am making some progress." Are you still making progress in your life? Or are you opening up beer cans as you watch television? Are you living, or are you just waiting to die?

What do you still want to do with your life? Life is one of God's greatest gifts. As far as I can tell, everyone in this room is alive. What do you still want to do? What books do you still want to read? What places do you still want to travel? What new food do you still want to eat? What individuals do you still want to meet? Are you still making progress or are just waiting to die? Enoch had a long life! Enoch had a full life. I hope you are like Enoch. I hope you have a long, full life. If you want to have a long, full life, say, "**Amen!**"

Enoch has eternal life!

Third and finally, we are told Enoch has eternal life! Look at the text one more time with me. Verse 24 says, "*Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.*" I don't know how that happens. I like to think his family received some form of notification. I hate to think they wasted their time placing missing-person posters around town. That verse is so important. It says Enoch did something that you and I will never be able to do. He earned his own salvation. That fact impressed the author of the epistle to the Hebrews so much that Enoch is mentioned in the 11th chapter. Verse 5 in that chapter says, "*By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: He could not be found, because God had taken him away.*" Enoch has Eternal life. I hope you have eternal life. However, there is only one difference between you and Enoch. You can't earn your salvation. It is a great gift.

George Lee is the pastor of the West Austintown United Methodist Church. Years ago, he told this story. I have told it to you in the past, so you may remember it. I am going to tell it again because it makes the point so clear. The story revolves around a woman, who supported her church in every way. She was generous with her time, talent and money. She never missed worship. She served on all the committees, twice. She even worked in the kitchen for every church dinner. As you know, everyone is assigned a certain job in the kitchen. Her job was to peel the potatoes. Through the years, she peeled a countless number of potatoes. She and her potatoes became a standing joke around the church. One day, George got one of those painful phone calls. The lady who had peeled all those potatoes was diagnosed with cancer. Faithfully, George prayed for her as she battled the disease. This time, all the modern medicine didn't work. The woman began to lose ground and the doctors said they had exhausted all options. Shortly before she died, George visited her in the hospital. She was surrounded by her family. George led them in prayer and the woman asked to talk to George alone. When everyone had left, the woman motioned for George to sit next to her. She looked at George and said, "I have to ask you a question. *Have I peeled enough potatoes to get into heaven?*" George said his heart dropped. She had spent her entire life in the church, but she didn't hear a word. We are not saved by peeling potatoes. We are not saved by singing in the choir. We are not saved by teaching Sunday school. We are not saved by never missing the plate. We are not saved by sewing items for the forgotten. We are not saved by preaching weekly. We are not Enoch, who earned his own salvation. We are only saved by the precious blood of Jesus. We are saved by grace

and by grace alone. Only one question really matters. Do you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior?

As your pastor, I hope you have a long life. How long do you expect to live? As your pastor, I hope you have a full life. What do you still want to do with the time you have left? As your pastor, I want you to experience eternal life. It is not going to happen because you peeled potatoes. It is not going to happen by doing anything. It is only going to happen by accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Karl Barth once said, *"Jesus does not give recipes that show the way to God as other teachers of religion do. He is himself the way."* And all of God's people said, **"Amen!"**