

## The Vanishing Man

(Genesis 5, vs 22-24)

It was always said that Enoch was a strange one, even as a child. But I didn't know him then; we first met when he was a young man and the strangeness was developing fast. Albert, our mutual acquaintance, said he was just a Holy Joe, someone who was on the verge of religious mania: that was the only diagnosis needed to explain his strangeness. But he was wrong. Albert was one of many who were unable to see clearly when it came to Enoch. Proper Holy Joes stand on their beliefs like champions. They will defend their territory against anyone who challenges them and some who don't. They will always fight noisily, sometimes aggressively and often not very logically. Passion is their weapon. They are strangers to compassion and reason. This was not Enoch. Yes, he knew in whom he believed and would say so, but mostly he would let his life do the talking. So what made him strange? Some of his fellow believers said it was his ability to live in the opposite spirit. "What on earth," I would ask, "does that mean?"

"Oh it doesn't mean much on earth," they'd reply. "The Spirit he lives with is from God, it's not from earth. The world cannot understand it, that's why he appears strange."

"Oh, I see!" I replied, not really being able to see at all.

Others of their faith would say, "Well he doesn't live here, he lives in Open Heaven, he's got a way into the Kingdom of God. That's why he's a stranger."

"Is that right?" says I, not knowing right from left when it came to the things of God. Yes, I had to admit it, when it came to really seeing Enoch I never seemed to be facing in the right direction, often not even knowing which way was up.

He would talk about having communion with God, walking with Him, all the time, not just on the Sabbath or Holy days. Now I could accept that as a figure of speech, but I don't think our Enoch meant it that way. He actually believed that God was there with him, in him, he would say. And you had to take some notice of this claim because you could see it, or rather it's what you couldn't see that made you think he was onto something, or something, like God, was into him.

Sorry, I'm rambling, but Enoch makes you. Not being able to figure him, you ramble. Let me have another go by describing how strange his attitude could be to religious things. I remember I met him once when I was going to the Temple, taking my offering, as you do, doing my duty to God.

"God can't hear worship that's become a habit, it needs to be heartfelt, free-blown by His Spirit." Now that sort of comment doesn't encourage people to be religious, just the opposite. You know, I felt so miffed that, had I not already paid for my offering, I wouldn't have taken it that morning. If he was supposed to be on God's side, I couldn't see why he said some of these things.

I could go on about what he said. You always sensed he'd revealed something important, but you couldn't quite nail it. I told him that once, hoping it would encourage him to be reasonable, more understandable. Instead of taking it to heart and doing something about it all he said was, "You don't see because you're looking from the wrong place. First get right with God, then you will see clearly."

Another thing. He was clever, he had some brains, did Enoch. Yet he never seemed to make the most of his talents, he never really achieved as he should have. It seemed a waste to me. He didn't look after himself either. Never bothered too much about his appearance, didn't take enough exercise or eat the right things. Yet, I have to admit that, in spite of it all, there must have been something attractive about him

because he gathered quite a following. These were individuals who seemed to be able to see him better than I could. Of course, many people couldn't stand him and said so, like Albert. Me, well I suppose I was somewhere in the middle. I would have liked to have been able to see more clearly but, I suppose, I just didn't have that much time to spare. You also needed to be careful. Seeing like Enoch and his cronies didn't help you get on in the world, it could be a wrong career move.

That's why I'm not sure what happened at the end, not being in his inner or even his outer circle of fellow believers at the time. Those who were nearer than me said that as he drew close to God he gained more of the things of God until he became difficult for even them to see. Eventually he was no more. They say that we lost our grip on eternity when we stopped walking with God: Enoch's got it back. At least I think that's what they say. The problem is, spending so much time with Enoch has made them like him. They've become peculiar too; I often can't see what they're getting at either, well not with any clarity. If Enoch's got eternity back, why is he no more? See what I mean? No, neither do I.

They say I need to take a step in their direction in order to be able to see better. But I don't know. It would mean moving away from the things I've got used to. If I become strange to material things I might vanish too and then where would I be?

I think I'm going to need help with this seeing business, I'm not going to be able to manage it on my own. But where will this help come from, who will show me the way?