Did Enoch Die?

Translation, “Seeing Death,” and the Two Men Scripture Says God Took

A verse-by-verse examination of Hebrews 11:5 and 2 Kings 2:11, testing whether scripture anywhere exempts a son of Adam from death.

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Anchor Passage

> **Hebrews 11:5** *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.*
>
> **Hebrews 11:39** *And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: 11:40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.*

Introduction

A. The Question This Study Has to Settle

Two men in scripture are commonly held to have escaped death altogether. Enoch, of whom Genesis says "he was not; for God took him," and Elijah, who "went up by a whirlwind into heaven." If that reading is correct, then two sons of Adam are walking somewhere in their original bodies at this hour, thousands of years after every other man of their generation returned to the dust — and the sentence pronounced in Eden has two standing exceptions.

That is not a small claim, and it does not sit quietly. It bears directly on what death is, on whether anyone is conscious between death and resurrection, on whether anyone has ever ascended to God's presence ahead of Christ, and on whether Christ is in fact "the first that should rise from the dead." A study of where the dead are cannot leave it unexamined.

The question this study exists to settle is narrower and sharper than "what happened to Enoch." It is this:

Does "not seeing death" mean "not dying"?

Everything turns on that. If the two phrases mean the same thing, Hebrews 11:5 states an exemption from death in so many words and the matter is closed. If scripture itself distinguishes them — if a man can die without "seeing death," or "see death" without dying — then Hebrews 11:5 is describing something other than exemption, and the exemption reading has no text left to stand on.

B. Why It Cannot Be Left Open

A sound rule of reading holds that a position established by many clear, direct verses is not overturned by a handful of unclear ones, and that the unclear ones are held in abeyance rather than forced. That rule is what makes this question urgent rather than optional.

Because the clear verses here are not scarce. That in Adam all die, that death passed upon all men, that Christ is the firstfruits and the first to rise from the dead, that no man hath ascended up to heaven, that the whole company of Hebrews 11 has "received not the promise" and is "not made perfect" apart from us — these are direct statements, many of them, mutually consistent, spread across both testaments and multiple writers.

Against them stands one clause, in one verse, whose meaning depends entirely on what a four-word idiom means. A study that leaves that clause unexamined is not being cautious; it is allowing a single unexamined idiom to overturn a doctrine the rest of scripture states plainly and repeatedly.

C. The Starting Frame, Stated Directly

This study begins from three observations, stated before a single outside source is consulted, because they carry more weight than any commentary could.

First, the historical records themselves claim no exemption. Genesis 5:24 and 2 Kings 2:11 are the actual accounts of what happened to these two men. Neither says either man did not die. Genesis says "he was not; for God took him." Second Kings says a whirlwind carried Elijah up into the sky. The claim of exemption enters scripture nowhere in the narrative of either event — it enters only in a single interpretive clause written centuries later, in Hebrews.

Second, the phrase in that clause is an idiom, and idioms are tested by usage, not by appearance. "See death" occurs four times in all of scripture. A four-word phrase with four occurrences is exactly the kind of expression that has to be resolved by collecting every occurrence and building a composite sense — not by reading the English at face value and stopping.

Third, the writer of Hebrews gives his own verdict on Enoch thirty-four verses later, in the same chapter. Whatever verse 5 means, it cannot mean something verses 39 and 40 deny. The writer is the best interpreter of his own sentence, and he has not left us guessing.

Chapter 1: What the Historical Records Actually Say

A. Genesis 5:24 — "He Was Not; For God Took Him"

The whole Old Testament record of Enoch's departure is one verse, and it is worth reading with nothing added to it:

> **Genesis 5:24** *And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.*

Read what is on the page. It says Enoch walked with God. It says he was not. It says God took him. It does not say he did not die. It does not say he was carried to heaven. It does not say he remains alive. Every one of those is supplied by the reader, not by Moses.

The observation that Genesis 5 breaks its own refrain here is real and worth granting in full. Eight times in that chapter a man's record closes with "and he died" — Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Methuselah, Lamech. Enoch's does not. Something about his departure was unlike the others, and the text marks it deliberately.

But notice precisely what the break establishes and what it does not. It establishes that **the manner** of Enoch's departure was different. It does not establish that **the fact** of his death was different, because the words Moses used instead of "and he died" are words scripture uses of people who are gone, and most often of the dead.

B. "He Was Not" — Scripture's Word for One Who Is Gone

The Hebrew behind "he was not" is *'ayin* (Strong's H369), which Strong's describes as coming "as if from a primitive root meaning to be nothing or not exist; a non-entity." It is a word of absence: scripture's ordinary way of saying that someone who was here is here no longer. Set side by side, the occurrences that show who is meant are these:

> **Job 7:21** *And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity? for now shall I sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be.*

Job uses it of his own coming death, in the same breath as sleeping in the dust.

> **Genesis 37:30** *And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?*
>
> **Genesis 42:36** *And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.*

Reuben says it of Joseph, gone from the pit, and Jacob says it of the same son, whom he believed a wild beast had devoured.

> **Jeremiah 31:15** *Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.*

Matthew quotes this verse of the children slaughtered at Bethlehem (Matthew 2:18), so "they were not" there means they were killed.

> **Lamentations 5:7** *Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities.*
>
> **Psalm 39:13** *O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.*
>
> **Psalm 37:36** *Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.*

That last verse deserves a second look, because it pairs "he was not" with "could not be found," the two ideas that Genesis 5:24 ("he was not") and Hebrews 11:5 ("was not found") between them express of Enoch. In the psalm, the pairing describes a man who "passed away."

One occurrence in that list has to be named, because it keeps the argument honest. In Genesis 42:36 Jacob says "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not," and neither son was dead. Joseph was alive in Egypt, and Simeon was being held there: Joseph **"took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes" (Genesis 42:24)**. So this word does not, by itself, mean "dead." It means *gone*: gone from where he was, and out of reach of the one speaking. What the usage does establish is narrower, and still enough for what this section needs: it is not a word of exaltation or of ascent. In none of these occurrences does "he is not" mean "he was received into glory." It is scripture's plain way of saying that someone who was here can no longer be found, and most often it is said of the dead.

C. "God Took Him" — a Verb Scripture Uses of Death

The second half of the verse fares no better for the exemption reading. "Took" is *laqach* (H3947), which Strong's glosses as "to take (in the widest variety of applications):— accept, bring, buy, carry away, drawn, fetch, get, infold, X many, mingle, place, receive(-ing), reserve, seize, send for, take (away, -ing, up), use, win."

Nothing in that range requires taking a man alive. And scripture uses this very verb of God taking a man **in death**:

> **Ezekiel 24:16** *Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down.*

Two verses later: "at even my wife died." God's "taking away" of Ezekiel's wife was her death.

Elijah himself, under the juniper tree, used the same verb when he asked to die:

> **1 Kings 19:4** *But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.*

Jonah used it the same way: **"Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live" (Jonah 4:3)**.

The same verb also appears where God is said to "receive" a man (Psalm 49:15; 73:24), but those two verses are read both ways: some hear in them the hope of rescue out of the grave, others an echo of Enoch's own case. This study leans on neither.

D. What Genesis Does Not Say

Put the two halves together and the verse reads, in its own vocabulary: *Enoch walked with God; and then he was gone, because God took him.* Both key words are ordinary words of departure and removal,

used again and again of the dead. Neither one, in the occurrences examined above, describes a man lifted alive into God's presence.

What the verse does establish, and this study grants it fully, is that God acted directly and that the departure was sudden and unexplained enough that Moses declined to use the chapter's ordinary formula. Something happened to Enoch that did not happen to Jared or Methuselah. **The question is what — not whether he died, on which Genesis is silent, but how he was taken, on which Genesis is deliberately remarkable.**

Chapter 2: "See Death" — Every Occurrence, Weighed

A. Four Occurrences, and That Is All

The phrase "see death" occurs four times in the whole of scripture. Collected, so that the composite sense comes from every occurrence rather than from one:

> **Psalm 89:48** *What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.*
>
> **Luke 2:26** *And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.*
>
> **John 8:51** *Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.*
>
> **Hebrews 11:5** *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death…*

One of these four is the verse in dispute. The other three are the entire evidence base for what the idiom means.

B. Psalm 89:48 — The Universal Question

The psalmist asks a rhetorical question whose expected answer is *no one*: what man lives and shall not see death? And the second line of the couplet supplies the idiom's own definition by Hebrew parallelism — "shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" Seeing death and going down to the grave are set as the same thing.

This matters for a second reason. The psalm was written many centuries after Enoch. If a standing, known exception to the rule existed — a man who lived and did not see death — the question loses its force entirely. The psalmist asks it as though the answer were obvious and universal.

C. Luke 2:26 — Deferred, Not Cancelled

Simeon was promised that he should not see death *before* he had seen the Lord's Christ. The promise concerned timing, not exemption; Simeon died, as Luke's own account implies when he asks to depart in peace. Here "see death" plainly means a man's own death, and the promise was that it would be postponed.

So far, two occurrences, both meaning ordinary physical death. Taken alone they would settle the question in favor of the traditional reading.

D. John 8:51 — The Verse That Settles the Idiom

The third occurrence is spoken by the Lord himself, and it decides the question:

> **John 8:51** *Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.*

Every believer who has kept his saying in the two thousand years since has nonetheless died physically. Stephen died. James the brother of John died. Peter and Paul died. Every one of them kept his saying, and every one of them was buried.

And the crowd hearing him heard exactly the claim the traditional reading of Hebrews 11:5 makes, and objected to it on exactly those grounds:

> **John 8:52** *Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.*

They understood "never see death" as a claim of bodily exemption from dying — and **they were wrong**. Jesus does not withdraw the statement; he lets it stand in the sense he meant it, and goes on to speak of Abraham rejoicing to see his day.

This is the decisive datum of the whole study, and it must be weighed for exactly what it is. **Scripture's own usage, in the Lord's own mouth, establishes that "shall never see death" does not necessarily mean "shall never physically die."** That is not a rescue reading imported from outside to save a position. It is the identical idiom, in a context where the bodily-exemption reading is demonstrably false, and where scripture itself records people making that mistake and being corrected.

Note also, in the same exchange, that the crowd substitutes "taste of death" for the Lord's "see death" without comment — the two are interchangeable idioms. And scripture uses "taste death" of one who unquestionably died:

> **Hebrews 2:9** *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*

E. What the Lexicons Say: "To Experience"

The word behind "see" in Hebrews 11:5 is *horaō* (Strong's G3708), which Strong's defines as: "properly, to stare at… i.e. to discern clearly (physically or mentally); by extension, to attend to; **by Hebraism, to experience**; passively, to appear."

The Hebrew counterpart, *ra'ah* (H7200), carries the same range: "to see, literally or figuratively… advise self, appear, approve, behold… (make to) enjoy, **have experience**, gaze, take heed…"

This point must be made honestly, because at first hearing it sounds like it favors the traditional reading. If "see" means "experience," then "not see death" sounds like "not experience death," which sounds like exemption.

But that is precisely the question the next chapter answers, and scripture answers it itself: **experience what?** The fact of dying, or the process that ordinarily attends it? Scripture draws that distinction explicitly, using this very construction, about a man who unquestionably died.

Chapter 3: The Construction Itself — "Seeing" What Attends Death

A. Christ Died and Did Not See Corruption

Scripture uses the same "see" construction with another death-word, and in doing so it separates the two things this whole study is trying to distinguish:

> **Acts 2:31** *He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.*
>
> **Psalm 16:10** *For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*

Christ died. That is the foundation of the gospel, stated everywhere, denied nowhere. And Christ "did not see corruption." Both are true at once, without contradiction, because "seeing corruption" names something separable from the fact of death — the process that ordinarily follows it.

B. David Died and Saw Corruption

Peter's argument in Acts 2, and Paul's in Acts 13, both turn on exactly this distinction being real:

> **Acts 13:36** *For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: 13:37 But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.*

Two men, both dead. One saw corruption; one did not. The difference was not whether they died — it was what they underwent afterward.

Compare also:

> **Psalm 49:9** *That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption.*

That verse is the nearest counter-instance, and an honest account has to name it. There the two clauses stand as parallels, so that "see corruption" points simply to going down into the grave (the Hebrew *shachath*, which Strong's defines as "a pit (especially as a trap); figuratively, destruction: corruption, destruction, ditch, grave, pit"). So the phrase does not *always* carry the distinction between dying and what attends dying. It carries it in Acts because Peter and Paul build their arguments on it there, not because the words require it everywhere. That is why this reading is weighed below as a reasonable inference, and why the case does not rest on it alone: the writer's own verdict in Hebrews 11:39-40 and the order of the resurrection carry the weight.

C. What This Establishes

Scripture's own "see + [death-word]" construction marks **what a man undergoes, separably from whether he died**. That is not an inference imposed on the text; it is the grammatical structure Peter and Paul both build a sermon on.

Which means the sentence *"he was translated that he should not see death"* is fully capable of describing a man who died — taken suddenly by God's own hand, spared death's ordinary approach,

decline, deathbed, and grave — without saying anything whatever about exemption from death itself. On this reading, what Enoch was spared is precisely what the verse says he was spared: **seeing** death. Not dying, but meeting it — the long approach every other man in Genesis 5 walked toward for centuries and finally reached.

And this reading accounts for the one feature of Genesis 5:24 the exemption reading rightly presses: why Moses broke his own refrain. Enoch did not die the way the other eight died. God took him, directly and without the process, which is exactly why "and he died" would have been the wrong formula and "he was not; for God took him" was the right one.

D. Bullinger's *Idioma*

E. W. Bullinger's *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* gives the whole category a name, *Idioma*, or Idiom, "the peculiar usage of Words and Phrases," and he makes a point that bears directly on Hebrews: although the New Testament is written in Greek, its writers were Hebrews; "the words are Greek, the thoughts and idioms are Hebrew," and a rendering that ignores that will make "grave mistakes." Strong's says the same of this very verb, *horaō*: "by Hebraism, to experience." Under another figure, Synecdoche, Bullinger glosses the "was not found" of Hebrews 11:5 as meaning, in effect, "was not present." Neither observation settles whether Enoch died. What they say together is that the clause is a Hebrew-style idiom, and that an idiom is settled by its own usage, not by laying the English words side by side.

A sound rule of reading is literal-first: take a passage literally wherever the literal sense can be true to fact. Here the literal-exemption sense cannot be held without contradicting many direct statements elsewhere, and scripture's own usage of the identical phrase (John 8:51) rules out treating it as a plain literal claim about physical death. That is precisely the condition under which a reader is sent to the idiom.

Chapter 4: Hebrews 11:5 in Its Own Chapter

A. The Greek, Stated Plainly

The clause is *tou mē idein thanaton* — a genitive articular infinitive, the ordinary Greek construction for expressing purpose or result. It tells us **what the translation accomplished**: Enoch was translated so as not to see death.

What it does not do is define what "seeing death" is. The construction carries the logic of the sentence; the meaning of the phrase inside it has to come from usage, and usage is what the two chapters before this one establish.

Worth noting as well: the writer had a plain verb available and did not use it. Eight verses later he writes that the others "died" (*apethanon*, 11:13) — the ordinary word, used plainly. Of Enoch he does not write "he did not die." He writes that he was translated so as not to *see* death. The choice of the idiom over the plain verb is the writer's own, in a context where he demonstrably had the plain verb ready to hand.

B. What the Writer Added to the Old Testament Record

Hebrews is quoting the Greek Old Testament here, and the fingerprint is visible: the Hebrew of Genesis 5:24 says Enoch "walked with God," while the Greek says he "pleased God" — and Hebrews 11:5 says "he pleased God," following the Greek.

That matters because the Greek Old Testament's rendering of Genesis 5:24 reads, in substance, *"and Enoch pleased God, and he was not found, because God translated him"* — and contains **no "see death" clause at all**.

So the clause on which the entire exemption doctrine rests appears nowhere in the historical record it interprets, in either language. It is the writer of Hebrews' own summary phrase, added as he retells the event — which is exactly why its sense has to be taken from his usage and his context rather than read as though Moses had written it.

C. Hebrews 11:39–40 — The Writer's Own Verdict on Enoch

This is the argument that settles the matter, and it comes from the same writer, in the same chapter, about the same man:

> **Hebrews 11:39** *And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: 11:40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.*

"These all" here closes over the entire chapter — Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sara, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, the judges, the prophets, and the unnamed sufferers of verses 35 through 38. Its scope is not in dispute; it is the chapter's own summation.

And the verdict on that whole company is twofold: they have **not received the promise**, and they shall **not be made perfect apart from us**.

Now apply it. If Enoch was taken bodily into God's presence in the year 987 from Adam, then Enoch **has** received the promise, and Enoch **is** made perfect — without us, and some three thousand years before us. That is precisely what verse 40 says did not happen, written by the same man who wrote verse 5, about a list on which Enoch's is the second name, right after Abel's.

The exemption reading does not merely strain verse 40. It contradicts it directly, within one chapter.

D. A Note on Hebrews 11:13, Honestly Scoped

A related argument is often made from verse 13, and this study will not lean on it without qualification:

> **Hebrews 11:13** *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

Read as reaching back to verse 5, this would say plainly that Enoch died. But there is a fair counter-reading that has to be granted: verses 14 through 16 go on about those who "seek a country" and "desire a better country, that is, an heavenly," which fits the patriarchs of verses 8 through 12 specifically — Abraham, Sara, Isaac, Jacob, who dwelt in tabernacles in a land of promise as strangers.

On that reading, “these all” in verse 13 is scoped to Abraham’s household, not to the whole preceding list.

This study does not need verse 13. **Verse 39 carries the argument by itself**, and its scope is not open to the same narrowing, because it is the chapter’s own closing summation over everyone named in it.

Naming this honestly matters more than winning the point twice. A study that presses verse 13 harder than its context allows invites a reader to dismiss verse 39 along with it.

E. Hebrews 12:23 — “The Spirits of Just Men Made Perfect”

One verse in the next chapter is sometimes set against everything above, as though the writer, a page later, placed the faithful dead in heaven after all:

> **Hebrews 12:22** *But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, 12:23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,*

If “the spirits of just men made perfect” were the faithful dead, already perfected in God’s presence, then Enoch would be among them, and the case of this study would fall. Three things in the letter itself point another way.

First, “ye are come” (*proselēlythate*) is the same verb, in the same form, as four verses earlier: “ye are *not* come unto the mount that might be touched” (12:18), Mount Sinai. The writer is contrasting two ways of approaching God, under the Law and under the new covenant. It is the verb Hebrews uses for drawing near to God in worship (“come boldly unto the throne of grace,” 4:16), and it describes the believer’s access now, not his arrival at the end of the ages. The same letter says plainly that the city is not yet possessed: **“For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come” (Hebrews 13:14)**.

Second, the writer has already given his verdict on the faithful dead of chapter 11, and it is the verdict this chapter has just examined: “that they without us should not be made perfect” (11:40). The same man cannot, a page later, describe them as perfected in heaven apart from us without contradicting himself.

Third, Hebrews says what “made perfect” means in this letter. The Law “made nothing perfect” (7:19); then **“by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14)**: the same verb (*teleioō*), said of **living** believers, perfected in their standing before God. And the same chapter speaks of “the Father of spirits” (12:9), set against “the fathers of our flesh,” of living people in their relation to God. Read this way, “the spirits of just men made perfect” are the justified, perfected in standing, whom the worshipper now joins in drawing near. A second reading that also keeps faith with 11:40 takes the phrase as naming all the just of every age in the perfected state God guarantees them, when they and we are “made perfect” together at the resurrection. Neither reading places Enoch, or any of the faithful dead, in heaven now, and so Hebrews 12:23 leaves the writer’s verdict on Enoch in 11:39-40 exactly where it stands.

Chapter 5: Elijah, Read the Same Way

A. “Into Heaven” — Which Heaven?

> **2 Kings 2:11** *And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.*

The word is *shamayim* (H8064), which Strong’s defines as “the sky (as aloft; the dual perhaps alluding to **the visible arch in which the clouds move**, as well as to the higher ether where the celestial bodies revolve):— air, X astrologer, heaven(-s).”

The word covers the sky where birds fly and clouds move as readily as it covers God’s own dwelling, and context decides which. Here the context supplies its own answer: the vehicle was a **whirlwind**, which operates in exactly one of those layers — the air where clouds move. The verse says a windstorm carried Elijah up into the sky. It does not say he was carried into the presence of God, and it would have been an odd way to say so.

B. Fifty Men Searched Three Days for His Body

The men who were standing there did not understand what they saw as a man being received into God’s presence:

> **2 Kings 2:16** *And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the Spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send. 2:17 And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, but found him not.*

Fifty men searched three days expecting to recover him from a mountainside or a valley. Elisha, who had watched the whole thing from a few feet away, did not tell them the search was absurd because Elijah had gone to God — he told them not to go, and then relented and let them go.

C. The Spirit Carrying a Man Bodily: an Established Pattern

Their expectation was not superstition. The bodily relocation of a man by the Spirit of the LORD is a documented pattern in scripture, and Obadiah names it to Elijah himself, about Elijah himself:

> **1 Kings 18:12** *And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me…*
>
> **Ezekiel 3:14** *So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.*
>
> **Acts 8:39** *And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.*

Philip was caught away bodily and found at Azotus, still alive, still on earth, still preaching. That is the category the sons of the prophets had in mind, and it is a category scripture supplies.

D. A Writing From Elijah, Years Later

> **2 Chronicles 21:12** *And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah,*

This is addressed to Jehoram king of **Judah**, whose sole reign began after the events of 2 Kings 2. Either Elijah was still alive somewhere on the earth when he wrote it, or the writing was prepared beforehand and delivered later.

This study does not rest on the point, and says so plainly: the second explanation is available and reasonable, and the regnal chronology is itself an inference from the numbers rather than a stated date. But on either explanation, the record is not that of a man received into God's presence and heard from no more. It is corroboration, offered at its own weight.

E. No Man Hath Ascended

And over all of it stands a direct statement, from the Lord himself, spoken nearly nine centuries after Elijah:

> **John 3:13** *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.*
>
> **Acts 2:34** *For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,*

Peter's argument at Pentecost turns on this being true without exception. He proves that Psalm 16 cannot be about David by pointing out that David is dead, buried, his sepulchre still with them, and **not ascended**. If two men had ascended, the argument has a hole in it that any hearer could have named on the spot.

Chapter 6: The Order That Cannot Be Broken

A. Christ the Firstfruits

> **1 Corinthians 15:20** *But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. 15:23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.*
>
> **Acts 26:23** *That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.*
>
> **Colossians 1:18** *And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*
>
> **Revelation 1:5** *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth…*

Four books, one claim, stated four different ways: Christ is **first**. Firstfruits, first to rise, firstborn from the dead, first begotten of the dead. And Colossians gives the reason it has to be so — "that in all things he might have the preeminence."

B. What Two Deathless Men Would Do to That Order

If Enoch and Elijah are alive today in bodies that never died, the order stated in 1 Corinthians 15:23 has two men standing ahead of the firstfruits — one of them by roughly three thousand years. Whatever else may be said about their condition, they would have arrived at deathless life before the one whom scripture repeatedly calls the first to do so.

This is the structural argument, and it is stronger than any argument from a single verse, because it does not depend on the construal of any single verse. It depends on a claim scripture makes four separate times in four separate books.

C. The Honest Complication: "We Shall Not All Sleep"

One argument commonly raised for this conclusion needs qualifying rather than repeating, because scripture itself qualifies it. It is often said simply that **all men must die**, therefore Enoch and Elijah died. But scripture names a class of people who will not die:

> **1 Corinthians 15:51** *Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*
>
> **1 Thessalonians 4:17** *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

Believers alive at the Lord's return will be changed without dying. So bodily removal from this life without death is not impossible in principle — scripture provides for it explicitly. "Hebrews 9:27 says all must die" is therefore an argument with a scriptural answer, and a study that leans on it hands an informed reader an easy reply.

D. Why the Order, Not the Rule, Carries the Argument

What 1 Corinthians 15:51 does not touch is the **order**. Note where that exception falls: at the last trump, at Christ's coming, when "the dead shall be raised incorruptible" — that is, at the resurrection, after the firstfruits, in the sequence verse 23 lays down. Scripture's one named class of people who bypass death bypasses it **in its proper place in the order**, not thousands of years ahead of it.

That is the form of the argument this study holds: not that God could not have taken a man without death, but that scripture places the one occasion of that at the Lord's coming, and places Christ first in the order of all who come to deathless life — and states, in Hebrews 11:39-40, that the entire company of Old Testament faithful, Enoch named among them, is still waiting on us.

Chapter 7: Where Previous Treatments Land

A. The Traditional Reading, Stated at Its Strongest

The traditional reading deserves its best case, not a caricature, because it has held widely for good reasons.

It runs: Hebrews 11:5 says in plain English that Enoch was translated so that he should not see death, and the most natural sense of "not see death" is "not die." Genesis 5 pointedly breaks its own eightfold

“and he died” refrain for this one man, which is exactly what a writer would do to mark an exception. Second Kings narrates Elijah’s departure in vivid physical detail with no death, no burial, and no body. And the plainest reading of a text ought to stand unless it is genuinely impossible.

That case is real, and this study does not pretend that Hebrews 11:5, read alone and at first glance, favors its own conclusion. It does not. The position here rests on the claim that the many clear texts govern the one contested clause, and that the clause’s own idiom, tested by its own usage, does not carry what the traditional reading puts on it.

B. What “Translated” Itself Means

The Greek is *metatithēmi*, which Strong’s defines as “to transfer, i.e. (literally) transport, (by implication) exchange, (reflexively) change sides, or (figuratively) pervert: carry over, change, remove, translate, turn.” There is no sense of ascent anywhere in it. Paul uses it of the Galatians being **“removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ” (Galatians 1:6)**, a transfer of standing. Hebrews uses it of a change from one priesthood to another (Hebrews 7:12). And Stephen uses it of the patriarchs’ bodies being **“carried over into Sychem” (Acts 7:16)**, which is the relocation of **the dead**. The word describes a removal by an outside hand. It says nothing at all about the man remaining alive.

C. A Suggestion That Fails Against Genesis 5’s Own Numbers

It is sometimes suggested that “should not see death” means Enoch never *witnessed* anyone else’s death: that God moved him away so that he would not watch his loved ones die. That suggestion can be tested, because Genesis 5 gives the numbers:

Event	Year from Adam
Adam, at 130, begets Seth (5:3)	130
Seth, at 105, begets Enos (5:6)	235
Enos, at 90, begets Cainan (5:9)	325
Cainan, at 70, begets Mahalaleel (5:12)	395
Mahalaleel, at 65, begets Jared (5:15)	460
Jared, at 162, begets **Enoch** (5:18)	**622**
Adam dies, aged 930 (5:5)	**930**
Enoch is taken, aged 365 (5:23)	**987**

Adam died **fifty-seven years before** Enoch was taken. Enoch was **three hundred and eight years old** when the first man died, and Abel had been murdered centuries before that, the first human death on record. So the suggestion cannot carry the verse, and this study does not use it.

The distinction has to rest on what the idiom means — established from John 8:51 and Acts 2:31 — not on where Enoch was standing.

D. The Two Witnesses Theory, Named and Declined

A further view holds that Enoch and Elijah were preserved alive precisely so they could return as the two witnesses of Revelation 11, who prophesy, are killed, and rise — satisfying “it is appointed unto men once to die” at last.

It is named here rather than ignored, because it is widely held and it is at least an attempt to reconcile the texts. But Revelation 11 does not name them, or anyone; the identification is built entirely on silence plus the prior assumption that two men must still be alive somewhere to be available for the role. That is inference resting on inference, and it cannot bear weight against the direct statements assembled above.

Chapter 8: What This Settles

A. The Settled Reading, Stated Plainly

Enoch and Elijah died, as every son of Adam since the Fall has died. What scripture records of them is not exemption from death but the unique **manner of their departure**: both were taken bodily, suddenly, by God's own direct act, spared death's ordinary approach — its decline, its deathbed, its burial, and its grave.

Genesis 5:24 and 2 Kings 2:11, the actual historical records, never claim either man escaped death. They say "he was not; for God took him" (two expressions scripture uses elsewhere of people who are gone, and most often of the dead) and "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven," the sky where whirlwinds move, in a book that then records fifty men searching three days for his body.

Hebrews 11:5's "that he should not see death" uses an idiom the Lord himself applies to people who do physically die (John 8:51-52), in a construction scripture itself uses of One who genuinely died and yet did not "see" what ordinarily attends death (Acts 2:31; 13:36-37). And the writer of Hebrews closes that same chapter by placing Enoch among those who have "received not the promise" and shall not "be made perfect" apart from us (11:39-40).

No man has ascended up to heaven but the Son of man (John 3:13). Christ is the firstfruits, the first that should rise from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23; Acts 26:23; Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5). The two men God took are not exceptions to that order. They are waiting in it, with Abraham and Moses and David and every other name in Hebrews 11, for the same resurrection and the same day.

B. Weighing It

Every argument in this study is given one of five weights, so that the reader can see how much rests on each. A **direct statement** is scripture saying it in so many words, leaving only the meaning of the words in question. A **strong inference** follows closely from what scripture says, and the alternative has to strain against the text. A **reasonable inference** is the more natural reading, though an honest, careful reader can take it otherwise. **Corroboration only** is consistent with this position but roughly as consistent with the opposite one: it may be stated, but not leaned on. **Neutral** means commonly cited by one side or the other and settles nothing.

Argument	Weight	What the other reading fairly answers
Genesis 5:24 and 2 Kings 2:11 never say either man did not die	Direct statement, of what the records say and omit	The records are silent on death either way; the exemption reading says silence plus Hebrews 11:5 is enough.
“He was not” (’ayin) is scripture’s ordinary word for one who is gone	Corroboration only	It is also used of Joseph and Simeon, who were alive (Genesis 42:36), so it cannot show death by itself.
“God took him” (laqach) has a very wide range, including death (Ezekiel 24:16; 1 Kings 19:4; Jonah 4:3)	Corroboration only	A wide range cannot prove exemption, but neither can it prove death. Psalm 49:15 and 73:24 are read both ways.
Psalm 89:48’s rhetorical question implies no one is known to have escaped death	Corroboration only	A rhetorical question speaks in generalities, and one known exception need not break it.
“Shall never see death” (John 8:51) does not necessarily mean “never physically die”	Strong inference	The Lord may be speaking of a deeper death, so the verse shows the idiom can reach beyond the body, not that Hebrews 11:5 does.
“See” plus a death-word can separate what a man undergoes from whether he died (Acts 2:31; 13:36-37)	Reasonable inference	Psalm 49:9 uses “see corruption” simply for the grave, so the writer of Hebrews may have meant plain “not die.”
“Translated” (metatithēmi) carries no sense of ascent and is used of the dead (Acts 7:16)	Reasonable inference	A word of transfer can still describe a transfer of the living.
Hebrews 11:39-40 places Enoch among those who have not received the promise and are not made perfect without us	Strong inference	“The promise” might be the Messiah’s coming, and Enoch could be in God’s presence yet not perfected. That answer works only if a man can be in God’s presence before the resurrection, which is the very question this study is examining.
Hebrews 12:23’s “spirits of just men made perfect” does not place Enoch or the faithful dead in heaven now	Strong inference	Many commentators take the phrase of the departed, and the list seems to name a group distinct from “the church of the firstborn”; neither point overcomes 11:40, a page earlier.
Hebrews 11:13 (“these all died in faith”) reaches back to Enoch	Neutral; not used here	The verse may be scoped to Abraham’s household only.
Elijah’s “heaven” (shamayim) is the sky, from the whirlwind	Reasonable inference	The word also means God’s dwelling, and a chariot of fire can be read either way.

Fifty men searched three days for Elijah's body	Corroboration only	Elisha first said "Ye shall not send," which may show he knew where Elijah had gone.
The Spirit carrying men bodily elsewhere (1 Kings 18:12; Ezekiel 3:14; Acts 8:39)	Corroboration only	It shows the category exists; it does not show Elijah's case belongs to it.
A writing from Elijah reaches Jehoram of Judah (2 Chronicles 21:12)	Corroboration only	It may have been written beforehand and delivered later, and the chronology is itself inferred.
No man has ascended to heaven (John 3:13; Acts 2:34)	Strong inference	John 3:13 is spoken about who has gone up and returned with heavenly knowledge, and Acts 2:34 is about David alone.
Christ is the firstfruits and first to rise, so no one arrives at deathless life before him (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23; Acts 26:23; Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5)	Direct statement that Christ is first to rise; reasonable inference that this excludes anyone earlier	"First to rise from the dead" is not word for word "first to be deathless," and 1 Corinthians 15:51 shows a change without death is possible.
The two witnesses of Revelation 11 are Enoch and Elijah	Neutral; declined	Revelation 11 names no one.
Enoch and Elijah died and are waiting for the resurrection with everyone else	Strong inference, cumulative	Hebrews 11:5, read alone and at first glance, favors exemption.

What would change this conclusion. Three findings would overturn it, and this study has found none of them in the text. The first is a passage saying in so many words that either man is alive at this hour. The second is a demonstration that "these all" in Hebrews 11:39 was meant to leave Enoch out. The third is a text placing the deathless change of 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 anywhere before the last trump for any man but Christ. A reader who wants to test this study can go looking for any of the three.

C. The Residual Difficulty, Named Honestly

One thing should not be smoothed over. Hebrews 11:5, taken by itself and read for the first time, does favor the exemption reading. That is why the traditional position has held so widely and among careful readers. This study does not claim otherwise, and it does not claim that its own reading is the first sense an honest reader would reach.

What it claims is narrower: that the clause is an idiom; that scripture's own use of that idiom elsewhere rules out treating it as a plain statement about physical death; that the construction it sits in is one scripture elsewhere uses to distinguish dying from what attends dying; and that the writer of that clause settles his own meaning thirty-four verses later. On the rule that the great weight of clear verses governs the few unclear ones, that is where the question lands.

Sources Consulted

Scripture. King James Version throughout. The four occurrences of "see death," and the occurrences of "see corruption," "taste death," and "he is not," were collected by searching the full KJV text rather than a topical list, so that the sense of each phrase is built from every place it is used.

Strong's Hebrew and Greek dictionaries supplied the definitions of *'ayin* (H369), *laqach* (H3947), *ra'ah* (H7200), *shachath* (H7845), *shamayim* (H8064), *horaō* (G3708), *metatithēmi* (G3346), and *teleioō* (G5048).

E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (1898, public domain) supplied the figure *Idioma* and his gloss on Hebrews 11:5's "was not found" (under Synecdoche). It is used as a linguistic tool without adopting his doctrinal conclusions.

The Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) rendering of Genesis 5:24 is cited in Chapter 4 for its "pleased God" wording, which Hebrews follows, and for having no "see death" clause. This is a textual observation about the Greek Old Testament tradition, not a claim about the Hebrew original.

Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, vol. 4 (1874), on Hebrews 12:22-24, was consulted for Chapter 4, §E; his own reading of "the spirits of just men made perfect" as the conscious departed is weighed there and not adopted.

Victor Paul Wierwille, *Are the Dead Alive Now?* (American Christian Press, 1971) was consulted for background orientation on the range of scriptures this subject raises; it is cited as a source only.

Genesis 5 chronology. The year-from-Adam figures in Chapter 7 are arithmetic from the genealogy's own numbers (Genesis 5:3, 5, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 23), not interpretation.

None of these sources carries scriptural weight in this study; each is background and corroboration only. Every doctrinal claim here has been tested directly against the text of scripture itself.