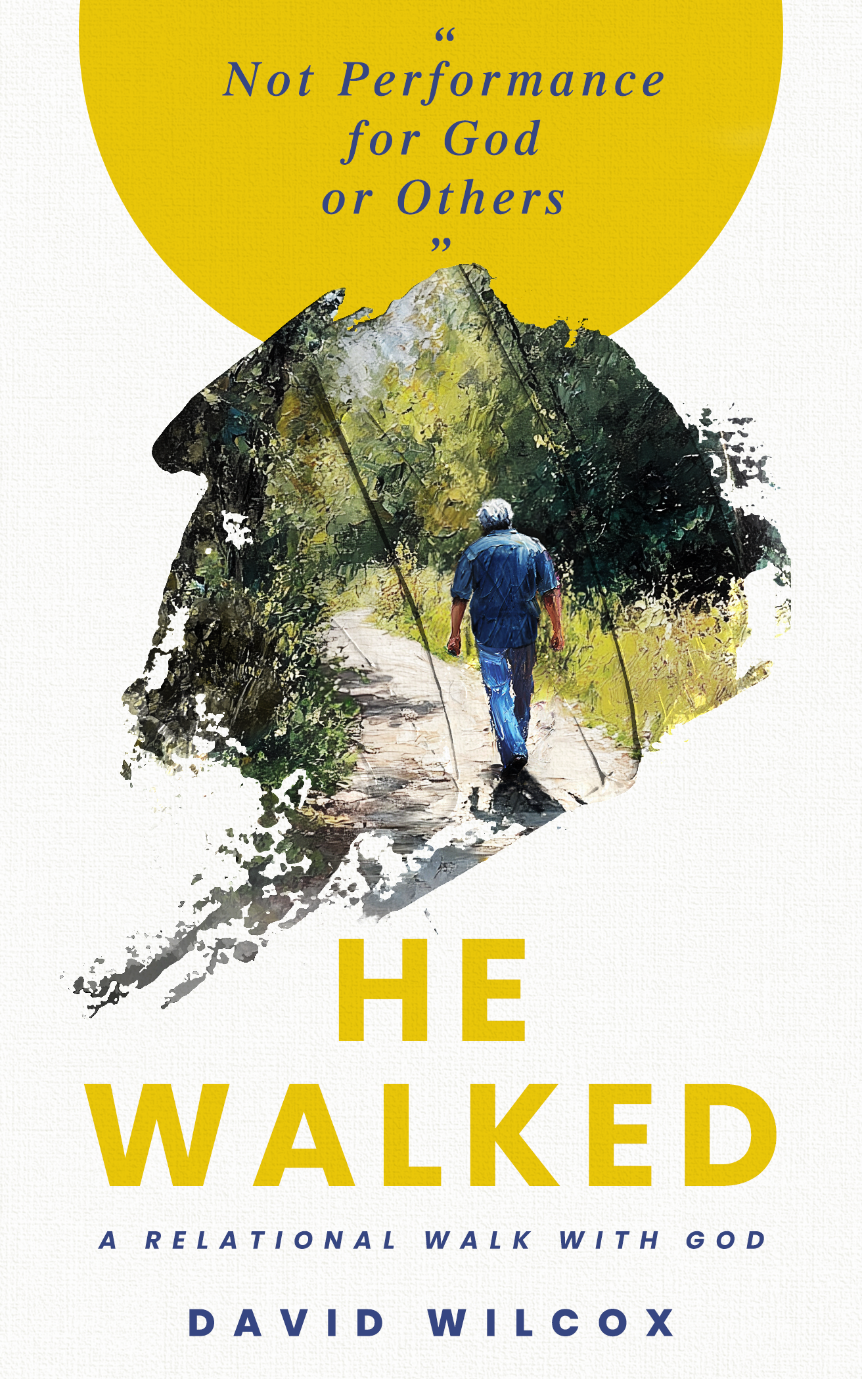
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Enoch walked with God for three hundred years. The spiritual reality of walking with God may be experienced by believers today as it was many generations ago in Enoch’s day.

Dave Wilcox wrote a doctoral dissertation for Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas, and was awarded the Doctor of Ministry degree in 2000.

This book illustrates the experience of one who sincerely desired to walk with God. As a devotional novel, it suggests real-life lessons for readers.

The account is a work of fiction based on Biblical truths. HE walked . . . is intended for Believers in the Lord, Jesus Christ. Believers are those who have received the Gift of Eternal-life Salvation and are part of the Family of God.

We are walkers together. One who walks with God knows God’s revealed will and acts on it in such a way as to enter into a strengthening relationship with God Himself.

Find encouragement in your walk with God by contacting Dave at [walkerstogetherwithgod@gmail.com](mailto:walkerstogetherwithgod@gmail.com)

Table of Contents

1 Desire - what I want

2 People - my world

3 Path - the road I travel

4 Journey - one step at a time

5 Altars - all about obedience

6 Choice - I will

7 Stand - belief determines behavior

8 Evil - deeds of ungodliness

9 Resistance - many follow sensualities

10 Faithfulness - found faithful

11 Water - glory of God

12 Fences - essential for protection

13 Home - a safe place

14 Division - inevitable

15 Peace - as much as lies in you

16 Trouble - you will have trouble

17 Festival - sons of God

18 Blood - source of life

19 Alone - depend on God alone

20 Attack - they will hate you

21 Escape - God is here now

22 Help - defeat sin

23 Darkness -of the soul

24 Reflection - it takes time

25 Contentment - I can learn

26 Relationships - with God and others

27 Hope - three remain, faith, hope, love

28 Reality - Thy Word is truth

29 Forward - press toward the mark

30 Blessing - every good gift

31 Place - the gathering

32 Purpose - plans for you

33 Ambush - count it all joy

34 Humility - blest are those

35 Learn - lifelong endeavor

36 Fear - enemy of faith

37 Guilt - enemy of faith

38 Anger - enemy of faith

39 Death - result of sin

40 Love - now abides

41 Life - one source for all

42 Direction - He will direct

43 Witness - you shall be

44 Rejection - expect it

45 Care - intimacy grows

46 Fellowship - one another

47 Preach - every walker

48 Separation - sadness

49 Focus - no distraction

50 Rest - God’s promise

51 Shock - the narrow way

52 Grace - steadfast love

53 Devoted - intimacy

54 Abide - in Christ alone

55 Character - walking worthy

56 Victory - celebration

57 Mercy - act responsibly

58 Respect - perspectives

59 Wisdom - walking together

60 Worship - proper response

61 Thanksgiving - distinctively God’s

62 Appreciation - language of love

63 Intimacy - maturity in Christ

64 Honor - love as God loves

65 Taken - with the Lord forever

PREFACE

Enoch walked with God for three hundred years. How could he do this in a time before Noah’s Flood when the actions and imaginations of every person’s heart were evil?

Is Enoch’s life experience different from ours?

God chooses to walk with Believers today just as He longed to be with men and women who followed Him eight hundred years after creation

and a thousand years before Noah’s flood.

Noah walked with God too.

What does it look like when a person takes this kind of walk? Genesis 5:21-24

The Lessons in this devotional novel are for Believers who have received eternal-life salvation by faith alone in the person and work of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. They demonstrate the necessity of a relational walk with God rather than a performance-based walk.

God desires that we love him with our heart, mind, and soul. This relationship with the one and only, eternal God.

Chapter 1 DESIRE

He sleeps peacefully beside a vernal pool surrounded by majestic trees on a grassy slope. Weather patterns are interesting where he and his wife live. No storms. Perfect humidity. Gentle breezes waft fragrant perfumes.

The man lies still after an intense night of loving embrace. Waking comes slowly as one rouses from a perfect sleep.

They had talked long into the night, with child-like trust. A fire of faith had almost grown cold. Both had reached out to one another and their creator, ‘We desire to have a child.’

Too many years had passed. Friends all around them had daughters and sons. Would God hear their prayer? They committed their bodies to him.

Enoch slips away from the warmth, dives headfirst into the waters, then stands still as the ripples settle.

“Lord, I give my life to you. May you do as you wish? Help me to know you. I want to please you from this day forward.”

He speaks from his heart but is startled when words come out of his mouth.

Orna stirs, admires his perfect body, and praises God with a smile as she relaxes with a peace that only God gives. Together they dress under the sheltering arms of their tree now more than seven centuries of age.

It is an accepted truth. God created with a word everything that was created: their amazing bodies, the stars of the universe, and all these towering trees. It was direct and immediate. Many say he did it in six days.

Men live long and fast. Forests, rivers, earth, and stars beckon adventurous minds and reward them with God-given wisdom. They see breath in lions, lambs, cows, wolves, and rabbits. Babies possess the blood passed on from mother to child which spoke of an essential element of life.

Their forefathers were created in the image of God. Enoch and Orna still bear his image even though they were conceived in sin.

Family love gives Enoch and one of his many cousins, Haran, countless adventures. They pack up needed supplies and live off the land for weeks in the forests. They love each other and work together in their well-known shop as they provide for their households. Such bonds are not easily broken. Nothing can ever separate them.

Chapter 2 PEOPLE

The town wakes rapidly. Merchants set up shops. Builders, masons, and metal smiths labor. Field workers tear away at pesky weeds. Music drifts from fine houses. Women and children dance in the streets.

Enoch has developed the art of the javelin. As violence increases, such weapons bring security and peace. More men are using them to kill birds, small animals, and fish for food. Enoch’s darts are the best. He can throw them straight and far. His fame spreads.

His steady hands hone a metal tip at his worktable. Well-formed muscles flexing on sun-darkened skin still carry the perfections that God created so many years before his time. He and Orna have work, food, privacy, and each other.

With a twinkle in his eye, a smile curls upward on his lips. Like everyone else they eat and drink and see others marry and have children. Everyone believes in the joining of one woman and one man to become one flesh. God told them this was the way he had designed their bodies and souls in creation.

As Enoch steps back admiring a finished piece in his hands his thoughts take control.

“This is an instrument of death. Should I encourage people to kill?”

He knows that his best tools are the darts, often used to offer a sacrifice of the lamb that God had asked them to bring.

By faith, with child-like obedience many people pour out the blood. The best tool takes the life of the best lamb. Parts are burned. Flesh is shared. They do it with trust believing this is the only way they can approach a holy God.

“People are using my instruments to kill people.”

Hatred and violence grow and fester like the gash on his side.

Enoch had hurt himself just a few days before when he had gone with Haran to gather branches for new weapons. The wound is healing slowly. He is not sure if their growing disagreement about the altar is healing at all.

The one he loved sees it first.

“There must be more to life than we are experiencing. Look at the street. People walk by as if they are in control of their destiny.”

She speaks slowly as they share a simple piece of bread with cheese and wine. Self-made men and prancing women surround them. There is no thought of God, most live for the desires of the flesh. The altar is not what it had been.

Haran brings hardwood branches to the shop and drops them in a bin as the sun stretches toward the western sky.

“Don’t miss the festival this time like you did a month ago.”

“We are going toward the setting sun for a few days and will not come.”

Enoch carefully answers his cousin.

How long could they make excuses?

Everyone must come to the festival. They are essential in the community. Business depends on them. Relationships are strengthened.

If Enoch and Orna tell the truth, they would say the gatherings which are so important to everyone else make them feel uneasy.

Chapter 3 PATH

Adam lives near the springs of water that flow out of the forbidden lands. The general population had moved toward the new worlds of the rising sun. These burgeoning settlements promise prosperity. Many say,

“There is a curse on those who linger near the place of our ancestors.”

Enoch and Orna were both born in the largest city of the river that flowed through these settlements. Their people had prospered and the family which they trace back to Seth, the thirdborn son of Adam, continued to protect one another. They enjoy each other and find much peace in strengthening relationships.

Enoch’s father, Jared, had claimed prime land on the outskirts of town. It borders the river upstream and boasts great groves of ancient trees. They live happily on the edge of the masses, which now number more than several million according to the best estimates.

Younger generations of their extended family continually find themselves drawn into the growing excitement of the community. It is the festival. No one directs them. These monthly celebrations evolved quickly in recent years and have become an essential part of city life.

Orna supports Enoch’s desire to avoid such powerful but questionable attractions. When the moon began to decline many days ago, she listened with great understanding.

“Next cycle of the moon would you be willing to avoid the swarming crowd and follow the path upstream?”

No one ever goes upstream—group pressure. Fear grips the majority, even family members of Enoch’s family say, ”Old stories! Who needs them?”

Influential leaders of the city say it so often most people accept it as fact.

Enoch does not! Just as he and Haran explored the bounties of God’s creation downstream, he and Orna could forge paths upstream. Enoch is willing to look into the old ways wherever that may lead him.

“Let me tell you, if you wish to be in step with the rest of us, you must participate in the community festivals each time they come around.”

Enoch measures his words carefully each time his cousin mentions the festival.

They are fun—lots of food, feasting, and the best wines. God has been good, and all ages gayly celebrate with performances of human excellence, rhythmic music, and sacrifices of worship to God. As the darkness closes in, they slumber in exhausted lustful repose.

Then the great men begin to come among them. How could anyone keep their eyes off them?

These giants among men stand in majesty, arrogantly boasting about their masculine perfections; they capture the attention of every woman and child. New wisdom breaks bondage to old restraints.

“Yes!”

The man on the street is saying.

“God created us the way we are, and he is honored when we satisfy our deepest most genuine human desires.”

It is difficult not to become enraptured with them physically and spiritually. The greatest prize is when one of their daughters is chosen for marriage to these awesome ones. People begin to feel like they have never felt before. There is new freedom. Life is worth living. Food tastes better. Sleep brings more peace. Wine never satisfies like this.

“God is pleased!”

Because Orna and Enoch have no children, they quietly protect their own beliefs and do not feel threatened by false teaching. But they know these men take people away from God. When the festival arrives, the one that Haran warned them not to miss, they walk in the opposite direction. Enoch asks.

“Why is the friend of my youth going the way of the people?”

During their early years, they acted alike, thought alike, swam, fished, climbed, hiked, and ate with one mind. Physical sweat and grime elevated their flesh and blood—they were not only cousins, but their friendship was also inviolable.

Now they are choosing different paths.

Chapter 4 JOURNEY

Sparkling water refreshes their spirits as it cleanses the flesh. Waterfowl with iridescent green and blue bodies paddle near the edges of the mighty Euphrates River.

It runs slow. A shiny walleye breaks the surface stirring eddies of ripples which eventually join the steady flow toward their home downstream.

Enoch and Orna walk upstream. Fish swish brightly colored tails near the bank. They eat, rest, and relish quiet moments away from the grasping greediness of the marketplace where violence increases at a frightening pace.

They are leaving new fears behind and feel as if this journey might take them to the source of life. There is something about the water—its clarity, even its taste. The few who still sacrifice at the altars as God had instructed believe it has a value for health and peace. They say,

“That is why our old ones live well over eight hundred years on earth.”

“Nokh, could we build an altar and give one of the best calves to the Lord when we return home?”

Enoch’s wife started calling him Nokh some time ago. It is a term of endearment for her. He likes it.

Her desire to look into the old ways is a great blessing. At times in the past, he thought she doubted because it caused much unrest and dissension in the community; and even their own families who were divided over the issue. The lack of unity makes her sad.

The questions she has about bringing babies into this wildly wicked world still trouble her but now for the first time, Orna knows she is with a child. The effort of walking on the long journey wearies her. She thinks it is just an upset stomach; they had eaten fresh greens with oil, salt, and cured olives the night before.

This is different. Growing excitement of possibilities and realization cause her heart to leap; this with added light-headedness and troublesome nausea experienced each morning convinces her.

Orna also experiences a growing and hope-filled longing for God. Joining the few who share the old stories causes her renewed interest in the altar as the way to have fellowship with their creator God.

She asks,  
“Do you think we are coming closer to God?”

Enoch agrees. They see an intensity of light; white light filters through the atmosphere with hues of brilliant color; even the air they breathe invigorates. Trees stand as sentinels directing their steps toward mysterious beings.

As they contact some of their upriver relatives a heightened sense of loving apartness fills each of their hearts. Simple living speaks peace to the weary couple.

The uncluttered lives of working the ground, herding sheep, birthing babies, sacrificing lambs, and feasting as peaceful families give them goodness and joy.

One evening as Nokh and Orna floated together in the privacy of a crystal pool, he asks,

“What did the older mother among our new friends mean last night when she spoke to you? I heard her say,” ‘Are you ready to give birth to the one whose coming announces judgment?’

“I wanted to tell you first; I am with child.”

Orna’s voice breaks as she adds, “Is it possible the older woman has received a word from God?”

Life would never be the same for Enoch. Joy envelopes every endeavor—meals, work, relationships, sleep, distant relatives, and even the sacrifice takes on new meaning. He realizes that everyday routines of life impact worship.

So many years ago God had taught Adam to walk and talk with him in the cool of the day. A few of his descendants still practice the old ways even though they would not see God face to face as Adam did.

Enoch likes it. Mosquitoes still swarm. Children cry. Animals prowl and roar in the night. Man kills man. Neighbors argue.

Enoch’s old and esteemed family demonstrates there is a way to overcome sin’s curse by walking with God in this evil world.

Hope stirs in Orna’s womb as Nokh ponders the power of truth.

Chapter 5 ALTARS

The altar honors God. It honors his holiness. God’s love supports the substitution of blood for sin. Orna does not fully understand why but knows that God had asked them to approach him this way.

It shows obedience and their dependence on him. They cheerfully give God the first and the best. On this journey, Enoch and Orna begin to understand the significance of blood.

“Water and blood,” they said, That’s how we keep the faith of our ancestors alive in our hearts.”

Warming fires draw tired bodies after a day of toil and travel. Fathers tell the old stories as younger ones clean up after the evening meal. Nokh and his wife feel this welcoming warmth. Kids sit on laps, loved ones hug, and the fire keeps the bugs and fiercer animals at a distance.

Evening light fades. Minds finally relax with peace from God. An ancient one says,

“The name Enoch means – Dedicated to God!”

If anyone should keep the faith, Enoch should. Once, long ago, he knew it but had now forgotten more things than he wished to admit.

This older, wiser family loves to talk about God and life; what is God like; why sin enters the world; and how sin is destroying everything. They accept the intense labor for food and survival. Their women gladly brave the pain of childbirth. They see hope beyond death.

Death has become a cold reality: Animals tear one another apart and eat the bloody flesh. Hatred, anger, and pride cause unspeakable things among all peoples.

Human conscience shouts! Death and Sin reign!

“Will the entire world be destroyed because of this violence and selfishness among us?”

Love conquers when individuals believe. They enjoy a relationship with God if they keep the altars in the way God has instructed: Not Cain who tried to prove that his way was better than God’s.

Everyone speaks openly of their belief as the fire shifts down to glowing embers. But where is the missing generation, Nokh thinks,

“Where are the people who bear children?’

Orna notices so many aged and their few children birthed in older years but the vital, thriving ones have gone away.

“They go the way of all flesh. Bigger towns pull them toward the excitement and prosperity of another world: the world of fleshly desires and progressive ideas.”

A great-grandmother whispers as tears well up in her eyes.

The masses of people do not believe the truth. They worship creation – not the Creator. Things are more important than attitudes of the heart. Buying and selling, making stuff for a living, textiles, production, musical and dramatic arts, planting, and harvesting eventually led to bondage and even slavery.

Then there are enchantments. The sons of God tell stories that should never leave the lips of man or woman.

Chapter 6 CHOICE

Time levels things. Reasons vary. People gravitate toward the center of their world and shut out remembrance. The everlasting present focuses on self-gratification in the pleasures or anxieties of the moment.

Those who choose to keep the ugliness, erase the past with cynicism. Then some genuinely lay aside sins of the past.

The first family speaks in somber, hushed tones about Adam, the first man. Enoch and Orna have returned to their home without meeting Adam face to face. That was months ago now. The journey is a distant memory as life takes on typical routines.

Nokh never tires of sitting in the cool of the day with family and friends. Eyes often land on dancing flames when not fixed with wonder upon the magnificence of the starry sky. These are the times when Enoch cannot forget the extraordinary events of the journey upriver.

Special times call for Sacrifice. The Altar, a place of obedience and dedication, still draws many toward God.

This time just the two of them come to worship. The flame sputters out and she whispers with what sounds like distress in her voice:

“Nokh, thank you! I am happy you do this. Now I am ready to present our baby to God.”

Enoch replies,

“May it be tonight!”

The time has come. Birthing babies is not easy. God had told them it would be one of the hardest labors any woman would face. They accept God’s proclamation. Sin has changed so many things. Can they escape the curse?

Hours later the rising sun chases the stars away. Darkness had permeated the distress of the long night.

Nokh cradles the boy baby in his strong arms. With one finger he traces the face with its perfect features: Dark eyes reach inside his soul.

He praises God for the miracle of life. Three beautiful people cuddle. Their flesh pulses with soft breath. Methuselah has been born. Refreshing waters bathe their tired bodies. They understand the grace of each moment. God is good!

Orna my decision is final,

“I will walk with God!”

At the next community festival, succulent meats and savory vegetables satisfy the cravings of every celebrant. Only the best sacrifice is enough for a day like this. The sweet wine of the new harvest is fragrant on their breath.

The lamb’s blood pours out before God. A meal shared builds a relationship with one another. Salt adds grace to the feast. It stands for promises made to others.

Flames of the altar leap as Enoch holds his baby high, invoking God’s blessing. With thanksgiving he loudly announces,

“His name is Methuselah: the man of the javelin!”

Then he prays for all to hear.

“O Lord my God, I give my life to you. I will walk with you from this day forward. Now please, may Methuselah grow in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man.”

Haran silently turns away as others dance with joy.

Core belief systems divide families. Religion, politics faith or unbelief, ethics, and even personal preferences cause wounds that heal slowly. Scars often remain for years yet lived.

Chapter 7 STAND

The choice is made:

“I will walk with God!”

He braces himself for the stares and whispers.

“I will pay the price!”

Some say God has revealed that in less than a thousand years:

“Judgment will surely come!”

The javelin has been thrown. An end will come. It seems that peace has been ripped from the family. Joy flees with Haran’s followers.

Nokh’s wife Orna had warned:

“It will come to a sad separation.”

He knows there is no other way.

“I must take my stand for God. I can no longer go along with their perverse worship.”

All that is left for both of them is a pile of crushed and broken memories. Dreams fade like empty wineskins.

Friendships are broken. Haran does not look back. Happy adventures and expeditions into the forests sourcing raw materials for darts, spears, and javelins are put on hold.

“Could Haran so easily forget the days they enjoyed gathering and carving?”

Together they had learned the craft well. The search for perfect trees, weathered and strong, resulted in metal-like tools. Meticulously formed metal tips struck to the heart for the kill.

This price is more than Enoch could bear. He almost turns aside.

“I will still search for knowledge of God!”

Nokh snuggles quietly near his wife and infant son. Muscular arms hold them close. Their quiet breathing begs the question:

“Will Orna have the strength to stand with him? How can I support them if my work brings no return? Will God show the way?”

Because of man’s sinful condition, evil spreads faster than righteousness. Ungodliness takes control. It has a mind of its own. Lust does that. It presses hard and leaves the mind behind.

Enoch questions himself about making darts and spears. Men are using them to destroy life. Guilt gradually causes his bright eyes to dim.

The paradox of the altar puzzles people who take the time to think about it. Orna and Nokh doubt just like the others. Quickly they agree with each other,

“We will obey! We will fight to preserve the sanctity of the altar.”

With child-like faith, they respond to the revealed will of God. Enoch says,

“This is the step we will take today. Tomorrow’s challenges we will entrust to God.”

Chapter 8 EVIL

Khman comes with Haran to the javelin shop and warns,

“You will either come to the festival this month, or you cannot stay here. We will drive you out into the forest. You are bringing the wrath of God down upon us. Repent or go!”

This man’s word is law. He is a leader among men. His imposing stature and eloquent voice make argument impossible. Community prosperity under his capable management causes Nokh and his wife to waver.

She reminds him,

“God made us to enjoy pleasures and relationships. When it feels so good, how can it be wrong?”

Enoch does not have a ready answer.

It makes sense. All of God’s creation brings purposeful fulfillment, yes even pleasure. Male and female in marriage with its companionship and intimacy satisfy all who follow God.

Foods with its textures, flavors, and combinations excite the God-given palate. The music of nature and the human voice along with appropriate percussion provide needed rhythm and harmony.

Visual color and movement through the amazing eye-gate entice every living being to enjoy God’s good creation. It is very good!

Demonstrations of muscular achievement arouse passion to excel and celebrate. They are told,

“That is how we can know true love for God. Our creator reveals himself best in human form.”

Khman himself has repeatedly proclaimed,

“You are created in his image as a testament to his power and glory.”

They sincerely believe that’s how a person could know true love. This is the way to God. To know God one has to accept the revelation in oneself.

The sons of God teach,

“God is our creator to serve us; to make our lives full of meaning. We please him when we rise to our full potential.”

The old ones like Adam and his grandson Enosh are rejected without all doubt. Progress leaves them far behind.

It is commonly accepted,

“Traditionalists are not only difficult but have become dangerous because they ignore the progress of our enlightened humanity.”

Those out of step with the world are thought to have lost their minds. Followers of the new normal call out old ones who pervert justice.

The faithful moon dictates community behavior. When it is at its zenith in the night-time sky passions flare. People begin to take on animal-like characteristics.

The ancients say,

“People are not animals!”

Progressives counter,

“Animals have blood too. God wants blood. We will give it to him. We kill in the name of the Lord. Bloody sensuality praises him. Our great feasts, our intoxicating drinks promote glory.”

“If God asks for a little, we will give him a lot.”

The wickedest among the people began to practice things forbidden. Enlightened persons worship all of creation.

They preach,

“The sun and stars are worthy of praise. Nature itself teaches us to cooperate. The human body is our god.”

Ungodly ones who worship a false deity began to believe in a grotesque distortion of God certainly influenced by Satan himself. This inevitable conclusion blossoms among those who eagerly add false teachings to the revealed will of God.

Chapter 9 RESISTANCE

Everywhere Nokh and Orna turn they find resistance. However, despite rejection because of their beliefs, Methuselah grows in wisdom and stature. He brings great honor to the family as a lad. All agree his father’s prayer of blessing has made a difference in his life.

Brothers, sisters, and even more cousins are added to the clan as parents obey God’s command to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

The darts and javelins Nokh makes help them survive in their increasingly isolated world. Fish and fowl, herbs, and leafy greens along with roots become standard fare for meals.

Exclusion from community life shrouds their home with danger. Messengers from Khman and his band of followers appear often. The tallest one who stretches his perfectly sculpted body speaks,

“You must listen for the last time. Join us or leave!”

He holds one of Enoch’s spears aloft in a menacing manner and snarls. Children cry. They sense turmoil and animosity among adults. Orna still wonders,

“Have we made the best decision?”

Time passes! Little ones become young adults. The age of romance begins.

Flirty and sensual girls parade in front of prosperous homes tempting stupid boys. New philosophies and so-called spiritual advances of enlightenment surround everyone in this new world. Enoch feels helpless. His heart aches seeing his flesh and blood slowly being drawn into this web of trickery and wickedness.

The noble sons of God take great delight in enticing any woman, sometimes groups of them all at once, with their physical allures and promises of pleasure. They repeat often,

“Life is good! God wants us to be happy.”

But Enoch wonders,

“Where is God? I have tried so hard. Is this really what the Lord wants?”

The thing that keeps him on the right path is his determination to do the one thing God has asked,

“Bring the sacrifice to the altar.”

Abel, an ancestor on his father’s side, had died long ago because of the altar.

“Will it be the death of me?  Since God wants me to come to him in this way, I will continue to come to the altar.”

The meal of the offering is a blessing. Yes, the family feels closer to God and one another when they worship and share the sacred meat. The blood belongs to God. As it pours out and trickles down the side of the altar, they renew their dedication to their creator. They burn fat, entrails, and soft bony things to ash. The hide supplies coverings just as the Lord had instructed.

It is the will of God. As for Enoch and his house, he will serve the Lord with the fragrant sacrifice until God makes it clear that he has a different plan.

Chapter 10 FAITHFULNESS

Faithfulness leads to stability, peace, and joy in his own life.

“I could only wish that my faith would help the family as much as it helps Orna and me.”

His wife is not as strong as he would like. Separation from her family and added sorrow because of the uncomfortable privations of their changing lifestyle have taken their toll.

Methuselah stays strong for the Lord. Most of the others drift away.

Criticism turns to anger for many. Anger ends in bitterness. The ones who find relief in the world and its pleasures invent rational excuses for their decisions.

All they know so well is changing. This alienation from family and friends is hurting Orna; the one he loves most on Earth. Her eyes refuse to meet his where they sit looking at seven newly crafted arrows. They lay in a perfect row – arrows that had taken hours of whittling and caressing. His warm hands had tirelessly massaged the yew branches until they seemed to bend at his will. He sees no flaw; the result is perfection.

As his hand reaches across the table Nokh wonders,

“Could my hands help my beloved?”

He will see what they could do tonight in their precious times of privacy. A gentle touch caressing her tired body could bring peace and refreshment to her inner spirit.

Their world naturally exposes family life. The raucous clamor of neighbors gets attention. They see open fighting, public displays of sensual, even wicked aggression, dirty dancing, strong ones taunting the weak, and open rebellion of children against aged parents.

This division compounded by the gruesome gaming of cock fights with its gambling causes more bitter division, cursing, and broken dreams. God’s name becomes a blasphemous catchphrase. It is right in front of them – as they sit quietly on a workbench in Enoch’s dart shop in full view of the principal street.

Orna’s eyes meet his. He speaks with hesitation and measures each word carefully.

“I have a good supply of darts and knives on hand. Haran will continue to take care of the shop, I am sure. His sense of honor holds us together. Could we go on an extended journey? I would like us to go far from all of this discouraging pressure.”

Orna’s head drops. She does not hold her gaze. Her hand tightens.

“All right. I am willing. Where you go, I will go.”

Enoch wonders how far she will go. They both know these trips are not about ‘getting away.’ He is seeking something deeper. Her mind asks,

“Why can’t he find it here?”

“I will not discuss it now.”

Fear wells up – she gasps for the next breath. Orna lays uneaten bread back in the basket, takes a slow sip of wine from the shared cup, and slips toward the street.

“I will go see Methuselah and the families.”

Without saying another word Orna is gone. Her steps lead toward the river where their daughter-in-law, Methuselah’s wife, will be washing clothes. The best part of washing is the happy sound of children’s voices as they play in the waters along the verdant shores.

Chapter 11 WATER

With hatred, violence, and public shaming increasing, one thing has not changed: it is about water.

Water. Soft and gentle with healing in its buoyant bubbles, never ceases to amaze Enoch and his family. They realize that life on earth would be impossible without the God-given gift of water. In a moment of great reflection, he asks,

“What do we do with water?”

These words pop into his mind – drink, wash, restore, enjoy, cleanse, watch, listen, refresh, embrace.

“Water heals!”

Enoch understands. Husband and wife together need this encouraging touch of gentleness.

“I must be kind to Orna. My deep, loyal love for her is above all other things patient.”

His idea of rivers and streams is limited because all he knows comes from his own experience. Their territory is very flat. The highest things they ever see are trees.

Trees are Enoch’s life. The raw materials for most of his craft, which he sells in the shop, are derived from trees. He and Haran have climbed to the tops of the ones with spreading branches. Towering evergreens with myriad shades of green point to the heavens with majestic recognition of the source of all life in the Creator.

Trees and water are the two things that have not changed since his ancestors were expelled from Eden. The story does not change. Adam sinned against God and was judged. He would never enter the garden again.

Eve had started it, but the Lord of the Universe holds Adam responsible. Enoch’s parents have passed on the knowledge of good and evil so that it reaches his generation. Enoch, the seventh from Adam seldom attempts to understand everything.

This knowledge of evil has driven many people further away from God. No one knew the depths of sin they were capable of doing. Human moods and rebellions are beyond grasp. Even now as his children mature, he wonders,

“What is life about?”

He innately knows which deeds are good and those which are evil. Enoch believes God. It is counted as righteousness. His human conscience helps bring peaceful assurance.

Unanswered questions can wait. But he wants to know the source of the river.

“I will find where this water comes from.”

Everyone loves the waters of the mighty Euphrates. It flows like grace as a gift from God for both the righteous and the wicked. It sustains life on Earth.

Chapter 12 FENCES

The story about a perfect garden is forbidden. People say,

“Do not go upriver! Do not talk about these old myths!”

Enoch wonders as he frequently questions.

“Does it still exist? Why did Adam disobey God if Eden was such a wonderful place?”

Then there are the rumors of Eve being a very strong-willed, unhappy person. By all accounts, she is still alive.

“Could we ever meet Adam and Eve?”

Orna is interested in a journey like that. She says,

“How wonderful if the older children would go too.”

Whenever they follow the river upstream, they sense an unusual feeling of fear mingled with excitement. Both agree about the warm feelings this unknown territory elicits.

Orna puts pressure on Nokh to slow down. She knows he is driven and it makes her uneasy. He feels her hesitancy and concludes,

“It is about the festival. Her real concern relates to the children and how our absence will affect their futures.”

Retaliation for missing the monthly feast affects each child in their ever-growing family. Enoch thinks about Adam’s wife, his grandmother many generations back:

“Why did Eve have the reputation of taking matters into her own hands? Did she know that she was a difficult woman? Did she care?”

Such thoughts bother him. Then there is the controversy over food. Food problems surround their home because of his chosen work: A maker of instruments of death!

Enthusiastic followers of progressive rulings teach that eating any flesh from living things is evil. Enoch takes a moderate position. His father and even his grandparents were all comfortable with the killing and eating of animals, fish, and fowl.

Such incredible tastes and textures, when prepared carefully with herbs and required amounts of salt, bring much pleasure. Balanced diets give them strong bodies.

Those who care prepare oils infused with precious seasonings, salts, seeds, olives, grapes, flowers, and peppery things. Enoch’s family learns the skill of nurturing distinct types of olive trees.

Food discussions bother Nokh but this is only a small part of working through the larger disagreements about the old stories.

He recalls with apprehension when Ywek, Khman’s brother, came into the dart shop to purchase arrows for hunting. He said,

“I’ve heard you are fascinated with our ancestors toward the old dwelling places. Is that true?”

Nokh hesitated more than usual.

“My wife and I have wondered if the old stories convey God’s truth.”

He knew what they were planning would surely arouse an angry response.

“We have studied our genealogy and there is much that we believe.”

Ywek replied with a face that Nokh will never forget,

“When will you learn? You may make the most perfect javelins in town, but don’t expect that to save you from the wrath of God!”

With that outburst, he grabbed the arrows, paid his bill, and left without another word.

Scars on his shoulders caught Enoch’s eye as an exquisitely woven, loosely draped garment exposed much of his upper body. Men dressed, with little thought of protection from cold temperatures for they had none. These customs exposed incredible bodies and physical perfections that had been given by a loving creator.

Now, for the first time, Enoch knew a dividing line he could never cross. This division, like a well-built, sturdy fence, blocked men from men.

“How can he mutilate his body like that? I know this is what festival feasts are encouraging people to do. God does not ask this of us!”

Chapter 13 HOME

As he approaches his comfortable and well-built home, Enoch is encouraged that the blatant ungodliness of the shopping district has not disturbed their peaceful neighborhood.

His home has been built with the same care and craftsmanship as his darts and javelins. Many houses are constructed of stone, skins or fabric, and green grasses. His stands out with its sturdy woven wooden panels.

Solid floors of smooth brick overlaid with layers of finely worked skins provide comfort for the little ones as they play with the clever wooden toys Enoch has made for them.

Metal clasps hold larger sections of material together. Strong twine laced throughout provides the textured patterns. This covering over the top gives shade and protection from the regular mists that water the earth.

There are no big storms or raging torrents. No hurricanes, typhoons, tornadoes, or floods. Deserts and extreme heat are unknown. No freeze. No snow. No ice.

God’s grace allows them to live in this lovely environment. They keep weeds, thorns, and thistles under control, as the Lord had commanded after Adam sinned. The ground still produces vegetables, roots, and the finest fruit. It is arduous work but, they find fulfillment in the labor. Sweat pouring down their deeply tanned bodies is God’s will.

Orna creates a beautiful space for Nokh. Savory meals nourish contentment for the entire family. Kids, grandkids, cousins, and older ones, gravitate toward this prosperous and cheerful home. Days are filled with love, work, and laughter.

This day is special. Anticipation builds as family and friends gather. They have been called. Most of the family surmise that Enoch will say something about his new-found love – His walk with God!

When they find their places in the home he stands and begins with carefully prepared words.

“You all know that in my search for God, I have concluded that the powerful influence of the festival is not the way I will go. As your mother and I have journeyed to the west we have learned that the old ways are worthy. We have found peace and joy in the love of God as taught by our ancestors who dwell there. There is much we still do not comprehend but we desire to live life God’s way and pray that each of you will follow.”

Enoch and Orna know that this talk could cause a disturbance in their family and beyond. They are not taken by surprise when several speak out against them. Enoch stills the group:

“Join us in this celebration at the altar. Trust God! This is the way for forgiveness of sin. Hope for the future. May love for God and one another fill each of our hearts.”

He concludes.

“We walk by faith, not by sight. Until the Lord gives us another plan, Orna and I will follow the way of the altar! We will show the obedience that Abel, our faithful ancestor, showed as he brought the lamb in his approach to God.”

With tears streaming down his cheeks, he invites,

“Please join us now as we come to God in faith believing that this is the only way of salvation – The Lord asks for our fellowship, our friendship.”

He does not judge the reactions but focuses his eyes only on the stones he picks up. The simple altar takes shape, carefully, reverently. Sticks are arranged.

The eldest son brings their finest lamb. Nokh’s specially selected knife cuts deep. Blood pours out. Fire leaps high. Heads are bowed. Hands are lifted in praise to God.

The peace that comes from obedience affects the worshipping family. The littlest ones sense security and contentment among the elders who follow this strengthening relationship with God. All who remain share an evening of quietness, healing, and humility.

The aroma of roast meat dripping oils and amazing spices and sauces filters through the trees. Sounds of joy from children playing in the stream cause parents to remember family times of long ago.

No one said it to Enoch, but some of the family falter. They question why the old men make such an issue about which altar to follow. Doesn’t the festival feature an altar also?

Cousins look at each other with knowing eyes. Doubt about these things fills their minds like the smoke drifting toward them from the firepit.

“What’s wrong with the new ways?”

Methuselah’s son said to a friend. A young woman echoed,

“I love the Lord more when I can dance before Him!”

“This old altar is so boring compared to what we do each month at the festival.”

Another adds.

Despite this undercurrent that breaks his heart, Enoch’s faith grows day by day. Orna decides to stand with Nokh. She loves her children, and their decisions sadden her, but love for God wins her heart and mind.

Chapter 14 DIVISION

“Look at our neighbor’s field!”

Orna looks as beautiful as her husband has ever seen her even though they have now become parents of many sons and daughters. Long medium brown hair falls softly over her statuesque shoulders. Her polished flaxen garment with blue and red highlights contrasts with sparkling dark eyes that show a lively but strong personality.

“Yes, with each passing month, the neglect is more pronounced. If they would only spend less time preparing for the festival, they might have the energy to keep things looking better. It takes half a month for our neighbors to recover from the excessive rituals the feast days require of them.”

Enoch realizes that these religious practices no longer help people live better lives. Performances for God make people proud. Participants increase in greediness, violence, and rebellion against the God they imagine they serve.

Fellowship with their creator, as the Lord desires, is overshadowed by the things these people keep adding to the simple worship, the obedience of the altar.

“I wonder if my darts, intended for good, are being used for evil?”

They hold each other loosely, quietly breathing the evening air. Her sweet breath mingles with a citrus fragrance that settles toward their bed. This wonderful place gives a respite from the turmoil which has now sundered their own family. Sparkling water flows at their feet, fluffy coverings comfort and ripening fruit hangs overhead. Purple blooms rise from clean soil on each side.

Water refreshes the body and inner spirit leaving a softness to the skin. Sandy soil loaded with nutrients keeps their private garden flourishing. They enjoy years of memories in this special place but now the older children are grown and making their way in life. What does their future hold? Orna and Nokh must let them go.

Some of their best friends attempt to hold their adult children tightly with little success. The division in religious belief has taken a toll on every family. It is still God’s plan that a man and a woman should leave their father and mother and hold each other tightly.

Godly couples have no problem letting their families establish and build their own homes. Nokh says,

“This is what God intends. Our main concern is that fleshly lusts and material prosperity are sucking our children into false worship.”

Orna asks,

“Nokh, it has been several months since we have gone with our families to the feasts of the bright moon. I know we do not approve of all the rituals and behavior by some, but could we go and try to keep our family together?”

Enoch agrees for her sake. The more he acknowledges God in all of life, the greater his reliance on grace – God’s steadfast love.

Grace does not come in occasional overflowing baskets but in little blessings every moment of the day. He often repeats,

“I need God!”

The careless very religious neighbor queried more than once,

“You are so robust and have brought up such fine children, why do you lean on God as you do? Stand up and act like a man! You are made in his image.”

Chapter 15 PEACE

The people of Enoch’s generation know a great deal about God. They have no excuse for rebellious wickedness. Their world knows the wisdom, power, and glory of God. Direct revelation gives them hope of future salvation.

Weeds and thistles threaten their well-tended gardens. However, the truth remains, they still live in a manageable world.

Weather patterns help. God had created one large land mass with no mountains. The seas are far from the cities and towns. Gentle winds bring no storms. Volcanoes lay buried deep below the surface of the earth.

At night, the stars shine with a brilliance one can only imagine.

By day, a canopy of mist circles the sky above. This covering protects and nurtures all life.

Temperatures never vary. Day and night, morning and evening all feel the same.

Shelter and clothing consist of simple coverings for decency and privacy. It is paradise! In his mind Enoch compares it with the true Paradise – the Garden of Eden, he learns more about it from his ancestors.

All of these travels together have broadened Orna and Enoch’s knowledge not only of the place in which they live but of God’s relationships with all people.

Few of their children, except Methuselah and many of his clan, seem interested in hearing about these frequent journeys upstream to the west.

“Could they not see that these trips provide great peace and comfort?”

As Orna and Enoch approach the sparse settlements of the far west, their excitement grows. They are going over the river and through the woods to grandmother’s house. The simplicity of life here is in perfect step with nature. Peace permeates the very air they breathe.

Grandfather Mahalalel is known for his spirit of contentment. Now Enoch prays that they may meet him on this trip.

“Perhaps this step back in time will show what is important in the world. I pray this for both Orna and me.”

They sit under an ancient tamarisk tree, one that was only days older than the eldest among them, Enoch reflects,

“I like it here.”

The hours pass quickly. Old stories capture their imaginations and put a sparkle in Orna’s eyes. A growing faith strengthens their resolve to know more about the Creator.

“Will he reveal himself to us as he has to these older ones? Should we expect him to walk with us in this sin-cursed world?”

They stay a little longer than originally planned and enjoy the best days of their lives.

The women are not afraid to interact with men. Stories draw Orna into a renewed desire to live as they live.

“God created woman to fulfill a high and holy calling in the world.”

Day upon day there was a willingness to help Enoch and Orna understand creation, sin, and grace.

They meet Mahalalel and he says,

“Sin has created more problems, even disasters than we will ever know. We are rebelling against God when we deny sin and its consequences. We are all sinners! Cut off not only from the Garden but from God himself.”

This discussion awakens Nokh’s faith. He admits that most people in his city deny the existence of evil.

“Is there any hope for sinners?”

Mahalalel answers,

“It is difficult for us to know what life was like before Eve and then Adam disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit.”

Orna asks,

“How many years ago did that happen?”

Enoch’s grandfather responds,

“More than six hundred years ago! Eve took leadership into her own hands and disobeyed first.”

His sweet and submissive wife adds,

“We will never grasp why God held Adam’s sin as the more serious of the two.”

Their settled faith in God’s revealed word allows for unwavering belief.

“Who are we to question God’s plan?”

God’s plan for Eve was different than his plan for her husband. When Adam sinned God said:

“This is it! I warned you that if you should eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, you will die.”

So, death is the result of Adam’s sin.

For the first time, Orna truly believes this old account. Her desire to rule over her husband is also a result of Adam and Eve’s sin. This truth helps her think through some of the struggles she faces every day of her life.

Hope revives when they hear of God’s grace. They have experienced so much of this grace it is easy to rejoice. They love hearing the stories of God’s steadfast love.

Their confidence in such love overshadows any fears Enoch and Orna have about the future. God is faithful! He freely offers redemption to everyone! Even the children!

Fears dissipate, trust grows, and a growing relationship with God overwhelms them. They bask in the shower of love shown in this community among the followers of God.

The Lord conquers. He wins their hearts. They will not turn back. From this day they walk together, hand in hand with God. In faith believing, though they cannot see him, they follow him, taking one step at a time.

Saying goodbye is more difficult than it has ever been before. The journey home would normally take six long and arduous days. They choose to go slowly. Orna says,

“Let’s arrive home after the next monthly festival.”

Chapter 16 TROUBLE

Most people think life is good if they can avoid trouble. Enoch’s circumstances are about to explode with inevitable difficulty. His pathway leads to trouble.

Orna fully expects Cousin Haran to cause a great many problems when they finally arrive home. A woman’s perceptive intuition knows it long before Nokh. Neither of them imagine the measure of grief they will face. Only a few years ago they were inseparable. Nokh questions.

“How could our beliefs have drifted so far away from one other?”

Orna adds as they embrace under flowing pink and purple wisteria,

“My heart breaks for you when I see our family so divided. Haran of all people.”

Soft cotton bound in luxurious fabric pads their bed; a lightweight silken throw covers them. This is all they ever need. God’s marvelous world never disappoints. Flesh against flesh fulfills deep desire.

News of family anger reaches them on the journey. People in their world who disagree with them are hard-hearted. Enoch holds Orna close in their bower; they will put it off no longer, this is the last night before arriving home. Fear pulls them to turn back to the peace of the West. Duty calls home.

Enoch needs to get back to work. His conscience assures him,

“Face trouble like a man! This is God’s will. I work to please God and not to gain influence or wealth. The Lord gives immense joy when I make things with my hands.”

 No matter what he thinks, Enoch takes a great deal of pride in his work. Each piece requires hours of labor. No other person makes such fine weapons as Enoch, and he knows it.

Because of this, a thorn in his side has festered for years. Others, even his own family, could not live up to his expectations. At least that’s what they think. Many people have quit trying.

Satisfaction because of his standing in the community grows into pride. The way people rave about his workmanship adds fuel to the fire. Those who dislike him say he is arrogant.

“I am doing the best I can for God. Is that all right? I know I am good. Should I hide my talents just because people call me out?”

Haran shows up at the workplace just as Nokh finishes making one of his perfectly balanced javelins. It does not take long for his cousin to crush any thoughts of pride. He piles on blame for all the family problems.

His beloved cousin goes on to berate him for ignoring their decisions and desires. They have minds and hearts too. True love shows itself in unconditional acceptance.

“Love is the answer to all our troubles and you sure are not showing much of it.”

Then Haran turns abruptly and slips away before Enoch can think of anything to say. He is left alone, with a broken javelin in his hands, which snaps loudly as he destroys it. He is shaking. Something deep in his heart snaps that day too.

“Is my desire for God alienating me from my own family? Oh, God! What is my next step?”

Chapter 17 FESTIVAL

Followers of God do not remember how they know some animals are clean, and others are not accepted at the altar as a sacrifice. Enoch obeys what he has been taught from his youth.

His family descends from Adam, through Grandfather Mahalalel. He never doubts that this is the word of God and that it is sufficient for his life and practice. Blood and internal parts belong to the Lord, while some of the best flesh is eaten by the family.

They do not present these sacrifices very often. Altars are special occasions when families gather to worship, enjoy forgiveness, and seek fellowship with God.

In contrast, the monthly festivals of the larger community have grown out of altar practices but they include all kinds of rules and regulations. Sad to say, they gradually have become an excuse for excessive indulgence, gluttony, and sinful behavior.

Leaders of the central city do not doubt that their worship is what the Lord wants,

“God has put into our hearts what is required to please him!”

Among the leading men, there is a group that calls themselves the Sons of God. The unholy practices, which appeal to young women, come from these leaders.

Enoch and Orna grieve over the loss of their daughters to what they know is sinful excess.

“Can we blame them?”

They often say,

“The Sons of God are the most robust, virile, and handsome young men in the entire community? And they tell us that they too follow God!”

New excitement and entertainment add renewed pursuit of God among the youth from every family.

Orna observes,

“Our altar practice has become routine and the youth are drawn into the festivals because they are fresh and exciting..”

One of Methuselah’s children asks at a family gathering,

“How do we know but that these new ways of worship are exactly what God desires?”

Older family members respond with doubt, most of the younger parents say,

“If we keep our children coming to God, we must make it exciting for them.”

Others eagerly agree.

“Can it be wrong when it feels so good?”

Enoch knows in his mind that this discussion will divide the family even further.

“Could it pull Orna away from me?”

Orna continually asks Nokh, respectfully, to consider the children:

“What harm could there be in knowing what everyone finds so exciting?”

The day they agree to attend the festival starts like every other day – filtered sunlight, warm breezes, green meadows, deep forests – always an unchanging, peaceful calm.

Baskets loaded with bountiful foods are carried by the strongest kids. Families join one another with stories, laughter, and good old-fashioned fun. Bonds of love strengthen family ties.

The journey is part of the joy as everyone heads in the direction of the festival field.

When they converge on the largest meadow, an amazing sight greets them – displays of every kind of goods, metalwork, textiles, sculptures – anything that God-given creative minds can conceive is displayed. This truly excites Enoch’s imagination.

Banners proclaim,

“We Are the Image of God!”

“I may have been focusing too much on the past and missing all of this creativity right here in our community.”

One of the younger granddaughters says,

“Grandpa, this is what we have been telling you. I’m glad you listened and came with us.”

When the group comes upon a section of booths selling knives, arrows with bows, quivers, every size of a dart, and javelins that rival his own in beauty, strength, and workmanship Enoch observes,

“I am not envious. Our young people have grown in skill and are willing to work hard for the good of the community.”

Enoch’s joy and tolerant spirit surprises his family; it is sincere and fulfilling.

Later that afternoon, Orna and Enoch meet the families at the assembly site. Doubts arise about their involvement as they witness the Sons of God performing incredible feats of human agility.

Women provocatively encourage this naked performance of manly prowess and perverse aggression. Wives proudly claim ownership of winners; it is a competition. Honor and glory are bestowed vigorously.

Jealousy and even anger permeate the air as rivals assemble in gangs shouting indecent threats at one another. As evening shadows lengthen, the drums begin; the crowd surges toward them.

The ceremony begins with lots of brotherly bantering – but now the anger of the competition heightens. Children cling to their parents. Then everyone seems to forget the turmoil, and everyone joins enthusiastically in what comes next: A celebration before God at the altar.

Chapter 18 BLOOD

Glistening bodies draw attention. Women radiate positivity as they dance around the altar. Then the men come out and celebrate the human spirit with competitions. Darkness falls, torches are placed, and the great fire of the altar casts a magical glow over the whole scene.

The competitions are without question the most amazing things the eye has ever seen.

Aggressive men fight against equally aggressive men, and submissive women surround them, as the sensual display satisfies their need for violence, but it stops short of bloodshed. Humans press against one another, and some leap to super-human heights.

Many wonder,

“Could mere men push themselves to these outer limits of incredible performance?”

Orna and Nokh see much more than the physical performance. The whole festival takes on a spiritual dimension of power, superiority, control, and worship of God’s creation.

This display along with human intelligence, even ingenuity, defies understanding. Who could imagine that anyone could conceive these things?

“Beautiful!”

“Awesome!”

“Unbelievable!”

These are words people use to describe this amazing spectacle.

Music ceases! Everyone falls to the ground in heaps of hugging, human clumps.

The lamb comes!

Voluntarily!

Almost supernaturally!

Silence!

No one will break it. No child cries out. A holy hush falls upon the meadow as if one is standing alone in the middle of tall fir trees on a perfect day.

“God is in this very place!”

“Is he pleased?”

Nokh is not convinced. He seeks truth.

“This is powerful, but is it what God wants of his people?”

Orna has happy thoughts.

“What leaped in my womb? I feel life! I have not spoken of my suspicion to my husband Nokh, now I know; God has given us another child.”

Because she believes, there is no doubt. God designed women. Life begins at the moment of conception.

The word of God teaches that he rested when he finished six days of work and declared,

“Everything is very good.”

The old message never grows old for those who walk with God. She rejoices. Nokh’s seed had joined with her seed, life began, and her blood flowed to this brand new person.

Orna always has difficulty in birthing. She does not question God’s plan. God said,

“Fill the earth.”

She obeys explicitly, despite her intense pain.

Drums start slowly with a measured, reverent echo from many sides of the gathering place. Then the fathers, seven of them, step forward with knives and darts in their hands. Enoch gasps,

“I made some of those darts!”

The lamb moves to the foot of the altar; it is so much larger than any they had ever built before. Steps surround it. A fire as large as a full-grown man rises majestically like a crown of glory.

One of their daughters comes close to their ears and quietly mouths,

“This has to be the best worship of the Lord I have ever experienced.”

Orna smiles at Nokh with awestruck eyes and replies,

“Thank you for allowing us to come.”

Then blood spills out; and splatters down the sides of the sacrificial altar. Men come close. They smear red on their arms, legs, and chest.

Athletes who amazed the participants earlier enter; each with a dart in his hand. Carefully, but intentionally, they cut into their flesh.

Blood oozes out. They mix their blood with blood from the lamb lying lifelessly at the foot of the altar. One lifts the lamb high over his head. The drums reach a crescendo, the flames flare up, and worshipers fall to the ground.

Everyone embraces. They offer themselves with raised hands to the fathers and athletes; this is part of the sacrifice. They have been assured that this pleases God.

Enoch’s family quietly walks toward their home. Darkness hides their features. Enoch’s oldest son asks.

“Was one of the dancers Haran’s son?”

Another speaks,

“Yes, your cousin is as talented as the sons of God.”

Nothing more is said about the sacrifice until they are alone. Just Orna and Enoch. She decides to hold her announcement to herself till a more opportune time.

Enoch finally says, with tears in his eyes,

“Isn’t the blood of the lamb enough?”

It is the last thing they say that night.

Chapter 19 ALONE

Enoch thinks about the festival for several days. They use his darts in the bloodletting of the sacrifice. He happily holds on to his reputation in the community because it secures the safety of his family. The leaders and gangs threaten but they do not attack. They do not move against Enoch. His unsettled mind asks,

“Where is my happiness in this community?”

He speaks aloud even though no one is listening. Joy replaces his concern when Orna announces the coming of another baby. Older kids are parents by this time, so cousins, uncles, aunts, and grandparents of similar ages gather in his large and prosperous family.

Life settles back into normal routines. Leaders of the city stop outward threats. Nokh longs to be with the godly people who live upstream. Perhaps that will help settle his mind.

When he suggests to his beloved that they travel upriver, she encourages him to go alone this time.

“I will stay at home, have good times for plenty of rest for the sake of the baby, and encourage the children. They will take loving care of me.”

Enoch agrees, maybe too quickly, and eagerly prepares for a journey of at least three new moons.

Preparation for such a trip requires lots of thought and work. Enoch never shirks work. God-followers know that blessings come by the sweat of the brow. That’s what God had told them. Enoch learns to love work as part of his strengthening relationship with God.

He makes a list – selecting each item with care. He chooses his best knife, two darts, and a javelin and dagger; tinder for fire, clothing, blanket, essential oils, dried fruit, and vegetables – raisins, pineapple, apricots, nuts, grains of all kinds; lightweight cooking pots, writing material, and his book on which he has written some of God’s words.

Enoch certainly possesses abilities to craft wonderful things but he has also grown in wisdom from God. His wisdom causes him to chase obedience to the law of God rather than the lusts of his flesh. His growth separates him from those who stubbornly refuse God’s wisdom.

Everyone knows that all truth comes from God. Often it is passed on from parent to child. In special times it comes directly from the Lord. Enoch lets his heart keep the instruction from God. By doing this he finds favor and good understanding in the sight of God and people. This is one reason the gangs do not attack him.

However, peace with all people becomes difficult to maintain as the divide between God-followers and others grows. Nokh does the best he can. He hopes that his time on the trail will help.

“This journey could strengthen my greatest purpose. I want to know God better.”

And because each step he takes toward his ancestral home becomes so important in his life, he eagerly works preparing for his solo hike along the great river. He often says,

“The preparation for the journey is part of the fun!”

He has taught his children that if they want to love life and see good days, they must keep their tongues from evil. They must turn from evil and do good, seek peace, and pursue it. This is God’s word.

Many understand that a person who walks with God never totally knows if obedience is the walk with God or if the walk with God produces consistent obedience.

On the last night before he leaves, Nokh feels the baby move in Orna’s middle section. Both delight in life. They could never do anything to destroy life unless God would instruct them to do so. They pray continually for everyone in their family, even this little one in Orna’s tummy.

Two things they pray together falling toward sleep: God please give Nokh a safe trip, and God, please help everyone in our family to have faith and courage in the face of growing wickedness.

They cling tightly to each other marveling at the spectacle of the misty curtain pulling back to reveal stars; with magnificent drama. More stars than they can fathom. God knows each star.

At morning's first light, Nokh quietly pulls away from Orna, he loves to part this way; kisses her gently, and as has always been his custom – he dives into the water, prays to God, shoulders his pack, and heads west.

For some unknown reason, his travel is slow. It’s not his feet. Enoch does not wear shoes. Smooth grasses cover most of the non-forested earth. Trees stand tall with no underbrush. As it does each day, the canopy of mist shelters from direct sunlight and keeps the ground moist but not muddy.

He thinks about Adam and learns truths from the fall into sin. Disobedience shadows the first man’s reputation. Weeds grow in places as a result of Adam’s sin – they bear prickly seeds when no one pulls and discards them. Nokh sees carcasses picked over by vultures. These stinking things remind him of the reality of death and corruption.

Enoch accepts without doubt,

Death came into the world because of disobedience. Because all people have sinned.

“I face death as long as I live on earth.”

We all are born sinners, separated from God.

This is the word of the Lord.’

Good journeys have a goal and this one is to meet Adam. Enoch wonders,

“Is it possible?”

He and Orna had met many of their ancestors who lived near Eden, but never Adam. He is reclusive and difficult.

“Will Adam want to meet me?”

Time alone on the trail helps Enoch reflect and arrange priorities. Ever since the festival experience, his perspective has changed. Now he is moving on to fulfill the greatest desire and yearning of his heart.

“I yearn for the Lord more than I have ever yearned for anything before this time.”

For several hours he ponders life. Love for Orna remains strong, the children are important; he loves each one. They also were created in the image of God. Male and female. Everyone deserves respect even if they travel different paths. He works hard to love. God asks him to love unconditionally.

Enoch also likes his work, his home, and his reputation. He surely loves that his friends appreciate him. He enjoys feasting and festive celebrations. His own body and its health provide wonderful experiences and give him much happiness. These things are nice. He likes the luxury of worry-free comfortable living.

Thinking about Haran’s scars that were made at a festival makes him sad. Tears stream from his eyes.

“God! How can my friend, the one I have loved whom I have spent countless hours with, laughing, working, sweating, teasing, struggling with turn against me?”

These thoughts conflict him. How will he talk to Haran? Can he convince him to follow God and reject the new religion?

Eventually, after overthinking the whole thing, he turns it over to God. God will deal with Haran with grace and truth.

“I am sure our love as brothers has not been wasted.”

Settling into the routine of walking, eating, sleeping, and pressing toward the goal: Enoch suddenly jumps up!

A sound! Too close for comfort!

He reaches reflexively for his javelin and dagger.

It is night! He waits!

Then a panther’s claw lashes out.

“Too close for the javelin!”

With a dagger in hand, he wrestles the cat to the ground, both still with great strength. A rip on Enoch’s shoulder matches Haran’s scars.

With his uninjured arm, he strikes the ribcage of the beautiful animal. It sinks and struggles viciously till death wins.

“Thank you! God!”

Nokh breathes deeply; panic takes longer to go away. With little sleep the rest of the night, he longs for the first light of day. Packing quickly, he hits the trail earlier than usual. His heart races erratically.

The reality of sin and death dogs his every step. Is there hope for redemption?

What Enoch does not know is that scouts from town are following him.

He is not alone!

Scouts had heard the death struggle. They see the carcass. They watch him cleanse his shoulder wounds and then see him stretch out on soft grasses allowing healing light to warm his tired body.

They smell meat sizzling over fire: They see him pray to God.

The Lord will provide his daily bread, will he protect him from these enemies?

Chapter 20 ATTACK

Orna wakes with a start. Her heart races and the baby moves uncomfortably in her womb. She carefully counts the weeks and knows she is through her first trimester. Delivery won’t come for twenty-six weeks, and God promises to help through the miracle of birth.

It will be ten weeks before her husband arrives home from his journey upriver. In the distress of the moment, she prays silently.

“Could you please be close to him tonight, Lord, he needs you more than he has ever needed you before.”

Her daughter, Chava, and her kids stir in an outer alcove—the one Nokh had crafted so beautifully, it is one of his greatest creations.

A stream of water bubbles alongside a tall partition decorated with mementos that each family had collected or crafted.

A secure covering overhead looks like evergreen branches that never lost their needles. The floor of the alcove is the talk of their neighborhood.

Both Orna and Nokh had worked hard at tanning skins, cutting, coloring, and weaving strips into the thickest, amazingly soft carpet.

Whenever Chava and the kids come over, they beg to sleep together in this place. Tonight, her husband sleeps here too.

He comes to Orna and comforts her.

“What is wrong?”

She looks at him questioningly.

He answers,

“I think I know why you are distressed.”

Word has spread, in the center of town, that a scouting party went at Ywek’s command to spy on Enoch as he travels. He and Chava know something bad could come of it. That’s why they stay close to Orna.

“Has our God put into your heart to pray for Father Enoch?”

“Yes! He has taught us that we do not need to wait for the altar sacrifice to pray. We do it; anytime, anywhere.’

Chava speaks up.

“You know, Mother, Dad talks to God all the time.”

“You are right Chava. His prayers remind me of one talking with his or her best friend. For your dad, prayer is about a relationship with his personal God.”

Then Orna exclaims,

“He does not just say a prayer –Enoch communes with the Lord!”

Orna adds with conviction and confidence in her voice. She knows her trust in God has been strengthened by her husband’s example of faith.

The whole group of them pray together until morning – parents, children, and grandchildren, together.

At the same moment, many miles upriver, Enoch wakes with an uncanny feeling. His shoulder burns from infection, where the cat had slashed him, but something else troubles him.

Silence surrounds the place where he lies. The birds are quiet. The absence of birdsong is unusual just before morning light.

Squirrels stop dancing through the trees.

But Enoch’s continual reliance on God settles his troubled mind. Today he expects to arrive at his grandfather Mahalalel’s place. Both he and Orna have been here twice before, and they always enjoy hospitality and welcome refreshment and rest.

And the best part of their visits has been the stories about Adam and Eve; about the Garden of Eden, and God, who created all things that have been created.

After breaking fast, he reads words he had written:

“The Lord was pleased with Abel’s offering.”

Abel died! He was murdered because he did what God asked him to do.

“Will the Lord take my life if I stand against the false teaching of the festival?”

To be honest, Enoch hates death. God did not want death. Enoch has been created to live a life of freedom. All people are like God with intellect, emotion, and the power of choice. Humans are not puppets to be manipulated in God’s hands. They are not animals.

Enoch is afraid to die. The stench of rotting flesh convinces him that death is unnatural. It is inevitable.

“God created all of us, male and female, in his image. I can’t get my head around it: Perhaps Adam can help me if I could only meet him.”

He carefully folds the words he had written from God, places them in his pack, swings it up, he takes one step, making sure he leaves the campsite as clean as he had found it. He winces from the weight on his injured shoulder when motion from behind alters his senses and causes him to stop dead in his tracks.

Pivoting quickly on one leg Enoch looks into the faces of three young men – athletes, strong, virile, desirable.

There is good and there is evil. If they are evil, their countenances do not betray them. The knives they hold do.

“How can evil look so beautiful?”

Chapter 21 ESCAPE

God speaks to Mahalalel while finishing his morning routine. His advanced age allows many moments of quiet reflection.

“One of my children needs help! Will you go rescue him?”

Mahalalel pauses,

“I am old and not feeling very well today. What can I do to rescue someone who is in trouble?”

Then without further hesitation,

“Yes Lord, I will go.”

The Lord says,

“Go east, downriver, and watch for signs of disruption and struggle among men. Do not pass the first camping site. There are signs of a recent fire.”

Further instructions reveal that four men struggled. One was taken captive!

“The one who has been taken is your eldest grandson, Enoch.”

This rescuer, fifth from Adam, now more than five hundred years of age, delights to do God’s will. He drops everything he planned for the day and follows the Lord.

It is more complicated than he first imagined. When Mahalalel, which means praise of God, comes to the campsite he sees nothing which would alarm him.

The evidence of a recent fire assures him this place is the right one. So, sitting down to catch his breath, he waits for God to give him direction.

“You have time, my son. Continue to wait and I will show you the way.”

Ywek’s son Azar had taken Enoch into the river to hide their tracks. That presents a problem.

The water on the far side is deep and swift. One of the scouts gets into serious trouble and starts thrashing the water, gasping for air.

Enoch, an extraordinarily strong swimmer, swims swiftly to his side, dives down, and lifts him out of the deep water. The three pull him to the north shore and up a steep, eroded bank.

Nokh works on the drowning young man until he gasps and water spews out of his mouth. After a steady embrace in Enoch’s arms, breath returns and relief takes the place of fear of death.

When Enoch finally looks into the eyes of the rescued man, he exclaims,

“You are Hazron, my cousin Haran’s boy! What are you doing here?”

Azar suddenly takes charge and ties Enoch’s feet with his belt.

“We have to track and report traitors who disrupt the friendly relations of citizens of our town.”

The other scout shouts angrily,

“Unless you turn from your separatist ways, we have been ordered to take you in.”

Enoch says flatly without thinking of the consequences,

“How can I renounce the One I have chosen to follow all the days of my life?”

He knows that those who follow God, do so not because of the good things he does for them, but because he is God.

“He is my God. If this is his will, I submit!”

Then he speaks slowly,

“I do not know who sent you, and I respect their authority, but I will follow greater authority. I cannot renounce my God.”

Nokh sees the power of evil in Azar’s face as it suddenly turns to stone and this young man spits out blasphemies against God.

Enoch believes in Satan, the evil one, and sees his command over the will of this young man. On one of their earlier visits to Mahalalel’s home, Orna and Nokh learned details about Eve and how the Devil tempted her.

“He makes things look so appealing and beautiful, but his intention is rebellion against the one true God.”

They also learn from their elders,

“The Devil, that old serpent, draws into his light, a light that leads to darkness, into separation from all that is good.”

Satan’s music of the night lures thousands away from God’s plan. He appeals to the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, and the greediness of the eyes. He has control of the world, using his supernatural powers to deceive many.

Hazron recovers enough to step forward and asks, with great force, if he could speak to his uncle alone.

Azar, almost without reason, loosened the belt from Enoch and allowed the two of them to walk further into the forest, away from the river.

When they are alone, they hug a good long hug of brotherly love and loyalty – much more than a superficial pat on the back.

“Thank you for saving my life.”

“I have an incredibly special place in my heart for your father and for everyone in your family. It was the only thing I could do.”

“Azar is serious about taking you in. What shall we do?”

Enoch says,

“Let’s seek wisdom from God.”

Time passes as they speak of family, desires for the future, and the importance of community participation. Their respect for one another draws them remarkably close.

Enoch will not back down and speaks strongly against the addition of human blood to the blood of the lamb at the altar.

“It is what God has asked and it is enough.”

Hazron asks,

“How can it be wrong when everyone is doing it?”

The third scout approaches suddenly.

Hazron is silent.

“Azar fell asleep after you left. It was like something hit him, but he was exhausted from the thrill of the hunt.”

He tells them their time is up. Azar is stirring. He will be upon you.

“Come now or risk bloodshed.”

Then, after this warning, he looks directly into Enoch’s eyes and prods,

“I have watched you in town Enoch. Your lust for flesh is just like all of us. You are no different. I have seen you look at young men and girls with great desire. You love the preeminence of your exalted reputation. I know you do! Do not deny it!”

Guilt floods Enoch’s inner being, for he knows there is truth in this perceptive young man’s accusations.

They push toward the river and the scout says,

“You do not make sense. Our new way of life makes us feel so good about each other and God. How can that be wrong?”

Hazron agrees and Enoch feels there is no escape from these three young and extraordinarily strong men.

“God wants us to be happy. Don’t take our joy away from us with your old ways.”

When they arrive at the edge of the river, Azar is gone.

“Wait!”

They all talk at once.

“Two men are standing on the other shore.”

With Enoch’s help, they swim across safely and Azar appears to be captivated by Mahalalel. The elder ancestor takes Enoch by the hand, lifts his pack onto his own back, and walks west.

At Mahalalel’s home, they talk, weep, hug, eat, sleep, and talk some more.

On the last day before Enoch returns home, Adam comes. Nokh’s heart is filled with so much awe, that he can barely speak.

All he remembers on his journey is one thing Adam had said:

“Did you know that Jared your father, and your mother, brought you to me when you were a very young child? I held you in my arms and blessed you!”

Enoch marvels,

“I am over two hundred and fifty years of age and for the first time, I learn of my blessing. Thank you, God! You have loved me with your steadfast love. I am blessed.”

Chapter 22 HELP

Orna leans hard on Nokh’s chest. His amazing arms, supple and fragrant, wrap around her. She wonders,

“Would I want to live without my lover’s caresses?”

These are the times when they talk. Enoch does not tell her all the details of his encounter with Azar; now they are making another journey. He is not sure she could handle a full account of the attack.

He hopes this is the trip in which they will decide about their future. Together they walk, hand in hand. Orna, great with another baby, still strong in spirit, is weakened carrying this child.

She knows something different moves within her body. Her mind, determined to follow God, perseveres with purpose and contentment. She struggles with each step. Enoch gives all the help she needs. They make slow progress heading upstream toward the source of life.

They have reached as far west as they have ever gone.

“The ones with whom we’ve shared stories, meals, sacrifices, and protection for the nights, have encouraged me to follow God’s way more closely than ever before.”

Enoch’s troubled foreboding almost conquers him.

“I feel alone tonight for some reason. God, please don’t leave me. I need you!”

Relief comes when Nokh finds an unbelievably gorgeous place for the night. Other travelers say that the closer they go to Eden, the greater the delights; now they experience it for themselves. The trees, the waters and flowers, and the colors. They stand together, amazed at God’s creation.

Awesome, indescribable glory surrounds them. After lingering over their evening meal, not too shabby considering the time they have been on the trail, they prepare for sleep.

Orna says,

“Nokh this has been the best day of my life. I dream of living here the rest of our time together.”

Then they snuggle into their bed. Talking with God and one another, comfortable that the Lord’s plans for them are perfect, they drift into peaceful sleep.

But not for long!

“What’s wrong? Orna! You need help!”

She wakes suddenly in great distress. Mournful cries shatter the quietness.

“The baby is coming. God will help us! He promised we would be saved through childbearing.”

“Orna! My beloved! Oh, God! Help us!”

How could this be happening now? Orna has delivered many sons and daughters after Methuselah. Each birth was easier. God has blessed them.

Friends often say,

“Your quiver is full.”

This sentiment pleases Nokh because he made his living crafting arrows. His is the best. And everyone agrees that Orna’s children are as fine as any in the land.

No time to talk now. Some dreadful thing is sucking the life out of her. Blood, sweat, too much fluid, ripping flesh – broken words.

“I love you, Lord! Thank you for the children we have been given. May they believe in you. I do not want them to live the way of the wicked. Deliver them!”

Then, a final gurgle, lungs collapse, words cease – there is no more breath.

“God gives, and God takes away the breath of life.”

Silence is more than Enoch can bear – silence screaming in the dark, tears blocking sight, total darkness. All alone – fear and dread his only companions.

Enoch lays his helpmeet, companion, completer, fitted just for him on her final bed. Softest, freshest, adorned with flowers received Orna’s body.

‘She is not complete without her body.’

God had instructed his people that death is a temporary separation of body from soul. Enoch sees that the unity God created is now broken.

Cut cords bleed if they are not tied off quickly. This one does not pulse. He goes through the motions. He had done it many times before. Animals begin stirring. Birds rustle in their nests. Darkness continues.

‘I will wait till light to finish. Now, I will hold the baby.’

Nokh cradles his newborn son in his arms, the warmth of his own body giving warmth to the boy. He named him Mattawn – God’s final gift.

Death is not new to Enoch and his family. They have experienced it as much as others. They know it is the result of Adam’s sin.

It is an enemy. Nokh hates death as much as he hates sin. Now he despises it more than ever.

“God, I am weak. Help me! I want my son to live.”

He cries out!

Light brings life. Birds bobble with song; waters dance in morning gleam; flowers stand tall with majestic beauty; warmth spreads.

“He is alive! I feel his flesh warm against mine. Mattawn! A gift from God.”

Enoch will not turn back. He has come too far. The ones he will meet near the garden can help him.

They believe in God as he does. Their belief gives hope.

“Will I ever understand death? His mother gave her life so her son could live.”

Chapter 23 DARKNESS

Enoch wisely repeats over and over,

“I will not make any decisions right now!”

And with pure determination and strength of character, he continues, one step at a time, to find help for the baby. Enoch knows.

“He needs a nursemaid to care for him.”

They had come too far to turn back to Mahalalel and his family. Some of Adam’s daughters had settled further ahead, but from what he had heard, they needed as much help as he did.

Division within their family and care for Eve, their mother, has taken its toll.

Desperate people grasp anything to survive. Life is stronger than death. God has put power to conquer death and sin in every man’s heart. Call it conscience, faith, or plain old stubbornness: Enoch has a fair share of it.

He will use this power for his survival and of much greater significance for Mattawn.

The baby needs help soon. This realization causes Enoch to press toward the source of life – the Garden of Eden.

He loses all sense of time. The baby somehow wondrously, miraculously accepts the waters of the river as his only sustenance.

Approaching one of the oldest outposts in the area Enoch sees a woman. Ebele looks up! She has lived all her life separated from the congested cities of the east. Strangers seldom come into her protected and hidden place. Her eyes, dark and sparkling, reveal wonder, even excitement.

A disheveled man who looks very old comes stumbling toward her with a newborn baby in his hands. He does not cuddle the little one to his chest but holds him out as an offering to her.

“He looks like he has not eaten for days. Who is this stranger among us?”

Ebele quickly prays, as is her custom, relieved that this is not a threat but a blessing. Violence is spreading even in this isolated region. Most of the younger ones have moved off to the east, leaving her settlement peaceful but dwindling.

She fears God with a trusting heart and moves quickly to help. With grace, she reaches out and takes Mattawn from Enoch who says,

“He needs nourishment and a mother’s care.”

With immense joy Ebele springs into action, taking care of the situation, finding a nursing mother, and praising God for an opportunity to serve.

Enoch needs more than physical restoration. Using only a few words he purchases a lamb. He walks deep into the forest – far from the river and weak as he is he somehow builds an altar.

There he meets God in the only way he knows – with tears, anger, obedience, and the blood of the lamb.

 With Mattawn safe in the care of this peaceful community, Nokh spends hours in solitude – with God. Sleep helps. Succulent roast lamb restores. Worship gives confidence. Recognition that God is God and complete submission to his revealed will bring rest.

“God, I believe you! You are good all the time.”

Days turn into weeks. Seth, third born son of Eve and Adam is part of this community. The coming of Enoch brings revival to him. Family surrounds the family. Stories encourage broken hearts. Mattawn survives.

The leaders decide that Nokh should continue to seek friendship with Adam. They warn – many times such things are not as easy as they should be.

Adam has been marked by the weight of his sin and the fact that it has been passed on to the entire world does not help. Some say Eve never completely recovered.

Eve and Adam faithfully worshipped at the altar. They lived responsibly bearing children, as God commanded, and worked the ground for food. Aching bones and sore muscles reminded them that death hovered over their home.

Enoch begins to understand,

“It is a heavy load to bear.”

At this same time, far away to the east, Haran also carries a heavy load.

Ever since his boy, Hazron, returned from the scouting trip, Haran could not rest. Guilt about the broken relationship with cousin, Enoch robs him of peace. Thoughts continually invade his mind,

“Enoch has peace. His courage, faith, and hope inspire me – it is real, not just a performance to impress others.”

Even in the face of opposition Haran’s cousin, formerly his constant companion and co-worker, shows strength of character.

God placed human conscience within the mind of every person. Haran’s conscience is troubling his mind and he knows it is from God.

“How can I ignore what God is telling me?”

Love pursues him. Remembrance of good times together stirs him; trees, families, laughter, meat and drink, hugs along with work: He has to resolve this. Love wins!

Haran looks at his son Hazron having finished the evening meal and as they begin to settle down to rest, he says,

“Tell me again about Enoch and what happened when he saved you in the river.”

Hazron answers sharply,

“I have already told you, Dad!”

Haran’s mind will not let it rest.

“But how did Mahalalel convince Azar to let your uncle go?”

“I do not know! It was like someone conquered his darkness. Azar is dark! He tells us his father gets messages from God, but it scares me.”

Haran softly replies,

“I know what you mean son.”

After securing the home Haran settles down for the night but his thoughts continue,

“Why does Nokh’s hope unnerve me? I believe God. He believes, but he has something more.”

Hope makes a difference. Haran’s hope is in the new religion of the community. Enoch’s hope is in the word of God, unchangeable, and all-powerful: Enoch possesses a confident expectation that the Lord will do everything he has promised to do. Haran doubts.

His troubled mind stops. Exhausted, he slumps into a fitful sleep.

Chapter 24 REFLECTION

Far to the west, Adam wakes the very next morning with a refreshing peace that surprisingly invigorates him. He generally struggles with sadness.

As he reflects on God’s steadfast love, his mind wanders to the visit he had with Enoch some time ago. He had asked the small group that had gathered for the morning meal to help him remember.

It had been a simple one with roasted grains, thickened cream, and a flavorful dish made up of a variety of amazing, luscious fruits.

‘Help me remember.”

He said with his typical tone of sadness. Adam continued,

“Mahalalel’s grandson flourishes unlike his son Jared.”

Many years ago Mahalalel had mentioned his son Jared to Adam.

“We named our firstborn son Jared which means, flower, but now we know that he is fading like a flower.”

Yes, they all had agreed that Adam’s memory was correct.

Jared and his wife started their family very well by naming their firstborn son, Enoch, which to them meant, dedicated to God. From the very beginning, the neighbors gave good reports about Enoch.

When the meal ends Adam slips away to be alone. Memories now flood his mind.

Each day in the garden, Adam and his wife walked with God. They loved it – to walk and talk with the Lord. God told them about himself. They were open and transparent. They openly shared what they were doing, things they were thinking, dreams for the future.

This relationship continually grew stronger. They had a simple childlike innocence.

Then, the terrible day came. It was quite a long time after creation week. Shame moved in like a dark, foreboding cloud. Both realized they had destroyed the wonderful relationship. It affected their relationship with one another. The fellowship with God which they had enjoyed so much was gone.

Now Adam often takes long walks when these memories control his mind. However, in recent years the recalling has become less frequent. In their place, he feels a heaviness that results in discouragement and sadness.

Those who try to help him counsel carefully, for he is the oldest man on earth and deserves respect,

“Adam face up to what you have done. Has God not supplied hope for present blessing and future salvation? Leave the things that are behind and press toward the high calling of God.”

Adam is very human. Difficulty accepting his sinful humanness becomes a major problem. His inner fight results in controlling thoughts. They prey on his mind like a beast crouching at his door.

“What if we had done it differently?”

He never was able to understand why Eve gave in first.

“Will I ever be able to move on and forget the dreadful memories of our disobedience to God?”

God had told them the path to healing. They needed to listen. God asked them to believe – to have faith in his revealed word. Forgiveness and peace would only be found at the altar.

The altar is the way to God. This is the place of forgiveness, peace, and worship. God requires blood.

Adam still approaches by way of the altar, but too often it is a ritual. His heart is not in it.

Today Adam directs his path toward the entrance to the Garden of Eden.

“I will walk to God. I will go! It has been too long since I have dared approach the gate of the Garden.”

He walks as we all walk, one step at a time. The entrance still frightens him. Cherubim guards the way. Their flaming swords are not for ornament. Anyone coming near will die.

Greater fear takes hold when he thinks of the holiness of God. The Cherubim are there to guard God’s holiness. No person can approach God by works.

Keeping his distance, in fact, a long way off, he sits among the lilies of the field and stares past the angelic beings longing to meet with God once again.

Years ago he approached God’s holiness. He honored the Lord God in his heart. Sin destroyed that fellowship.

Today, God chooses to give no revelation of himself. God was silent. Adam’s guilt overwhelms him.

“Will I ever learn to just do what God has asked me to do?”

God has revealed his will. There is no need for additional revelation.,

“The lamb is enough. Make a simple altar – no steps, no mortar, no carvings. Do not add to my word. Come in faith and I will give you rest.”

God designed all families of the world to desire fellowship with one another and with a Creator greater than themselves. Enoch and his family along with Haran and the larger family circle had always enjoyed wonderful fellowship. Now times together have become rare.

God does not need fellowship – he requested it. Humans need it. There is a God-shaped vacuum in every person’s heart. Success, possessions, money, fame, or sensual pleasures will never satisfy anyone.

But fellowship with God must be approached in God’s way. Adam agrees,

“God’s way is the only way.”

He stands and walks toward home.

Adam’s friends rejoice to see that he begins each day with a walk. They delight to hear him talk of stars, of water, and trees. He reminds them,

“These are the things that have not changed. They are still the same from the days of creation.”

That is why people sense the presence of God when surrounded by towering trees, waters in any form, or the vastness of a starry sky.

Negative thoughts of Paradise Lost will eventually destroy Adam if he allows them to flourish. Instead, he now sings a new song:

“My hope in God alone,

To know His will I come.

Actions speak louder than words.

Today I will obey.”

Chapter 25 CONTENTMENT

Hours drag on and on for those who get trapped in sadness and regret. In the opposite direction, time flies when people are having fun.

Enoch chooses joy. He realizes that the circumstances of his life are orchestrated by God. He constantly struggles to live by faith but never gives up. Trust in God’s word gives him victory.

Life is good for Mattawn as he grows in size and understanding. He becomes an important part of Ebele’s interesting family.

The boy and his dad learn to share good times in strengthening relationships surrounded with love, respect, and honor; planting, nurturing, reaping crops, and raising sheep; some for sacrifice at the altar.

Ebele quietly begins to encourage Nokh to consider returning to his own home. She dreads the day when he will leave for love has grown in her heart, but she knows he has unfinished work at home. Ebele tells him,

“You will never really be happy until you make things right with your family and old friends.”

Enoch respects her very much; for she is the same age as his grandfather. It takes many months before he decides to return to his own family home. He tells her to her great satisfaction,

“I need to make one more journey to the gates of Eden before I turn back to the east.”

The community knew what a special place the gates had become to Enoch.

The fiery swords of the cherubim did frighten him; but not quite as bad as it was at first. The comfortable vista point he has made becomes a welcoming place; a reverent chapel – still he keeps his distance in what he calls his safe zone.

Honor for the majesty and holiness of God humbles him. When he comes to this place his only choice is to humble himself in the eyes of the Lord. And God invariably lifts him.

Enoch could not see God. But God is there, and Nokh learns to practice the presence of God: By faith. With thanksgiving he says,

“Thank you, Lord! You take away my uneasiness and tell me – “Do not be afraid!”

Then he adds,

“Lord I honor you in all I do. I am content!”

God responds,

“Yes, my child. Please come and walk with me.”

The trees, the stars, and crystal-flowing waters hear Enoch’s reply.

“God, I do not even know what that means but I trust you to show me the way.”

Chapter 26 RELATIONSHIPS

Ebele and her husband love Enoch and Mattawn so much that they hate to see them go. Speaking with sadness she stands quietly before them and says,

“There is one thing you need to know about Adam. He isolates himself from us: Ever since Eve died.”

Ebele tells Enoch that Adam does not receive guests unless he invites them into his home.

They were all amazed when Adam went to Mahalalel’s to meet Enoch. It was unprecedented. Only the Spirit of God could prompt such a thing.

All agree that Adam does not leave his home for such meetings. They know God facilitated it. It goes against Adam’s typical behavior.

Enoch sees Adam’s home from a distance before he and Mattawn leave for home. A young man, Mattawn’s age, goes with them at Ebele’s insistence.

Each step takes them closer to home, family, work, and the town-but fear affects Enoch.

This journey distracts him a little bit with its adventure, comradeship, laughter, and toil. Flames dance in their eyes around the evening fires. Great conversation bolsters their spirits.

Nokh works hard helping Mattawn prepare for life before him. But for Enoch, it is not always about the destination, he makes the journey part of the fun.

Lying awake in the night, Nokh’s entire being cries out to God, not in a prayer but in a conversation.

“Do my family know their mother has died? Do our children follow God’s way? I am so weak! Help me, Lord!”

The next day Enoch takes every opportunity to talk to Mattawn and his young friend.

“I want all of my children, your older brothers and sisters, and all of their children to walk with God.”

Mattawn responds,

“Don’t they love and obey God?”

The young friend asks,

“What does walk with God mean?”

Enoch pauses, then answers,

“To walk with God one must know God’s revealed will, whatever that may be, and act on it in God’s way to enter into a strengthening relationship with God himself.”

Enoch struggles to put it in a few words. He includes the choice and the strong desire to be God’s person in every circumstance. It also involves knowing God and his word.

“You must work hard, leave everything else behind, and study to do what God wants for you today.”

Mattawn asks,

“Is it enough to know about God?”

‘No! God requires us, and he has the right to do so because he is God, to act on the things we know about him. We must follow his direction for each of our own lives. Then we will grow in our relationship with him.’

Mattawn is very quiet for much of the afternoon. Finally settling down after nightfall, Enoch’s mind does not rest easy.

“Can I find peace in town? I want peace wherever I go. Oh God! Why does fear control so much of my life? My mind needs rest as much as my body.”

By morning he decides he will live a quiet life in town, mind his own business, work with his hands, and teach his family about God.

He adds,

“I will submit to the leaders as long as they do not make me do something God has told me not to do.”

With excitement three men, two quite young, one of great age, walk toward Enoch’s place in town.

The life-giving waters look the same. Forests around the property have grown. His finely built home welcomes them, thanks to the older daughters who have maintained it well.

Enoch’s desire to gather the family together is realized in less than a week after his arrival. Celebration of Orna’s life lessens the pain of death. Mattawan holds a place of honor, the youngest child of Orna and Nokh. Enoch admonishes the entire family, without any apology.

“I beg you to bring all of our children up in the wisdom of the Lord our God.”

His experience with the distant families near the Garden of Eden empowers him to challenge all of them to follow God rather than the sensual ungodliness of town.

The young man from Ebele’s family shows great promise as he demonstrates godly character and skill in making arrows and helping Enoch at work and home.

Methuselah, now over one hundred years of age, actively leads the family with godly living. Some of his siblings reject his leadership claiming he is too judgmental just like his father.

Relationships within the families become divided between those who obey God’s word and those who love the excitement of their monthly festivals.

Reconnecting with Haran and the work at their shop in the center of town proves challenging. Business is good. Enoch’s cousin has become the best maker of darts, javelins, and arrows. He treats Enoch fairly and maintains the business relationship.

But his mind is closed to any discussion about God or the revealed will of the Lord.

Haran frequently presses Enoch to participate in the festivals.

“Enoch, you have to understand how the monthly gatherings help our family. Our participation places us among the most influential leaders of the whole city.”

It has become a city. Growth continued immensely while Nokh was away. Towers, plazas, large structures, and a new altar with blocks permanently mortared together, and steps on all four sides speak of power and control over the life of every person.

Enoch’s time with Ebele’s people and with Grandfather Mahalalel has grounded him so much he cannot help but speak God’s truth.

“God is good! All the time! I accept the old stories. Sin in our deepest being produces murder, violence, lying, selfishness, and anger. But because of my faith in God, I confidently hope to see Orna in the presence of God someday.”

Each morning, Nokh sets out to build a relationship with God and others. Without hesitation, he generously shares with all around him. He gives himself and his time with gifts and demonstrations of his love.

A prayer for reconciliation with Haran continually surfaces In Enoch’s mind,

“Oh God! I love my cousin Haran. Please bring unity in our relationship with you and each other.”

Chapter 27 HOPE

“Dear God, please put it on Haran’s mind to ask about the hope that is in me.”

Nokh talks to God all the time. He does not have to go to a special place and does not need to stop working. Enoch prays without ceasing.

Each month as the festival approaches, the community comes alive with activity. Enoch makes the decision he will not attend. He wants to protect Mattawn from being exposed to its growing violence, gore, and sensuality.

Some parents are offering their children to God at the festival.

“They don’t kill them they just offer them up to God.”

The shopkeeper next door tries to explain to Enoch, but Nokh has doubts because he has heard otherwise. He knows there is much bloodshed.

Enoch has settled the fact in his thinking that the blood of the lamb is enough to satisfy the wrath of God. Obedience to what the Lord has instructed is more important than man-made regulations.

He begs Haran to accompany him and Mattawn on a wood-gathering expedition during the next full moon. They both agree that moonlight enhances such a journey. But Haran refuses. He uses his leadership at the festival as an excuse. He then adds,

“God is pleased with all the work we put into the festival.”

Nokh does not answer directly but his determined focus at the shop worktable shows Haran he disapproves of the monthly celebrations.

Haran wonders,

“Why does Enoch hate the festivals?”

Answers come quickly when just three days before the start of the festival, they are now lasting several days each time, Enoch suggests to his cousin,

“Let’s go to our old beech tree grove across the river from my home and cut some wood for our supply at the workshop.”

To his surprise, Haran agrees.

Nokh quickly arranges to take care of Mattawn and the young man from Ebele’s family. After sending a message letting them know he will be gone for the day Enoch and Haran set off across the river in their favorite manner.

It is like old times. Tools carried on shoulders, water restoring tired muscles, their world with its almost perfect balance of nature brings joy to them. The shop is flourishing and all of their families have settled into easy prosperity. What more could they need?

Haran starts the conversation,

“I know you question the things we do on the feast days each month. Can you explain to me what your problem is?”

Enoch strips the bark off of a fine straight branch and says,

“I think simple obedience to the ancient words of God is enough.”

His cousin climbs to a higher branch swinging his axe. The branch breaks. Haran falls the full length of the trunk landing in a heap far below. Enoch shouts thinking he is badly hurt.

Haran jumps up as if nothing has happened and is fine except for a bleeding gash on his shoulder.

“Let me look at that!”

Enoch says as he lets himself down and starts searching for healing leaves.

It is a serious wound. The cousins stand closely together and their touch reminds them of what had been in days of long ago.

Enoch sees other scars on close examination of Haran’s shoulders and says, probably without thinking,

“I know what these other scars on your shoulders mean.”

Haran snaps back,

“Forget it! We will never agree and let’s just leave it at that.”

They quickly gather bundles of branches and head back to the shop. There is no more festival discussion.

The days of celebration come quickly, and Enoch discovers that several darts, arrows, and javelins are missing from the shop storeroom. When he asks Haran about the missing items it escalates into an embarrassing confrontation.

“I stay here and do all the work while you go traipsing all over the western lands searching for God only knows what and you accuse me of taking some of our stock?”

Haran ends by shouting loud enough for passersby in the street to hear,

“I will take what is my right to take!”

Nokh asks, with a calm and steady voice, if he can look more closely at Haran’s shoulder.

Haran refuses,

“Don’t bother! I’m fine! Who needs your help?”

Months pass. The two settle into a tolerable but conditional unity of purpose. As long as they avoid talking about the worship of God, they get along just fine.

Chapter 28 REALITY

The young man from Ebele’s community close to Adam’s home in the west near the source of the river, proves himself a faithful source of help, encouragement, and spiritual refreshment.

His beliefs and life of faith, even at an early age, bring peace to Enoch’s home. Disruptions resulting from Orna’s death, years ago now, are gradually replaced with fond memories and opportunities for a return to faithfulness to God and others.

Mattawn has by this time grown strong and shows an ability to use his hands to make things. He is clear-headed, speaks well, and demonstrates maturity beyond his years. His young friend deserves much of the credit for this good influence.

Enoch’s families help a lot too. Methuselah the oldest son, respects his father and takes great interest in the bringing up of his youngest brother.

However, Mattawn and the young man desire to return to their Western community. Uneasiness around the big city with its increasing wickedness and violence disturbs their peace, so they ask Enoch if they could all return together.

The young friend suggests,

“Perhaps you will be able to spend quality time with Adam. I am praying that this will happen.”

They all believe that God answers prayer.

By the time plans are completed for the three of them to depart, most of the city people know they are leaving.

Just as they settle in for the night before the next day’s journey, men come with torches and burst into the home.

“We are taking your young man and your son Mattawn for the new month feast.”

Ywek’s son, Azar, speaks with dignity and firmness.

Khman, still a leader in the growing city adds with authority,

“Now!”

With ten strong men against two much younger men and an older man, there is little opportunity for battle.

Enoch’s gentle response amazes all who are present as he quietly says,

“God will take care of you.”

Now alone in silence as the band moves off into the darkness, Enoch talks to the Lord throughout the night.

At first light, he stands patiently at Ywek’s gate. The guards stationed there remind him of what he knew about the cherubim at the entrance to Eden.

Nokh speaks aloud,

“This is no garden of God. I am not sure God is here.”

It is unusual that a community leader needs this kind of protection. The whole house looks sinister and foreboding. More than two hours later a door on the side opens. Enoch is ushered into a large, highly decorated room that reveals power and wealth.

Azar explains,

“We will not hurt your young men. They will be stronger and wiser after we train them. They are conscripted into God’s army.”

Another person dressed in purple satins speaks with a voice of authority.

“They are among the most outstanding examples of God’s incredible creation.”

Ywek, Khman’s brother, says with a crooked smile on his face,

“Wait until you see what they will become by the next moon feast. You too will be amazed to see the sons of God and what they can do for your boys.”

A man draped in magnificent, beaded fabric steps forward and presents Enoch a parchment scroll on which is a statement of payment due which he now owes based on the goods sold from the shop in town.

In addition, each month he must bring the best-year-old lamb from the flocks of his family. Enoch cannot hide his angry tension but calms himself by breathing deeply and saying under his breath,

“I give my best lamb to God!”

He turns and leaves, shocked because all of this comes as a total surprise. He has questions,

“Am I the first one receiving these demands? Does anyone in my family know about this? Does Haran know? Is this really what my world has become?”

After the feast days are over everyone returns to the reality of normalcy. Many people collapse into a state of piety recovering from their excess of drink, food, and frenzied activity.

Mattawn, now stronger and wiser, holds his father tightly in a long emotional hug.

His friend who has helped him grow in the Lord is somehow changed. He speaks to every one of the impressive athleticism of the festival.

“There is a dignity in their reverence for God’s creative powers.”

This godly young man from the quiet land near Eden is drawn with eyes wide open into a new world. He loves consorting with beautiful people.

“Enoch and Mattawn,”

He pleads,

“It cannot be wrong when I am so happy. Can’t you see how it celebrates God and his creation? And besides that, it is fun!”

Chapter 29 FORWARD

Enoch gives the only answer he knows to give.

“I still build simple and temporary altars outside of town. Many tell us they reject what we do because it is too easy and incredibly old-fashioned.”

He then sits patiently talking with the young men. They understandably are confused about many things after their experience. Enoch does not give ready answers, but willingly listens and shows respect. He says,

“The faith-answers are the hard ones.”

God had told them how to approach his holiness now that the entrance to the garden was blocked. They do not need to ask why God does what he does. God does all things according to the good pleasure of his own will. He asks us to believe him when he says,

“This is the way, walk in it!”

Mattawn questions why Adam and his closest descendants who have remained near the garden are giving up hope for this world. He perceptively asks,

“Why are the older women, like Grandmother Ebele stronger than the men? They rule!”

Enoch had heard the stories about God’s curse on the world when Adam sinned. Caution in answering his son caused him to say,

“I still believe that Eve took matters into her own hands and disobeyed the command of the Lord and that is why wives should submit to their husbands. But I tell you this, respect for him must come first.”

He turns toward the other young man from Ebele’s family, looks deeply into his eyes, and says,

“You are from Ebele’s family and you know what she would want you to decide about this false religion of the city. What will you do?”

That week he gave no response. The young man helps Enoch and Mattawn prepare for the journey west. He serves them selflessly with no indication of division.

Even the final night of rest provides no answer. At morning light he begins to walk with them. At first, his steps falter as if he is going to escort them away from town and then turn back.

Enoch senses the intense temptation the young man is facing. He prays earnestly that this one who has been such a strong follower of God, will not turn back.

At the end of the day the three sleep beside one another, with love, peace, and joy surrounding them, clean, and refreshed after enjoying the healing waters of the river. The young man conquers temptation. Self-control saves the day. He continues toward home with friends. They have become walkers together with God.

This journey still takes many days and when they arrive home the community welcomes them with encouragement, hugs, and wonderful refreshment.

Together they build a simple altar, sacrifice a young lamb, share the good things God has provided, and worship the Lord in the beauty of obedience to his word.

It does not take long for Enoch to notice an overpowering sadness in the community. Violence had struck while they were away. It was shortly after he left that a band of unknown invaders from the east attacked, killed, and robbed.

Ebele believes she has failed and wishes to turn her leadership over to others. She humbles herself before the Lord and her people.

The young man who had served Enoch so well steps forward and offers to help. He understands temptation and says,

“I wanted to stay in the city. It was so exciting. The sons of God are powerful. But there is something wrong about their claim that they do what they do for God.”

His words, like a breath of fresh air, instill new life into a dying faith community. The man willingly takes his place among the new leadership. There is one condition he says,

“If I lead I will teach the way of the altar.”

Adam also makes the effort, not without a struggle, to leave his seclusion. He joins forces with his community to stand for the worship of God against the growing violence from outsiders.

Enoch loves sitting for hours with Adam. They walk and talk with one another among the towering trees in the cool of the day. Enoch imagines what it had been when Adam walked with God in the garden.

Talking comes easily while walking. Adam speaks with a guarded voice,

“I find it extremely difficult to trust people. I do not trust myself!”

Joy had gone out of his life. Adam’s sadness was different than Enoch’s at the loss of his wife. Regret underscored everything he thought and did. This cloud affected many.

Adam accepts without doubt,

“God has forgiven me for my transgression and I have life because of the blood of the lamb.”

Adam’s sin which affected the entire world, cannot be undone. He looks at the trees, the waters of his river, the stars, and each one reminds him of what could have been. They are all that he has left of the many things God had given in the beginning.

“I go and sit near the gate of Eden, not too close, and weep for all I have lost.”

Enoch remained still and silent for a long time. Finally, he says,

“Is there a way to peace?”

He wondered if faith in the altar was enough.

Adam says,

“It is the only way. There is none other!”

Enoch ponders,

“Is he saying that faith in God who has revealed his word to us is all that God requires? If I trust God, must I not obey him?”

Adam speaks,

“I cannot tell you about God. My knowledge of good and evil has affected me so much that I am blinded by my humanity.”

Mahalalel had instructed Enoch about God and the curse of sin. All that had been beautiful and marvelous for all people created in the image of God is ruined.

Adam becomes sleepy and speaks softly,

“I am genuinely sorry, Enoch. That is all I can say. Come another time. Bring your son!”

Enoch feels comfortable asking,

“Can you teach me what it is to be human?”

Adam drifts,

“Yes, we can talk about that.”

Chapter 30 BLESSING

Enoch leaves Ebele’s community thankful to God for victories in his young man’s personal life and the promise of godly leadership among the people.

Ebele continues to humbly submit to the new leadership and thanks Nokh, in a community-wide gathering, for his wisdom in preserving the group and bringing them back to faith in God to overcome discouragement.

Mattawn and the community leader, now known as Enoch’s man, have become friends forever. They cling to each other and weep at the time of parting knowing it may be years before they see each other again.

After stopping at Grandfather Mahalalel’s for a wonderful time of refreshment, feasting, and worship, including sacrifice at an altar, Nokh and his son arrive home just in time for the fifth full moon of Mattawn’s thirtieth year.

Many homes in the neighborhood show signs of neglect. Several are abandoned. Enoch thanks his large family for maintaining the property extremely well. They have become an island of peace and order in the middle of growing chaos.

Many neighborhoods have organized themselves to protect people and property. Ywek controls life in the city center. Those who disagree move away to form associations in outlying regions. Tensions grow as people multiply.

Haran continues to manage the shop and has prospered with new products, services, and properties. He shares with Enoch. Old tensions between them seem to be gone.

“Come with me, Enoch, for a journey to the forests of the north country.”

Nokh agrees with joy. He prepares his pack and arranges with Mattawn for his absence.

It is like days of long-ago; they share simple meals, swim in healing waters, and look into each other’s eyes without shame. Enoch sees a change toward grace in both of their lives and realizes,

“God has worked in us while we have been apart. I praise you Lord for bringing my family together.”

Enoch acknowledges before God that it is not his job to change others. His responsibility is to honor God as holy and to faithfully walk with God in his own life.

He confesses before God,

“I take too much on myself when I trust clever words. I wish to trust you in everything!”

Trees and forests still enchant Haran and Nokh. They return after time well-spent, having trekked a great distance. Walking together!’

Haran helps Enoch realize he is controlling Mattawn too much.

“He is your youngest child. You can let him go. People often cling to the youngest especially when the mother dies in giving birth.”

The challenge from Cousin Haran cannot be cast off by Enoch. He calls Mattawn,

“Come to me, my son. You are the joy of your aged father. What can I do to bless you?”

Mattawn stands and looks off to the west with this answer.

“Father, I will stay with you, care for you, and protect you all the days of your life.”

Enoch reaches over, picks up a twig, breaks it in his hands, and answers.

“Marriage is honorable. Find a wife, leave me, and honor her with steadfast love. She will be the one God gives you for the joy of life on earth.”

Turning abruptly the son responds with a gleam in his eye,

“Ebele’s youngest granddaughter is amazing. She may be the one I would like to marry. Is it God’s will that we become one flesh, never to part?”

His father answers quickly,

“God has told us marriage means that a man leaves his father and mother and becomes one with a woman who is perfectly suited for him.”

Even in their imperfect world, where every intention and thought of the heart were only evil continually, people still preserved God-given marriage customs.

Nokh’s voice catches when he says,

“Son, I have hoped that you will take over my part of our dart and javelin shop and work with my cousin Haran.”

A sweet answer makes sense to both of them.

‘You have taught me well father. I will use our craft for the Lord wherever he leads me.’

Gratitude overwhelms Enoch.

“You are wise my son. Go with my blessing.”

The entire clan supports Mattawn. They celebrate with gifts to God at the altar and send Mattawn on his journey with provision for his future. Several from among Methuselah’s family accompany the young man to meet his bride.

Chapter 31 PLACE

With careful steps and slow, Enoch makes no major changes for weeks after Mattawn leaves home. He carefully considers what the Lord would have him do.

A deep longing to be with Adam is his desire. His conscience counsels him to build relationships with family here, including Haran’s clan. Also, many neighbors need encouragement.

Enoch chooses home, family, and friends in the community. Faithfulness to God encourages him.

With years of exciting travel, and searching for the old truth stories, Enoch has been in danger of losing his focus on an important part of his walk with God.

How does he know what God wants him to do? Is his pride pulling him away from intimacy with God and others?

Happy moments fall into place quickly. Times of laughter and playfulness are spent with all, not just a few favorites.

Haran enjoys the immediate benefit as they produce the best javelins they have ever crafted. Neighbors notice immediately. The dart shop prospers.

Worship and sacrifice at their private family altars continue to be the center. Because of such a good example, many people turn toward God. Traditions must not take the place of love for God!

On a typical filtered-light Friday, the first month of a new year, Methuselah shares lunch with his father, Haran, and several others who have committed themselves to freshness in their walk with God. Sadly, there is disagreement among them.

Enoch asks, thinking the Lord wants him to take charge,

“Why can’t we build a permanent altar? Are we not able to do whatever we want?”

An older man from outside the clan speaks up.

“My conscience tells me to go slow when we add new things to what God has told us to do.”

The others agree. Methuselah adds,

“Cain, our forefather, got angry because God did not accept his offering.”

Every man in the group bows in quietness before the Lord. No decision has been made about a permanent altar place.

In the days following, Methuselah attempts to talk to his father about pride in the place of the sacrifice. Each one is convinced his way is right. However, Enoch enjoys a calming peace in his inner being and tells people,

“I choose to focus on God. Our altar and worship should be simple. It is not a performance. It is a relationship. We come to strengthen our relationship with God and one another. If our worship does not draw us together, something is wrong with our worship.”

God speaks to them in their minds. It is called the human conscience. No one hears an audible voice. They understand that it is the word of God. Most of them agree that they should not hide their place of worship. Their obedience will be seen by all. Everyone is welcome to participate.

Enoch follows this time of decision by setting apart a large section of his property on the river for those who follow God. They are welcome to gather regularly.

One of the leading women speaks up,

“Our family will not participate if we have to build our altars here.”

Enoch answers,

“God has told us we can follow our conscience if we walk in obedience to his revealed word.”

The new gathering place takes on a life of its own. Healing waters diverted from the Euphrates River flow through it. Olive trees flourish. A press provides fresh oil.

The plot of ground becomes a source of health and happiness. Planting, nurturing, harvesting, providing fellowship. The people bless God.

An open meadow overflowing with flowers and foliage becomes the assembly place for families. Marveling at the starry host when evening arrives and seeing the misty canopy pulling back keeps all who come close to God. Encouraging each other day by day as God lengthens their days and guards them from the deceitfulness of sin.

The wise man, Methuselah, asks,

“How can anyone reject God’s word, when we see the glory of God in the starry host?”

In obedience, those who gather stand in silence, confessing their sins, as together they give their best lamb. Blood drops off the corner of a fieldstone and soaks into the earth.

It is enough! God has promised.

The group then shares a feast of roast flesh, bread soaked in cold-pressed olive oil, sweetness of honey, fruit, and salty spices with infused oils. Grace and love like fragrance fill the park.

Methuselah with his growing ministry of announcing judgment against sin, pulls his father aside as families move toward their own homes.

“Father, we must continually warn one another to avoid the pride we feel in this place.”

Chapter 32 PURPOSE

The ‘People of the Dart Shop,’ as they come to be known, do not anticipate that their public display of traditional sacrifice could cause them so much grief.

Customers begin to talk openly about going to other shops. One former patron confesses to Haran,

“We realize the other shops do not make quality darts like yours, but . . .”

Haran struggles when they close up the old shop in the city center for good. Nokh is not at all surprised. It has been coming to this for a long time.

Customers have stopped coming. Inventory disappears, and prized pieces come up missing. Someone is stealing right under their noses.

Haran says to Enoch with bitterness in his voice,

“It looks like our enemies have won.”

Both families are experiencing the darkness of sin and its results.

They try to understand as they carry the last of their lifework toward Nokh’s house.

“What has happened to our safe, peaceful community?”

Right now, they plan to continue working together in this new location and see what God has for their future.

Enoch becomes uncharacteristically quiet and soft-spoken. He knows God has a purpose in this difficulty too.

He wants to teach their families about sin; how it came into their world; and its dreadful effect on everyone. It leads to death in so many ways.

After many months, thinking that he has done all he can for his family Enoch rests leisurely with Methuselah one fine afternoon and says,

“I wish to travel now to see Mattawn and build a relationship with our families of the West.”

Because of Enoch’s generosity, Haran gratefully receives what is left of the shop, now he gladly becomes its sole owner. They agree that the only way to overcome sin in their own lives is through the gift of the lamb. How to overcome sin in the world is beyond them.

The special river houses, olive groves, and properties will continue as the homes for both families. One lingering question from Haran continues to puzzle Nokh as he prepares for the journey.

“Do you think God wants us to escape out of the world?”

Nokh rejoices to see Haran’s spiritual growth.

Haran says,

“Surely God has put us here for a reason.”

Nokh admits that his cousin, his oldest friend, is right.

“It is wrong to flee.”

From that moment both men attempt to walk with God: Working with their hands, caring for family, not participating in the wickedness of the world, and speaking often about God; his power, and glory.

They also make plans to speak out against the wickedness of the new worship. Methuselah and his family start thinking about their future but are willing to stay in the city for now.

Enoch says,

“We must warn people about the sin of the altar worship in the city.”

Methuselah agrees,

“It celebrates in wicked ungodly ways the wonderful bodies God has created. People worship the worshippers. They become more important than the Creator.”

The same persons frequently add to God’s instruction. Few know why. It seems to come from within: Works of righteousness persons do, even in God’s strength, produce personal significance and elevate a sense of purpose.

Enoch knows that sinful souls cannot atone for their sins. Any form of human endeavor cannot save one soul, let alone the entire world.

Haran still has doubts because of the pull of his family but he overcomes them by faith. He believes! This gives peace in the storm.

Chapter 33 AMBUSH

Haran insists that Nokh take a supply of darts, arrows, and javelins on his journey west. Several of their young men accompany him to carry the load.

Ywek and his cabinet of leaders have other plans. Those who know of Enoch’s venture are sent to ambush and rob Enoch’s party. No one in the city ever accepts responsibility for the thievery.

The thieves return to the city on several different routes. Enoch is allowed to continue his journey alone. His helpers scatter.

Enoch asks himself.

“Did some of our young men who came to help me know about the ambush?”

The increase of violence and wicked behavior of the ungodly will be judged by God, the Holy One.

Haran receives word, as the men return to the city, that his cousin Enoch is safe. He rests in God’s grace.

God’s faithfulness is new every morning. Grace permeates all of life like newly pressed oil running down into the basins, for those who walk with God. Terrible things still happen to good people. The ungodly flourish. God is always faithful.

There is no need to work on javelins and arrows anymore. Success in the olive trees attracts people. Prosperity, when shared generously, blesses all those who come to worship with the growing family at the river.

Worship in the old way continues. They think God is pleased with their form of sacrifice. They enjoy power, prestige, and wealth. Is this new danger threatening their faith in God?

Enoch’s life is gradually restored by the healing waters of Eden. One late evening as he soaks in a luxurious pool of gently massaging, warmer-than-usual water, he reflects,

“God! Thank you for saving me every time. I know you never leave me. Even though I cannot see you, I believe you! You are my family, my best friend.”

His faith grows as his suffering increases. Suffering produces endurance. Endurance produces character and character hope. Hope is not put to shame because God’s love is poured into his inner being.

Joy replaces doubt. Faithfulness, kindness, and gentleness are his garments.

The next day he puts together another altar. This one is all by himself. Instead of a lamb, he presents a meaty bird to the Lord. The blood spills down to the earth.

God has told him that his sins are forgiven when he brings the sacrifice. Those who walk with God know that much of their suffering is the result of their evil thoughts and deeds.

At times he wonders why it has to be this way. God gives him peace in his spirit that this is the way. Enoch is thankful.

There have been many tears. Enoch knows that God cares and keeps track of each one. His time is in God’s hands. He asks,

“Do you keep track of each sin I commit?”

God tells him,

“No, I do not. The blood of the sacrifice removes all unrighteousness.”

This assurance from the Lord brings wonderful peace. God directs. Nokh listens.

“Stay in this place and I will show you great and mighty things.”

Many years later Enoch looks back on this time of quietness as one of the best of his life. There is a peace with God that forgiven sinners know.

His body grows stronger. Food tastes better. Laughter comes easily. Sadness still comes, but there is no regret, bitterness, or blame.

Just as legs get stronger with use, Nokh’s relationship with God spirals upward day by day.

Even his breath brings uplifting words exchanging selfishness for God’s blessing. This brings favor in the sight of God and people.

He loves this walk with God!

His life becomes a relationship. There are no required rituals. Even habits are the result of love, not the source of his life. He still understands life is difficult. Like the blood of the altar, relationships are messy. They are necessary and worth all the trouble.

At times it is like he is swimming upstream with a heavy pack on his shoulders. God gives him strength for each stroke. He continues in faith.

Change in his family, his body, or the world around him does not disrupt his strengthening relationship with God himself.

Sometimes he just floats downstream. God’s hand holds him up like the buoyancy of water in his submission to God’s revealed will.

God assures,

“Your relationship with me does not depend on circumstances. My walk with you is a spiritual reality! I have chosen you!”

Enoch responds,

“God, I love you with all my heart, with all my soul, with my mind and all my strength.”

This faithfulness to God stretches from morning mist to midday warmth until the curtain pulls back to reveal nighttime skies.

Enoch walks with God.

He wonders,

“Is there more? Could I walk to the source of these waters?”

The river beckons but does not answer.

God does.

“Why don’t you try and see where it leads you.”

One last sleep with Mattawn and the people of his neighborhood with its welcome release of the cares of the day. Another goodbye to family and friends. Moments together in corporate worship at an altar, then with this solid statement of faith, Nokh lifts his pack and steps out to wherever the Lord may lead him.

Chapter 34 HUMILITY

Enoch walks as far upriver as he has ever gone. His inner being tells him, after many happy days, that the time has come to turn back.

Solitude is good for its intended purpose but God made us to live in harmony with one another. Upon arrival at the village, now thriving with vigorous youth, working families, and contented older ones Enoch says,

“I am eager to tell you what God has revealed to me during my time upriver.”

Within a few days, he shares.

“God judges all sin. He must do this because he is holy. If he did not act against sin, his character would be flawed.”

All sin is against God’s character. Sin therefore is a form of rebellion against our holy creator.

That old serpent, the devil rebelled against God in the Heavens before the creation of the world. He will be judged for his sin. God says,

“I have already pronounced judgment on him. In my time I will bring it to pass. Right now that wicked fallen angel has tremendous power on earth.”

It grieves God that he made man. No person can escape the corruption of sin by himself. All humans are alienated from the Lord.

Enoch concludes,

“I wept for days and begged God to spare my family from destruction.”

Peace takes over Enoch’s mind when he realizes that his grief is God’s grief. He is weeping because of the judgment coming to the world. Eventually, Nokh learns to weep because of sin. This is the mind of God.

“My sin grieves the Lord. Godly sorrow leads to repentance. This means that I face up to my sin. I receive forgiveness if I humble myself before the Lord at the altar.”

Joy fills the people who hear Enoch. They all sleep well. God’s mercy and truth fill each home in the community. They believe. Enoch blesses God.

Long talks with all who sincerely desire to grow in their relationship with God provide opportunities to understand God’s work in the world.

Ebele, still active among leaders, marvels at God’s faithfulness.

“Is it possible God has blessed us with so many babies?”

They share moments of happiness thinking about the amazing truth of the abilities of women and men to fulfill God’s command to multiply and fill the earth.

Sin had caused much deterioration but the perfection of God’s original work takes generations to weaken. Diseases are rare. Humans live to be hundreds of years of age. Human perfections, pleasing to the eye and a source of pleasure, continued for more than two thousand years.

God reveals the marvelous design of the human body, the heart and blood, the lungs and breath of life, and the birthing of a child through the mother’s womb.

Color, sounds, and touch bring joy. Food with its texture, taste, and aroma adds goodness.

Touch is important to Enoch. He holds his son Mattawn for a long time. There is no embarrassment. Their minds knit together. Enoch misses his wife Orna. It has been many years since she was placed in the earth. There is a hope of seeing her again.

The little ones love sitting on grandpa’s lap. The innocent faith of the youngest inspires older ones to trust God in a childlike way.

Forgiveness goes hand in hand with humility. Followers of God are not offended by the actions of others. Nokh feels no offense that his youngest son moved far away and married a woman from this distant land. Mattawn does not resent the fact that his mother died the day he was born.

Offenses will come, but God teaches them that love covers all sin. Enoch says,

“From life in our mother’s womb, we are all sinners. That is why we all sin and fall far short of God’s glory. Genuine forgiveness which proceeds from humility prevents offenses when others sin against us.”

The peace-loving followers of God humble themselves before God when they forgive all offenses.

God’s promise is repeated often.

“Salvation will come by the offspring of woman.”

Mattawn speaks,

“We should no longer blame Adam and Eve for our sin.”

His wisdom amazes his father when he says,

“Each of us will stand before God for our sin.”

Sin is passed on to all people. It destroys. Grace forgives. Those who come to the altar will receive forgiveness. Enoch prays continually for his large family who still live in the city.

“Oh God! I know you are with them. May they see the wickedness of their world. Please teach them to trust and obey.”

Chapter 35 LEARN

It becomes a priority for Enoch to travel to Adam’s place. A determination to become a friend to his oldest grandfather has driven his prayers for as long as he can remember.

After packing everything needed for a stay of several days he sets out. To build a relationship he will spend time with Adam. He brings gifts of specially crafted darts and plans to serve Adam in any way he can.

Adam had promised to teach Enoch what it is to be human. If anyone in the entire world, now grown to millions of people, knows about humanness, it is the first person—Adam.

Difficulty challenges both of them.

Great grandfather Adam hesitates to open himself to others. Memories of his failure continually weigh heavily on his shoulders. There have been few shoulders for him to lean on.

Adam does not trust himself and thinks often he will never trust others.

Nokh says to God.

“I should have packed for many more days. How do I come close to someone who purposely avoids me? Will I ever be able to hold him as a friend?”

The carefully crafted and prepared gift is almost forgotten in his disappointment that the relationship is moving so slowly. He had shaped it from the choicest hardwood, dark in color with inlaid highlights of rarest blood-red wood. The red extends the length of the dart. A red crosspiece crosses the blade at the hilt.

The hilt is perfectly shaped for the human hand. Its balance is without equal.

Enoch says to God.

“Just as practice using strength, balance, and timing is essential for success in throwing a dart, I am learning to approach Adam patiently.”

God responds.

“Approach wisely! Who are you to demand an audience with this great man who has such deep wounds?”

Adam’s eyes reveal more than he wants people to know. He is an old man with a much younger body. Now more than eight hundred years old, his skin is smooth with no wrinkles. Beautifully shaped muscles define shoulders, hips, and thighs. There is an unsettled peace about his inner man. Adam is tired.

The creative delights of God’s color wheel thrill him, as they have since his first breath of life. He never tires of the deep purples and tints of blue that calm his inner being.

The reds surrounding oranges and yellows of fruit satisfy his hunger for activity and productive work.

Green is his favorite. Adam’s home is the natural green of the deep forest. Accents of multi-tinted lighter greens almost overshadowed with feather-like fern provide what he often calls,

“The full spectrum of God’s favorite color.”

Enoch sits on a boulder to rest.

“I will take my time and talk to God. Since the Lord is everywhere present, I can talk with him while I wait.”

He prays aloud.

“Please, God. I wish to know Adam as a friend. If it pleases you, would you help me in this quest?”

Enoch knows from experience in his relationship with God that prayers are not always answered immediately. He accepts this and trusts God’s timing.

This arrangement of stone where Enoch waits has been placed here by someone. Most rock, as far as he knows, lays hidden under the rich soil, buried under fragrant grasses—hardness, hidden by softness.

When Adam sinned, the curse began. Chaos followed. It came much slower than Adam imagined.

Some of the trees now eight hundred years old have shown little disease or blight. All people live with youthful strength for hundreds of years.

Human vitality becomes a major problem. People begin to think they are invincible. They imagine themselves to be God.

Because Adam’s family has to sweat until it pours off their faces for their wonderful food supply and to raise livestock, they have taken rocks from the ground and used them for markers, enclosures, and protection.

Even from a distance, Adam’s property shows signs of laborious, loving care. God had told him,

“Take care of the earth I have created.”

And then after Adam’s expulsion from the garden,

“Do it by the sweat of your dying body.”

Adam works as if it is part of his redemption. He obeys God with little understanding that his salvation is a gift. His land stands as a testimony of obedience to the Lord, but something is missing.

Enoch concludes,

“I guess the only thing I am learning from Adam about humanness is my need to wait patiently on the Lord, my Creator, and Redeemer.”

Chapter 36 FEAR

A brilliant glow radiates around them like colored glass near the river as light filters through towering deciduous trees.

Adam looks for a long while at the nearest elm and says,

“You cannot know what it was like before sin destroyed so many things to which we had become accustomed.”

Enoch looks intently into Adam’s eyes and is surprised that Adam eagerly returns the gaze and concludes,

“Trees remind me of all that I have lost. Memories make me sad. I overcome sorrow by focusing on God, our Creator, his power, and his wisdom.”

Thoughts flood Enoch’s mind.

“I never thought Adam would be like this. His fear-ridden face and slow speech startle me.”

Adam does not notice Enoch’s questioning gaze. He continues,

“God has taken care of me these many days since I sinned. That was more than eight hundred cycles of the sun ago.”

There is silence. Finally.

“What if I fail God again?”

After a long pause in which Nokh waits without embarrassment,

“I was a man, fully man, human before I sinned.”

Sin does not make Adam more of a man. God created Adam, fully a man on the sixth day of creation. Even though sin reigns, Adam is no less a man. Enoch struggles to get his head around this truth. Despite his questions, he rejoices to see this day when patient endurance reaps great blessing.

Adam invites him into his home freely and begins to open his inner thoughts. Hours become days. Days stretch out to weeks. Finally, this relationship with the original man comes to fruition.

Nokh has been all right with waiting. God has taught him that love is patient. He wants a friendship with Adam as much as he desires to walk with God. Then Enoch realizes that he cannot walk with God without walking with Adam if Adam walks with God.

They will become walkers together with God!

Adam speaks slowly, almost reflectively.

“Why does anxiety about rejection steal my joy?”

At times he does not need to speak. His eyes reveal what he is thinking. The intensity of dark pupils drills deeply into Nokh’s soul, like a fiery flame.

Yes, fear shows. But there is so much more—wisdom, understanding, regret, glimmers of hope, frailty, humanness, the image of God. Faith emanates from his deeply tanned face. Miraculously worry has left no wrinkles even after centuries of life.

Adam confesses.

“Eve believed that the sacrifice like our son Abel offered, was the way to find peace with God. At times she fought a fierce battle with assurance.”

Adam’s head drops in shame, his eyes hidden from Enoch.

“I fight the same war.”

Then Adam looks to the majestic trees and questions,

“Is it enough to bring my lamb to the altar? Do I need to do more to cover my sin? What if I have not done enough?”

It has been a long time since God has spoken to mankind. These long silences cause the faith of many to falter. Adam and Enoch are not without a doubt.

A glimmer of hope returns to Adam’s eye.

“I yearn for the Lord! Every morning I rejoice to see another day. I wait for God’s assuring word.”

Water flowing from the direction of Eden reminds them of all that has been lost. At the same time, it gives testimony of God’s faithfulness.

Water for life. Sunlight for warmth and food. Towering trees offer protection. God is in control of all things.

Enoch learns quickly that it is human to doubt. Deep within his spirit, he touches God. He receives a few answers to life’s puzzling complexity.

“Faith in God’s revealed will, even his ancient words, is enough.”

Fears melt away like the flickering glow of evening lamplight’s last gleam. He rests.

With encouragement and childlike faith, the two men, one very old, the other quite young, seek to enjoy God’s provision of rest, power, and love.

Chapter 37 GUILT

While others often criticize and even condemn Adam for original sin, Enoch forgives with grace and shows it in his actions and words. His growing relationship with Adam has helped both of them to love God more.

Obedience is a natural result of love. When the Lord directs Enoch to return to his family in the city, he immediately makes plans to go. The trip home, even though he is not sure where home is anymore, provides an opportunity for peace knowing he has accomplished so much. He cherishes incredible growing times with Adam.

“If I had lived in Adam’s time in the Garden of Eden, I may have done what he did. The temptation was real. Did he encourage Eve to disobey first? God’s word does not return void. Satan told them the truth.”

Nokh thinks he could stand true, but doubt keeps him balanced.

“My mind is willing, but my flesh is weak.”

Enjoyment stretching out his journey east does not make him feel guilty. It is who he is. Even so, he is excited to reconnect with his children, grandchildren, and friends.

Word has come that they need him. Love fills his heart with eyes wide open to the ravages of death, disease, and rebellion on the journey. Enoch imagines sin has caused serious difficulty in his own family. His family now numbers in the thousands. Sin’s curse is real and it undoubtedly affects his home too.

Methuselah, who remains true to God, meets with his father to weep, and pray. Enoch says,

“We cannot atone for the sins of other people, not even our children.”

This increase in ungodliness has no end. Enoch proclaims God’s word of coming judgment.

Methuselah says,

“They tell us that their worship of God is the new way, the right way.”

Enoch adds with hope,

“Oh for a fresh word from God!”

Then his son’s response startles Nokh.

“The Lord has put within our beings the knowledge of good and evil.”

Enoch begins to understand humanity through a different lens.

“That is why our ancestor Adam struggles.”

Adam knows sin as no other person. His descendants have the same conscience that God has given all people, but they also have the rules and regulations imposed on them by other people.

As the years have passed they have difficulty sorting it out. What is from God? Which laws are from men?

Each person, by conscience, must determine the path to righteousness. This is intensely personal. It comes from a relationship with God himself. The Lord strengthens those who walk with him. Guilt crushes the ones who disobey or ignore God’s revealed will.

Because Adam had violated God’s holiness he labored many years under the horrible weight of sin.

As Methuselah and Enoch discuss these things they remind each other that they do not need a new word from God.

“We have been told what we should do.”

With determination to obey, they agree to continue faithfully in their obedient walk with God. They wholeheartedly agree,

“There is no other way to seek forgiveness for sin.”

Quiet assurance gives them confidence to deal with all the circumstances muddling up their lives. Their families are wading into the deep cesspool of twisted religion. The altars have been cast aside as old-fashioned and unnecessary. New forms of religion focus on man rather than on God.

Reports converge from several directions that the monthly festivals have evolved into a celebration of human life with an honor reserved for the seed of men. Their women love the virile athleticism that this promotes.

The sons of God receive special recognition. They have become gods. Children also receive great honor. They willingly offer themselves up in the excitement of these frenzied nights of celebration.

Because Adam has isolated himself from the sin-culture of these early days, he has no idea that this wickedness increases.

God protects him from knowing the full extent of mankind’s depravity. If he struggles with his guilt, how could he bear the perversions of mankind on his shoulders? The Lord does not choose Adam as the bearer of the sin of the world.

Enoch wishes he could bear the guilt of his cousin Haran but knows each person stands before God exposed and alone. No one can hide from God. Haran’s accomplishments of leadership, wealth, and worship will not provide salvation.

The oil production located at Enoch’s old homestead now produces the best in the region. Once his family was famous for arrows, javelins, and darts. Now their olive oils provide immense fame and wealth for the entire family.

Haran gladly shares this wealth with Enoch. He remains loyal to their relationship and love for years gone by.

Nokh prays they can agree on belief in God. No longer do they discuss beliefs to maintain peace. Haran’s conscience has gotten muddled with rules and regulations; new ones and old, including the ancient words from God.

Enoch rests,

“My family follows different paths, but I will keep the original word of the Lord.”

He settles himself with a clear conscience, enjoying freedom from the guilt of his sin.

Chapter 38 ANGER

Life in the city could never be the same for Enoch. Prosperity as a result of the olive grove with its production of fine oils, the growing popularity of the family bringing them power in the community, and congenial relationships within the families make Enoch feel like he does not belong here.

The materialism and satisfaction of every fleshly desire increases along with these prosperities. Such attractions no longer appeal to Enoch. He prays,

“Lord, please help me to fulfill your will here. You have brought me here for a purpose and I will stay as long as you wish.”

Enoch preaches the word of the Lord to all who will listen. Haran does not like his cousin’s boldness and speaks out against it often.

They finally decide to go separate ways and dissolve all partnerships. A great concern of Nokh is protecting his children and grandchildren. Many are given positions of responsibility and will maintain possession of Enoch’s old home and the mature grove of olive trees.

Some of the trees are now over a hundred years old and produce wonderful crops without fail.

Several of Enoch’s children continue working with Haran. A son becomes skilled in crafting darts and Haran helps him revive the dart shop. His reputation spreads rapidly.

Nokh grieves over this final division of spiritual issues within his family.

The extended family gathers periodically for feasting, fellowship, and playful games.

After the separation agreement, the whole group meets in the old grove, which provides a perfect place for celebration with succulent meals from their sacrifices at the altar. The wine flows freely. Infused oils are amazing.

It is generally the place of honor for the older ones to pour out the blood of the sacrifice as a portion dedicated to God.

On this day, the younger ones crowd in with incantations, loud drumming, and vigorous flailing that they insist is necessary to please God.

Enoch drops his head in shame and steps away from the spectacle. Tears well up in his eyes. Khavu, his youngest daughter, stands by him and says,

“This is why we called you home with such urgency.”

Amazed he responds,

“Does this bother you?”

“This spiritual division,”

She answers while looking toward the larger group of relatives.

“It has caused me to question my love for God. Should I choose my family over my love for God?”

She quietly whispers in his ear.

“What can we do to bring our family back to godliness? How can we have a strengthening relationship with God when we do not obey his word?”

Enoch feels a responsibility to help but honestly does not know what to do.

The joy of family celebration soon explodes as two young men bloody each other in a serious fight about some small difference. This fight is on the same meadow next to the river where Enoch and Orna’s firstborn was conceived so many years ago.

Now it has become a muddied slope where allies join in what some think is a good-natured wrestling match but hands and faces testify to the intensity of one man’s hatred for another.

What can a father do?

“To rule by force and anger is not my solution,”

Enoch replies to his daughter,

“If I lead by anger, I am no better than they are.”

By evening, which comes quietly, the protecting curtain of mist draws back. Stars blaze brightly. This majestic sight quiets a small group that remains.

“Violence increases among our families since evil multiplies.”

One of the group says slowly measuring her words,

“The minds of these sons of God are continually devising new schemes of wickedness.”

All relationships are breaking down.

Another adds,

“It is not about love for God, it is love for the people God created.”

Selfishness increases. Love falters. Words must be chosen carefully. Offenses come far too easily.

Enoch attempts to share what he has learned from Adam.

“Sadness permeates everything he says, his work, and even his sleep.”

He goes on to tell what Adam says about the human condition.

“Anger enrages Adam because of his failure.”

Often the sinner does not understand the ways of God. Because he has drifted away from the Lord, he turns some of his anger toward God.

On top of his feelings, he drew his wife Eve into this web of distrust. He blamed Eve for the original sin he committed.

Years later they both find a measure of peace as the Lord reveals his plan for hope.

He had told Enoch.

“Once God makes a person, an angel, a woman, or a man, that person will live forever.”

God calls it immortality. However, each person is responsible for the use of this time God has given.

Anger leads to death which for people created in the image of God is a temporary separation of the body and soul.

Adam said,

“Our firstborn son Cain traveled the road to destructive anger. We did not want to follow his evil way.”

Their inner spirit breaks when Cain murders his brother. Years later, long before Eve dies, Adam comes to terms with God’s plan for eternal life.

Now, the wasted years haunt him. He still sacrifices. He tries to obey God. He questions. Regret taunts.

God’s love, his consistent mercy, grace, and gentleness, conquers. Trust grows. Enoch’s word of faith builds the faith of others. A few people in his family and the community turn from sinful behavior.

Everyone who trusts God is forgiven. God accepts them. He remembers their sin no more.

Enoch rejoices!

Chapter 39 DEATH

Enoch loves the travels that take him west, upstream toward his family who live closer to the ancient garden God named Eden. Excitement rises with every step.

A few of the families in the city give assurance that they will continue loving God and one another. Enoch enjoys freedom but wherever he goes he intentionally builds relationships with all who God puts in his path.

He learned from his time with Adam, on his former visits, the importance and value of friendship. It was not what Adam said, it was what Adam did not do. He lives in isolation.

How can we love our neighbors if we don’t know them? How can we know them if we don’t spend time together?

While walking Enoch thinks through the things he has learned from Adam.

“Those who draw back into isolation are sad. I need growing relationships with my family and neighbors to enjoy the life God wants me to live.”

Relationships are messy. They are worth it.

“And I can tell others the messages from God when I become their friend.”

For seasoned hikers, the journey is part of the fun. God has given Enoch a message and he is determined to dedicate the rest of his time to doing this work God has entrusted to him.

Most people live to be well over eight hundred years of age before they die. Enoch is now approaching three hundred years since his birth. He still has an incredible amount of time left to do God’s will.

As violence increases it is dangerous to go alone to distant places. A good outcome for Enoch is that his family insists he not go alone on this journey. Someone must walk with him.

Wherever Enoch goes he faithfully tells God’s message with gentleness and respect. Friends agree that his actions support the message. When alone he tells it out loud to himself. If others go with Enoch they hear God’s word too.

Even though others poke fun at him behind his back, they respect him and desire to protect him.

Haran, after much prodding, comes with Enoch on this trip. The time together takes several more days than usual because they leisurely explore and enjoy the waters and surrounding forests. The two talk a lot too.

Some things they do not talk about. It still grieves Nokh that his cousin appears to have accepted the new ways of worshipping the Lord at the exciting city festivals.

Wisdom leads him to guard his lips. He knows the trouble that the tongue can stir up. It can be like a raging fire. Such a small member wields great power.

Nokh learns to pray continually. Haran, his best friend from years ago, always receives a mention in the prayers.

They go to Adam’s place and stay with him for one full week. Each of the seven days, who decided that each week should have seven days, Adam tells the facts as told to him by God about each of the seven days of creation.

His revived interest in God’s handiwork stirs him and he tells with heightened drama the wonders he was told by God in their walks together in the garden in the cool of the day.

The day for Enoch and Haran is always the same. Bright sun filters through the mist which waters the earth and then as day advances the mist draws away to reveal the stars. The sun moves off to the vast waters and disappears over the sphere of the earth.

Adam is sure he walked with God in the late afternoon. He remembers the sunset glow casting rosy tinted light on their path.

As Enoch and Haran leave Adam’s wonderful home which is situated to blend in seamlessly with the surrounding nature, Haran questions.

“How old did Adam claim to be?”

Enoch has an answer.

“He has carefully measured his days and marked the sun and the circle of the earth. This time shows Adam is nine-hundred and seventeen cycles.”

Adam can describe God’s work in making time and space. Haran is intrigued by these thoughts.

“God created light and water—the two things that make our world a safe place to live.”

Enoch agrees,

“God created time. That is how we know how old we are.”

Haran says,

“How old are you, Enoch?”

Enoch knows because of his time with Adam.

“I am three-hundred and twenty-one.”

They are approaching Mattawn’s place and Haran agrees to rest for a few days. It will lengthen their journey but Haran eagerly agrees.

He still expresses doubt about Adam’s behavior and attitude.

“Why is Adam fearful and burdened with guilt if he knows God forgives sin?”

As he says this, he thinks without saying it,

“At least our celebration of life at the monthly festival brings us joy, and peace, and fulfills our duty to God.”

Enoch senses this doubt and says,

“God gives rest to those who walk with Him.”

Haran is drawn into Mattawn’s family. They welcome him with fantastic food and lots of laughter. His inner spirit softens.

After staying several happy days with Mattawn, meeting Ebele’s extended clan, and hearing the old stories, Haran has a renewed respect for God and his word.

His joy puts a bounce on each step towards home. Enoch, in an opposite mood, labors with his steps. He wonders,

“What is happening in Mattawn and Ebele’s community?”

Young and old alike faithfully bring their sacrifices and vows to the Lord at the altar. They come with genuine passions of love for God and one another.

But disease and death increase among them!

“Why is God judging them when the ungodly live long happy lives?”

Chapter 40 LOVE

Time passes. Enoch uses it for God’s glory. Once again, he is with Adam. They have become intimate friends.

“I have now lived nine hundred and twenty-three years.”

Adam says as he shares roast lamb with the one he has learned to trust.

They have sacrificed a lamb at an altar according to the explicit instructions that had been given to him and his family so many years ago.

“Is it enough for you to still come the way God taught us?”

Enoch replies,

“Yes, it is difficult when the sons of God tell us we need to follow their new ways to please God.”

To be honest he struggles with envy when false teachers enjoy incredible success. He wants his own family to agree with him. So many love the world more than they love God. This love of pleasure results in sinful compromise.

“I admit the festivals are spectacular and demonstrate so many glories of God’s creation.”

Adam wisely warns,

“You will struggle with fleshly desires all the days of your life.”

The Lord is teaching both of them to not only expect trials but to joyfully welcome them.

Adam feels he has little to share. Enoch finds that time spent with him reveals a depth of wisdom. Walls fall away. Love grows.

Adam realizes his desire for isolation violates God’s plan. He says,

“God created us with a need for love, but it is only possible to love one another when we trust God.”

Enoch’s understanding of faith, obedience, and forgiveness grows stronger the more he knows God. His growing relationship with God gives him the power to overcome trials and temptation.

Those who never grasp the horrible weight of sin are robbed of their peace and the ability to genuinely love one another. Enoch wonders,

“Is this Adam’s burden to bear?”

Adam certainly did not know the result of sin until he sinned.

With his faith and desire to please God Enoch begins to isolate himself from the people of the world. He remembers long and sometimes awkward visits with Adam. His forefather becomes his best friend. He often prays,

“Thank you, Father, for the things I am learning. I humble myself before you. I accept my need. If I live as long as Adam, I have more than five hundred years to live.”

The companionship of friends who love God and others strengthens their testimony in the world. They cannot force other people to change, but they use all means possible to speak God’s truth.

Words from God become their words.

Disease devastates some communities. Whenever Enoch visits Mattawn’s people he smells the stench of death. His youngest son sees it too. They hate death as much as they hate sin.

No one expects to live forever. God has cut them off from the Tree of Life. Believers walk with God, and they remain faithful even though they die at young ages. Much younger than the wicked people of the city.

God’s ways are not our ways!

Death is a separation. At times it comes suddenly.

Nokh knows that those who die young are blessed for they are escaping by God’s grace the coming judgment. Believers who die are not going to face the wrath of God on earth.

Mattawn humbly shares with his father,

“Our love for God helps us face the inevitable result of sin.”

Enoch receives these beautiful words with thankfulness. The fear of the Lord brings wisdom. He reminds himself,

“Wisdom from above is pure and peaceable.”

He understands God’s love.

“Thank you, God! Precious in your eyes is the death of your saints.”

Chapter 41 LIFE

He does not often choose to leave the security of his home, but Adam braces himself to go against the inevitable emotional storm and accompany Enoch. Mattawn and his wife Elena, have added another boy to their growing family.

Mattawn greets them warmly as he runs out to welcome them.

“Elena wishes to speak with you.”

He says to Adam after a pause in the greeting. Mattawn’s eyes squint together playfully as they pierce into the very soul of his forefather.

Adam steps back deep in thought.

“This is why I do not like venturing far from the quiet peace of my solitary life at home. I don’t like to travel. Talks about the past pain my inner being.”

Even though his body has youthful strength, his soul withers.

Girls and boys bound toward Enoch with laughter as the party approached the waiting family. Nokh reaches out gathering them in his arms, kneeling right down to meet their eyes.

One of the children eagerly announces,

“Thank you for coming, we have a new baby brother.”

Another tugs his hand,

“Come meet him!”

A great, great-great-grandfather’s presence often makes the younger ones feel uncomfortable. This time they are surprised he reaches out and beckons the youngest ones to snuggle right on his lap.

They share a warm and happy time of family love. Few things in this world bring joy as much as harmonious family time.

Mother and baby are ready to receive them. Elena casts her eyes from the baby into the eyes of her aged grandfather.

Her depth of sweetness and respect makes Adam uncomfortable. She says,

“Thank you for coming to visit me. This is one of the greatest honors of my life. I love you, grandfather.”

He takes her hand with a thoughtful caress and says,

“It is my honor to meet you. What do you wish to ask me?”

Adam typically spends little time with small talk. The others sense that this is a private moment between the two and quietly step away.

“Even though we have never met face to face, I feel a deep love for you that I cannot always explain, even to myself.”

She begins. Her eyes sparkle with simplicity and natural unadorned beauty even though she has experienced the profound pain of childbirth.

Adam steps back wishing to distance himself from her sweetness. He lifts his arm as if protecting himself and says,

“How can you say you love me when I am responsible for your pain?”

‘Oh grandfather, please listen to me.’

She continues,

“How can I show you my love?”

His ready answer catches him by surprise.

“Forgive me for what I have done to you and all women. It is more than the pain of giving birth. You have become the weaker vessel with a monthly cycle of difficulty.”

Elena looks away as Adam continues.

“No man knows the periodic discomfort and weakness of the flow of blood.”

Elena hides her eyes with her delicate hand.

“You are right! No man understands. God has helped me overcome this too.”

After an embarrassingly long silence,

“If I had been chosen to live in the garden as you and my great-grandmother, would I have done it differently?”

She looks out at the towering greatness of the gently swaying trees visible through the opening around her comfortable bed and ponders.

“If I stood where Eve stood, I may have resisted but I do not know that. I do know that God has said we will be saved through childbearing. I thank him that I am privileged to give life.”

Then rather abruptly Elena asks,

“How long will my baby live?”

Her ancient grandfather answers.

“I have now lived more than nine hundred and twenty-five years. Only God knows how long others will live.”

She respectfully says,

“That is not what I mean. You are speaking of life as a human on this sinful earth. You know that death came from sin. What is death? Once life begins does it ever end?”

Adam says,

“Your wisdom exceeds that of many others. I have hope for a life that never ends because of God’s promise. I am not sure what that life will look like, but I believe.”

He tells her about the separation that came between him and God. The promise of everlasting salvation through the seed of woman he receives by faith. That is all God requires of him.

Adam believes God and it is counted to him for righteousness. The proof of his belief is faithfulness to sacrifice at an altar as God has instructed.

“One thing I know without doubt is that we all are created in the image of God and God does not die!”

He tenderly watches over her as her eyes close and she falls into a peaceful sleep holding her precious baby tight against her breast.

Her question has been answered.

Adam returns to his home accompanied by several young people. They have found a deep respect for him and experience much joy as he teaches them from God’s word and his life story.

Adam finishes well spending the last years of his life enjoying the fruit of forgiveness, experiencing purpose for living, and resting in peace.

Chapter 42 DIRECTION

Five years later, Mattawn helps his father lower Adam’s cold body to the ground. They carefully and respectfully shovel fragrant soil on top of it, protecting it from increasingly wild animals.

Wildness is a problem. Reports come from the lands of the east that lions devour people. Violence increases. People no longer travel alone. Danger surrounds everyone. People are frightened in the forest, on the roadways, and in the city.

Walls now protect families who are fortunate enough and have the means to build them. Strong tactics are cleverly devised to force men to labor with little personal reward.

Knife throwing has become more than a sport. Every man must protect his property. Extended families band together in settlements. Haran’s and Enoch’s families in the city prosper with their olive groves and shops, which still make the best knives and tools.

Enoch laments,

“Our tools are being used as weapons to maim, murder, and promote false worship.”

He lost his beloved wife years ago. Now that his friend Adam has gone to his grave, Enoch ponders what the future holds for him. He never escapes the reality of death.

“Where is Orna? Where is Adam? I believe God has told us that death is a temporary separation. The body is in the ground, but the spirit is immortal.”

God created all people in his image. Like him, we are unique. He gave us a body and a soul. We each possess intellect. We have freedom of choice. It is all wrapped up in personalities that overflow with passion and emotion.

Memories of Adam’s words fill empty places in Enoch’s thinking. Elena and Mattawn, and many others including Ebele and her families, often discuss ways to encourage those who have lost loved ones. They had seen too many people finish poorly. For some, it sucks the life out of them. Death conquers life.

Enoch’s eyes twinkle as he says to the group traveling together to a special place for worship and sacrifice.

“You think you are planning, but it looks more like a plot to me.”

After struggling with her emotions, Elena says,

“Please don’t be upset. We are looking out for your best interest.”

Mattawn adds,

“Dad, would you at least listen to us and our plans?”

Enoch does not say what he is thinking.

“Why does our sacrifice, which is so rich in meaning, cause us to question one another’s motives?

He hates to admit it, but they are right. Adam’s death has affected him more than he knows.

Can he walk with God and also maintain control of his own life? For two hundred years Enoch has been the patriarch of the family. They now number in the thousands. So many are prosperous, successful, talented, and respected. Too many of them have gone along with the excitement of the festival.

Those who do not approve of idolatry and its worship of the creation rather than the Creator refuse to live in the city.

However, once again, God leads Enoch to invest more time and energy into the lives of his family who live in the city. He wonders,

“If I live among them, will it make a difference?”

The time has come. Enoch will walk with God even though it means that he will be surrounded by the false teaching of the city.

He has learned from his time with Adam about the pitfalls of a reclusive life. God wants those who walk with him to make a difference in the lives of others, especially those of one’s own family. If Enoch attempts to help his family to obey God—his work is not done.

Mattawn does not agree with his dad. Elena helps him understand and they reluctantly agree to give up their plans and respect Nokh’s desire to leave them once again.

He generally makes the journey part of the fun for God has taught him the importance of enjoying each moment. Would this hike turn out to be enjoyable? He realizes times have changed. Dangers have increased. Is he foolish to take this trip alone?

Time alone can be beneficial when people love God. Surprised by joy, the days and nights pass slowly. He often talks right out loud.

“I know I am not alone. God assures me he will never leave me. I have little knowledge of how that can be, but I believe!”

Belief motivates actions. Each day ends with praise, confession, with submission to God. He enjoys an evening meal of simple grains and meat that had been offered to God at a sacrifice. The thought of blood dripping down its sides reminds him of his need for repentance and continual trust in God.

Obedience heightens his joy and even though he does not comprehend why God requires the blood, he knows in his heart that God’s way is the best. Those who walk with God follow the leader.

The Lord assures him that he can eat the flesh after the blood is spilled. A few citizens of Ebele’s community disagreed and left to form their community north of the Euphrates over the issue of eating meat offered at the altar.

Enoch does not argue about these issues. He quietly follows his conviction, remaining true to the ancient instructions from God.

Chapter 43 WITNESS

Enoch does not have a plan on how he will live for God’s glory, as he heads to the city. He has followed the call and knows he will continue the way he has been living for over two hundred years.

The city is now within a long day’s journey. He recalls the moment Orna gave birth to their firstborn child, Methuselah, the man of the spear. His son is now well over two hundred years old.

The wisdom he received from Adam integrates seamlessly with knowledge gained from God by special revelation. He has written and rewritten snippets of truth during the last few years. These words are now tied together in a bundle that he carries with him wherever he travels. He has become a traveling man. In stark contrast, the majority of people stay within a few communities of their birthplace.

It is his treasure. This account of life from deep within his inner self has moved out through his being to form a haphazard collection of precepts from his experience with God and others. There are a few rules. Faith is a priority.

God had said they were to bring the sacrifice when approaching him. He wrote,

“You may come boldly if you listen to God’s instructions. Those who trust God know that obedience finds favor and good understanding with God and people.”

Nokh believes in God’s forgiveness. He is not so positive about forgiveness from other people. He knows controlling other adults is wrong. He places other people in God’s hands.

Guilt often plagues him as it did Adam. They do not pretend to be as holy as God. Nokh struggles with the concept of holiness.

“What does it mean?”

Temptations often win the upper hand in his mind. Peace with God is a promise to which he clings. His message is consistent. It does not change.

As he approaches the edge of his former world, fear grips him. He has not returned since long before Adam died. Death still holds menacing horrors.

Life among his family and friends gives little promise of godliness. Lamech was born to Methuselah. Enoch fears the path he will choose. Will he live a godly life or follow the way of the city?

Grandparents take pride in the accomplishments of their descendants.

Each little flower along the pathway, ancient trees standing strong, spears fashioned by kids, and food harvested, remind him of his youth.

Orna still fills his mind. She is still the love of this earth for him. He does say,

“I love God more than anything else.”

Silent desires flare. Pride is a concern. He honestly attempts, sometimes not too successfully, to avoid judging others, especially their motives.

But the big concern is the world in which he lives. Why has God’s beautiful creation taken such an ugly turn? What can one man do to make a difference in this sin-cursed world?

He asks,

“Can I help others when I struggle to keep myself in shape?”

Satan had revealed himself as a snake. The sinister attack of serpents, some of them throwing fiery darts into vulnerable flesh, had long ago been accepted as an accurate description of the devilish attack on God-followers.

Enoch knows he is not exempt from temptation and recalls how Adam reluctantly describes Eve’s temptation. God blamed her, not Satan. Nokh does not cast blame on others but takes responsibility for his sin. He alone bears the weight of his sinfulness.

A group of women approach and recognize him as the walker from days long ago. They chide,

“It was his pride that did him in.”

One shouts out,

“Even his children know how his arrogance has divided the family.”

Another of the group whispers loud enough for all to hear,

“He thinks he is always right!”

Others agree,

“We’re sick and tired of these people who put themselves above us as if we are trash under their feet.”

Children come running alongside throwing stones. No one stops them.

Enoch has been gone for many cycles of the moon. Bitter roots dig deep in their hearts. The adults have passed this resentment to the next generation.

God has shown Nokh mercy and truth. He hangs on to the promise. As the Lord has been good to him, he will demonstrate the same mercy to others.

Loving and gentle mercy, looking out for the good of others becomes the preferred response if Enoch settles successfully into this changing world. He preaches God’s truth.

“God judges all sin.”

He has learned the severe mercy of the Lord.

Chapter 44 REJECTION

Can a man return when relationships have withered? Time has passed. Words of appreciation are no longer spoken. There is no service, no gifts. How can he touch the family when they are so far away?

Without reconciliation, relationships will die!

Enoch should have known that the warmth of family ties had smoldered into ashes—like the fire he woke up next to last morning. For a person his age such a journey is easy enough but the grip of uncertainty weighs heavily with each step.

“Who is that strange man coming toward us?”

A grandson warns. Mothers scurry away calling their young ones to shelter. Lovers sit up and withdraw into the shadows.

His voice is weak and raspy.

“I am weary from this journey.”

Perhaps he is too late. Did he eat something that has upset his stomach? Should he even have come on this journey?

Enoch questions.

“What can I do, O God? You have promised to be with me in everything.”

It is not easy but belief conquers.

A word from God comes into his mind.

“The wrath of man does not fulfill the righteousness of God.”

He makes a desperate decision.

“Humble yourself in the eyes of the Lord and he will lift you up.”

The battle is the Lords!

“I am Enoch. Is there a place for me to shelter here?”

There is little honor for Enoch tonight. Other things throughout the evening leave little room for him. He becomes a watcher, half dazed with fever, on the edges.

Some big thing is about to happen. He has never seen such a frenzy of preparation, elaborate dresses, and final rehearsals. Carefully choreographed dance and drama, disciplined levels of perfection, and human endeavor.

The food. The drink. The fragrances make Enoch sicker.

The arrogance. They present themselves as Gods. His righteous spirit grieves to see the passion, the dedication of purpose. All in the name of God.

Alertness eludes Enoch. They provide a comfortable bower for rest. His needs are met. Just barely.

Has God deserted him?

A mind cries out.

God answers with a peaceful rest.

“I have led you this far, do not doubt. You have a mission to let all people know that judgment is coming. The world is spiraling downward. There is no turning back.”

God has decided to destroy every living thing that lives on the face of the earth. However, those who obey God will escape.

Will he find faith on the earth?

Nokh wrestles with the call and then falls into a deep exhaustion of rest. Peace flows. He walks through the green pastures of the soul, refreshed by still waters.

At this point in his life, Nokh understands that he is a complete person—with no division. He is like a tower standing alone, weathering the storm, and not crumbling.

Just as God is one—Enoch is one. Flesh. Blood. Bones. Desire. Knowledge. Touch. Taste. Smell. Sight. Sounds.

He wakens. Two days later. His fevers abate. Evening stars shine brightly. As clearly as he has ever seen them. The failing moon slips away toward the lands of the setting sun.

Patience replaces anger. Forgiveness soothes. God will have his way.

Family surrounds him with previously withheld comforts. The attention startles him.

Was it all a bad dream? They tell him he missed the best festival worship of the year.

What Enoch does not know is the newest teaching of the leaders of this false worship of the festival.

The keepers of the great silver moon celebration have made an issue of tolerance. They say,

“We must accept one another. There is no right or wrong. Let each person do what is right in his own eyes. Tolerance is godliness.”

Now Enoch understands. Their attentions tonight are not about him. They still reject his belief. They turn away from his God—to a God of their own making.

Enoch’s God is a God of judgment.

Their God is love.

Enoch is one messenger among many. He is accepted for his dedication to what he believes.

His message is rejected.

Chapter 45 CARE

The peace of God controls Nokh’s mind. This happens after he submits and agrees with what God has asked him to do. He rests in the outcome. It is in the hands of the Lord.

No longer does he feel that it is his work to change other people. He cannot give attitudes of the heart. Can he even force another to grow in faith?

His earnest prayer reaches out to God for his family. That they will grow in grace and knowledge of God.

This freedom allows him to show thankfulness in all circumstances.

Often they come as an invasion. Violence increases. At times they are comfortable and light as a warm blanket. Can a person welcome circumstances, good and bad? Enoch tries.

Most of the family do not follow the way of the Lord. This makes him sad. Happiness of spirit, often called joy, replaces sadness as he relies on the Lord every step of the way.

“I have learned to even thank God for the death that surrounds us.”

Enoch tells Methuselah. The two, just father and son, are sharing the noon meal under olive trees, warmed by filtered sunlight. The shadows glow with color.

“Your faith Father has been a good example to all of us. Thank you.”

“I know I have failed by pursuing my interests.”

Like many of his generation, Enoch admits he could have done more to be a good father.

His son wisely says,

“It’s not too late. Today you may begin by joining us for the evening. Just do not judge others.”

“Thank you my firstborn son of the dart. I am listening to your counsel.”

How does a person rebuild broken relationships? Without God’s help, Enoch will fail. It would be foolish to walk the way of Adam. There has to be a better way.

Nokh searches his inner self,

“Change will start within my own heart.”

He cares about other people.

“My life has been too easy. I thank the lord for this adversity too.”

His faith is strengthened just in time because trouble rushes in. One thing helps him keep his focus. Bring the sacrifice to the altar. Pour out the blood to God.

Rejoice in forgiveness. Come boldly into the presence of God.

Nokh spends time with family, not sure if it makes much difference. He listens, keeps talking with people, praises accomplishments, and gives gifts sacrificially.

Cousin Haran becomes the greatest challenge. Nokh misses intimacy with him and often complains in his prayers,

“What will I do about my cousin? We are closer than brothers or once were. How can our friendship fail?”

It was not about the javelin shop or the family business. Haran is kind. He shares generously. It is a matter of the heart. How can two walk together when they go in opposite directions?

Haran usually will not talk about the inner thoughts of the soul. He sticks with business. Nokh looks up in surprise when he says,

“Why won’t you just relax and stop this need for your way? Is it not the cause of division among us?”

Haran’s body tenses. His eyes narrow. The tanned face flushes as he spits out the words.

Nokh steps back and thinks quickly.

“Silence or defense? Oh God help me! From deep waters, I cry out to you.”

Finally,

“It does matter. I love God and I love you too. Please do not make me choose between you and the Lord!”

Haran looks straight into his eyes.

“Are you saying I don’t love God? I do love him. Please let me show it in my way.”

“Who gives you the authority to say that the blood of the festival will replace the sacrifice God commanded our ancestors to offer?”

Haran keeps himself under control and replies quietly.

“That is where we see things differently. Do you think Ywek, the sons of God who are mighty among us, and our enlightened leaders would take us down the wrong path?”

Enoch responds with a mono-tone sound. He leaves room for God to convict of sin, of righteousness, and judgment.

His responsibility is to tell the message. He will not compromise. Judgment is coming. He speaks truth seasoned with salt. If God is gracious, he will speak with grace.

“Haran, I would like to address the leaders of our city. Do you think you could call a meeting like that?”

Haran says with lightness, almost relief in his voice.

“I will not promise, but I am willing to try. Thank you for being reasonable.”

He walks quickly into a crowd on the busy street and an overwhelming feeling of peace floods Nokh’s inner self. He has done what God asks of him today.

Later Enoch’s mind rehearses the drama.

“I love my family. I do care about their future. O Lord, please help me to show them the way. I wish to prove in the power of your name the way of life.”

The last thing that lingers on his whole being before sleep, is his prayer,

“May Haran embrace the truth.”

Chapter 46 FELLOWSHIP

Haran does not delay arranging a meeting. His accumulated wealth from the oils and ability to propagate the finest olive trees gives him a position of honor, with respect, in the city.

Many of the javelins, darts, and spears that he and Nokh had made were still proudly displayed as some of the finest ever made.

‘The meeting is arranged for the first week after the great festival.’

His cousin says during fellowship over a meal. Enoch asks if they could make a sacrifice together before the meeting. Haran has too many things to get done and wants to put it off until it is more convenient.

“God please, I need your help! I’m afraid. I don’t know what to say to the officials. Your words are true. How can these men understand?”

Enoch prays earnestly. He wants the leaders to accept him and make changes because of what he has to say.

The festival consumes the attention of everyone. Children look forward to the dances and music. The food treats sweetened with honey delight young and old alike. A new drink made from the fruit of the vine gives people a feeling of euphoria. A plant-based mixture when chewed makes participants do wicked things with no consciousness of the outcome.

Enoch stays as far away from it as he can. The spirit of the festival forces everyone to participate. If one doesn’t fit in he is ostracized. Friendship, conversation, and privilege in the community are affected.

While waiting Enoch makes a good decision to go stay with his oldest son and family who now live on the northeast corner of the city. It takes half a day to walk to them far from the festival grounds in the city center.

Pride swells as he goes down to the Euphrates where the water has carved into the earth a canyon of sorts. He is not sure about this unusual descent.

On the far side, he sees carefully tended groves with walls protecting families from wild things, from unwelcome strangers. Men stand ready to defend against intruders.

Nokh is welcomed with open arms and kisses all around. They are eager to hear news of the city and about his travels to the west.

The atmosphere of this place is much like Mattawn’s community but there is no stench of death here. This thrills Enoch.

People openly respect one another. Peace and love pour out for family and like-minded followers of God. Joyful activity in the walkways is different from the happiness of the festival preparations. It permeates all of life, comes from the spirit of godliness, and does not depend on circumstances.

Nicely designed, attractive shelters speak of faithful labor. Common areas welcome and provide flowing water, comfortable seating, and trees laden with fruit for all to enjoy.

The first evening with Methuselah and the leading men of the neighborhood allows Enoch to hear their story. The women do not attend this night. High regard for their men providing all the blessing they need, gives them peace in the rising storms.

“Welcome Enoch,”

A young man beckons.

“Join us! Will you please give us an account of the departure as you see it developing in other parts of the world?”

A couple of years ago these families started calling the violence and ungodliness of the city under Ywek’s control “the departure”.

Enoch’s eyes focus on several simple but well-used altars in the plaza. Dried blood clings to the stones on each side. Everything else is clean. Sturdy tables hold tools for slaughter. Some have been made by Haran and Enoch.

He could only imagine the freedom of sharing the sacrifices in this place with women, men, children, and God himself. Celebratory feasting is not neglected here.

Enoch speaks,

“The altar has become the place of separation. We are repeatedly instructed by God to bring what he wants. It is enough. Those who  have departed think they must add their man-made works to approach the Lord.”

Methuselah’s son, now more than nine decades of age, asks.

‘’What are some things the others feel are necessary to add to our sacrifice?”

Grandfather answers with frequent pauses.

“It’s complicated. They still believe in blood sacrifices. Truly they put me to shame. Their labor is long and hard. They have never-ending energy, giving of their wealth sacrificially, bringing their best to God.”

Enoch tells about the bloodletting of animals and people, elaborate dances, the elevation of human endeavor, the athleticism of muscular bodies, and darkness to hide sensuality.

Someone asks,

“Are you convinced that your relationship with the Lord is dependent on grace alone? Is childlike obedience enough?”

Enoch responds,

“The biggest difficulty continues to be that they will not accept any divergent views. They are now blaming the growth of violence and murder on us because we do not join their excesses.”

He continues after drinking a sweet syrup with a fragrance of lavender,

“Gangs monitor the city. It becomes hard to live the old ways. I have tried to show grace and understanding to build good relationships to no avail.”

Enoch goes on to talk about the planned meeting that Haran has arranged for him.

“I think Ywek himself will be there.”

The settlers stand with Enoch. He openly tells of his struggles with death. He has faced more than enough of it.

Other issues are addressed. Compromise to build peace, to tear down walls. Wanting others to like him. Acceptance by all people. The draw of power tolerance.

Discussion continues far into the night as he recounts his time with Adam. Ebele’s humility inspires them. Mattawn and his family stir up praise to the Lord.

Enoch tells of an arbor he is working on in sight of the gates of Eden.

God’s peace filters into each home. The women quietly assemble and with passion submit to God and one another. Little ones sleep well, sensing the unity that covers them.

Prayers of worship and praise with melodic tones echo into the darkness of the world. Light has come. Love for God and one another win! God is always faithful. His new mercies greet the ascending dawn.

Chapter 47 PREACH

Two men linger at a javelin shop just as dawn awakes. With united minds and purpose, much like days of long ago, they embrace and approach the throne of grace. They pray. It is the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man.

Nokh had detected a radical change when he returned to the city. Cousin Haran was eager to hear everything about his relatives and their life of faithfulness to God. He said it gave him hope. He had suggested they meet at this shop before the meeting.

Haran retells all that happened at the last great festival when Enoch was visiting Methuselah. The sons of God came out boasting of their connection with the gangs. Ywek embraced them and their ungodly ways. Haran thinks they will be given a place of prominence at the meeting.

Enoch asks,

“Who are these men? Where do they come from?”

Haran says,

“No one knows for sure. Some people say they are angels from God. The sons certainly use the rumors to elevate themselves above everyone else.”

Enoch.

“What do you think?”

Haran.

“They are men who practiced the truth, continually growing in grace, honoring their heritage as sons of Adam, but pride caused them to stumble.”

One of our family heard them announce publicly.

“Of course, everyone should follow us- we are giants among you because of God’s blessing. God enlightens us!”

And thousands follow them. Their physical presence with perfectly formed, muscular bodies, eyes that look right into your inner being, contagiously happy voices, and intellectual superiority, puts others to shame, attracting young and old alike.

Haran adds,

“The older ones love that the youth are willing to follow such religious men.”

A few wonder if this devotion is beneficial for the youth. Things are worse than Nokh imagines.

Enforcers gradually take matters into their own hands. These men police activities, punish critics, steal property, and reward followers. Those who speak out against them are harassed. The general population flaunts unthinkable immorality in the public square.

Enoch confesses,

“I need to trust God. What is the good of worrying in my prayers?”

There is a true oneness with his cousin. They are encouraging one another. Enoch lifts his voice in worship.

“Thank you, God!”

Today is the very day Enoch, the man who walks with God, is to approach the leaders who control the city.

Fear grips his whole being. Love for God, family, friends, and enemies gives him the courage to walk toward the city center with confidence and hope that God will do the work. He is just a messenger.

The day passes.

Night comes quickly. It is one of those skies in the dark of the moon. A thousand points of light pierce the darkness but seem so far away.

Nokh and Haran share a deep shadow of death.

“I was surprised when Ywek came in with his attendants.”

Haran’s raspy voice whispers through swollen lips.

“You would think he is almighty God the way he struts and takes charge of the whole meeting.”

Nokh speaks from his well-padded bed close to the floor.

“I did what the Lord had asked me to do.”

Both agree!

“Their blood is not on our hands.”

They had defended themselves with great strength and clever maneuvering, but it did not last long. Jeers threats and obscenities had drowned out much of Enoch’s message. The sons of God were the most hateful. It appeared as if Satan himself possessed them.

Nokh speaks,

“Do you hurt as bad as I do?”

They had landed some powerful blows in their defense.

Family members bathe their wounds. Blasphemies had been horrible, but the beatings have brought them to the dark shadow of death.

Enoch struggles to speak. His windpipe is damaged. Ywek’s gang used tremendous strength strangling him.

The hand of God delivered them. The unruly mob dispersed. There is no natural explanation.

“Thank you, Haran, for standing with me. You could have escaped if you had chosen to run!”

Haran answers as he drifts into a fitful sleep.

“I have decided to worship the God of our fathers. Thank you, my friend, for being patient with me.”

The two embrace the silence, sleeping with inner peace even though their bodies torment them.

Chapter 48 SEPARATION

Moving day is hard. This one was worse than anyone could imagine. Roots that reach back hundreds of years are left behind. Twenty-six families take the few things they can salvage and begin a several-day journey toward places where Methuselah and his families have now settled far to the northeast of the city.

What had been a scattered settlement now looks like an established city. Walls are large to protect from marauding bands that roam the outer edges beyond Ywek’s kingdom.

Hoping for peace and rest from violence and mayhem they are weary of forced relocation.

Carts are not full because many of their things have been taken. The old family home, where Orna had lived most of her life, has been taken over by the enlightened citizens of the city.

The old javelin shop in the center of commerce has been gone for many years. The wonderful olive groves by the river now belong to the authorities. The olive presses are silent.

Word spreads throughout the land that the older ones in new settlements, north and east of the city, are dying. It is a fact, many die when they are only five or six hundred years of age.

The people of the festival spread rumors that a curse from God causes an early death for those who refuse to participate in the worship and celebration. Fear grips people. The festival attracts new followers who are afraid the curse will be on them.

Methuselah greets his father and the people who travel with him. Enoch facilitates some of these relocations.

“We have peace about the death of our people. Our Lord God has shown us that those who believe in Him and die at younger ages are blessed.”

God has revealed this truth to Methuselah. He does not doubt.

“The ones who die young will escape the judgment to come.”

Death is no longer something to be feared. It is part of God’s plan for his children.

“We know we will be with him forever, which is far better.”

Nokh also has come to accept that death is not a permanent separation. His hope of life beyond the grave brings overcoming confidence with much peace, even joy.

He does not plan to settle down and live with Methuselah. The family has been encouraging him to go back to Mattawn and the relatively peaceful region close to the gates of Eden. Enoch loves thinking about Mattawn and also about his special place near the garden. They all agree that he has accomplished all that he can do for the present in the telling of God’s message.

Nokh hesitates. They pray, share meals, talk about God’s plan, grow in love for one another, and care for all who believe in the revealed truth. The ones who trust God build lasting friendships. Such memories strengthen in the face of hardship.

Enoch is in no hurry to leave. The best of times are when he and Haran walk together, as they had done so many years ago. They explore uncharted areas of the north. Just as Nokh continues to write down his messages from God, he maps out new territories.

This exploration is difficult and presents unknown dangers. The curse has taken over. These two love scraping their way cross-country through thickets of overgrown timber and bushy stretches so thick they walk on top of matted branches.

Low areas of brackish water add an odor of death that makes them uncomfortable. Wild shrieking animals, biting insects along with half-eaten carcasses with birds of prey circling above, cause the seasoned hikers to tread carefully.

Haran says,

“I need no other proof that our world has fallen under the curse of sin. The separation from God’s perfect creation is astounding.”

Sitting at the campfire on the final night out, warm humid air closes in. They are healthy and comfortable. People of their world need only light drapes of clothing. Covering is important. It is what God has taught them. This casual attire, directed by custom from ancient times as given by God, still uses animal skins and finely woven, silky fabric.

The canopy of space draws back to display the full glory of a crescent moon surrounded by myriads and myriads of stars. As Nokh stretches out on a welcoming bed of soft grasses he remarks.

“This is one of the reasons I cannot turn my back on God. Only the creator of such incredible glory is worthy of our obedient worship!”

Haran quickly responds.

“I am guilty of wasting so many of my years on selfishness. Some of my children and grandchildren have become entangled in the world of sin, because of my sin.”

Silence descends. Even the animals pause. Haran asks.

“Will God forgive me?”

A strange sound to their ears answers with an echoing reassurance. Crickets! They sing a happy chorus on humid evenings telling all who hear:

“There is a place of safety in this sinful world.”

“Yes, sin has destroyed so much, but please let your body, spirit, and all that is within you, accept the goodness of God.”

Enoch is assuring himself in response to his cousin’s query.

“Our lives, our business, our properties, the things we love so much, have all been affected. We do not deserve grace, but God is faithful. The blood of the lamb covers our sins.”

Haran says,

“Thank you! I trust him. You are right.”

Days of marksmanship to hone their skills, nights of sharing dreams about the future, long walks, sometimes alone, with God, not always easy, memories, end. The two friends are content.

They now turn toward home and the needs of others. Haran rejoices.

“I needed this time. Thank you for teaching me how to walk with God. I like hearing the history of creation and our first ancestor, Adam.”

He then encourages Nokh to walk toward the garden of God’s creation. Upstream. Right past the wickedness of the city.

“Serve the old ones. Bless Ebele and Mattawn, their families, and the community as you have strengthened us.”

Enoch answers.

“I will go. I desire to remain here with our families, but I promise to visit each year. Do you think that is possible?”

Haran.

“Yes! We appreciate you. Your life has become a testimony to the Lord. Wherever you go you serve God by loving people and standing for truth. This strategic ministry is exactly what we need in the age in which we live. God has you here for a purpose.”

Nokh.

“Moving away from each other, in separate directions, is always sad. Thank you! I love you, my cousin and brother in the Lord.”

Enoch’s steps are light as they journey back to town. His inner spirit rejoices. The body, still broken from the beating, begins to show its three hundred and forty-two years.

“I do not understand why I hurt so badly. Many of my ancestors are hundreds of years older than me.”

Haran, now his best friend on earth, answers.

“Remember the robberies, the beating, the difficult journeys—these things cannot separate us from God.”

Chapter 49 FOCUS

It is of great interest to compare the two separations that Enoch and his family are experiencing. One is bringing tears, fears, waste, and haste. The other includes hugs, confident expectation of faithfulness, growth in knowledge of God, and lifelong loyalty.

Since the first parting, four festivals have come and gone. Each celebration of excess has attempted to outdo the previous one.

“If God requires a little from us, he must be pleased if we give him much more.”

A faithful worshipper gossips to her friends. Another, at the neighborhood gathering place, adds,

“I praise our leaders for their courage and wisdom to blaze new expressions of excitement to keep so many people engaged in worship, the gatherings, and even financial support for our festivals. The youth of our city are engaged. It has to be God’s will.”

An older woman bent over with care and wrinkled folds of flesh, says with intense reverence.

“Yes, I agree, when they speak to us it is as if we’re in the very presence of God.”

The first speaks again,

“My husband believes that he could become one of the sons of God.”

The sons of God watch Enoch closely. They track his activities. Word spreads, with little foundation, that he left his family because they were angry with him.

The watchers report that Enoch wishes to encourage his contacts in the city, inciting them to resistance and rebellion.

Ywek is pleased that this troublemaker, who they believe causes division even in his own family, will continue to stir up trouble in the city.

“Don’t let this trouble you. We know how to deal with people like that.”

They all agree.

“His divisiveness proves that we are teaching God’s word. He is the one leading people away from God.”

Nokh does not realize that his activities are being watched. He walks on because Methuselah has encouraged him to do so.

Enoch makes it to one of his favorite places by the river just east of the city by noon. He never stops marveling at God’s handiwork. God’s invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature are seen.

Towering trees shelter him in a sanctuary, a place of safety. He communes with God. Flowers of every hue cascade over a bank toward the water of a quiet stream meandering toward the mighty river.

Journeys for him have become one of the greatest joys of his life; never rushed, stilled waters. His favorite foods are gathered, prepared, and eaten with thanksgiving to God.

Refreshing crystal clear pools, warm sunlight filtered through the misty canopy of his world to sustain him.

Prayer is an essential part of his life. He knows the Lord is with him wherever he goes. He is never rushed when he talks to God. Day and night he rehearses the words of God that have been passed down from his ancestors.

God has spoken directly to him. How could he seek satisfaction any other way? He is content.

Methuselah’s eldest son had questioned him three weeks ago about the festivals. Enoch organized his thoughts and gave a carefully crafted, concise answer.

“People are looking for more than the Lord our God has given. They sin by adding to God’s word. In doing this they focus on their works; the things they do to please God and one another.”

His grandson understands that religion is a performance for God. He says,

“Often it is a performance not only for God but for others.”

These discussions help them focus on what God wants and encourage them to walk the way God wants them to.

He prays that others will hear the truth, believe, and be set free.

The meal includes fruit, a small roasted hen, and greens tossed with salt and olive oil. He always carries salt and oil with him on his journeys.

Enoch’s healthy skin flushes from soaking in cold water followed by an invigorating massage using the oil. This is God’s plan to supply all the needs of his people with food, shelter, and good health.

He speaks,

“Thank you, Lord, for the water of life and the oil of gladness.”

Another voice echoes.

“Enoch!”

‘Nokh, Nokh!’

And then with a shriek of despair.

“Enoch!”

This alarm call brings him back to the reality of his present situation. A group of young women rushes toward him.

“What is it?”

“Enforcers are watching for your return. We know what they plan to do to you.”

They wail in unison.

“Oh, what will you do?”

Chapter 50 REST

Under cover of darkness, Nokh meets with friends in the city. He now knows the consequences if he is apprehended. Those who have chosen to remain in their place in the city are carefully and quietly minding their own business.

Many agree.

“We are too old to move to a new location, so far away. We will stay believing that the Lord has a purpose for his name in this place.”

Others, not so old, do not wish to leave their familiar surroundings. They are content and too comfortable to uproot all they have known and loved.

The families who left blessed them and promised support. They will help with the necessities of life, if possible, and commit themselves to praying for these fellow believers. There is little they can do because of the great distance between them. They do believe in the power of prayer.

Enoch’s friendship brings them incredible blessings.  Some are old friends, and others have come to God recently. They are drawn to one another by the Holy Spirit. Nokh is blessed too. It brings him great joy to give.

Motives are difficult to determine. Nokh often says,

“I don’t know why I do what I do, so I will not judge the motives of other people.”

God alone knows the heart, the invisible being, within a person.

“I see facts. What you do may be from pure motives. Or it may not. A performance does not reveal the inner self.”

Enoch tells a small group, some from Methuselah’s people who have delivered goods, some from the city.

The reality of genuine love which builds lasting relationships binds these believers together at this moment. Could a spy infiltrate? Is someone among them for selfish reasons? It could happen.

Before they disburse in separate directions, a man speaks.

“We realize we cannot preach openly against the excesses and wickedness of our city, but the Lord gives us opportunities to build relationships with other people, one person at a time.”

He is among those who still hold to the faith once and for all delivered to his generation.

Nokh praises the Lord for those who stand true. When he asks about the risk of offering sacrifices, they answer,

“Yes, it is at great risk. We make altars in private. Man cannot stop us from doing what God has asked us to do!”

Meals shared from house to house have always been part of their world. Eating and drinking together is a fact of life for everyone, rich or poor, young, and old, followers of God, and definitely among those who reject God’s word. This normal behavior helps believers meet together without detection.

Enoch reminds his friends that the shedding of blood is the only way. Feasting, acts of kindness, help or encouragement for one another, and giving of gifts, do not cleanse them from sin.

“Remember the faith of Abel, the third man, son of Adam, and younger brother of Cain. He had faith to do exactly what God asked of him.”

Many days later, quietness reigns as a simple meal of grain and dried lamb is enjoyed by three men on the banks of the river. The closer they come to the gates of Eden, the beauty intensifies, peace is embraced, and they find a place of rest.

Nokh asks his two young companions.

“Have you ever felt the life of the water which flows from God’s Garden?”

They had insisted on coming with him. He reluctantly agreed because they desired to spend time learning all that he could teach them about God.

They came to protect Enoch from ruffians. One said,

“Show us what you see in the water.”

It is true that after they hear, feel, and experience the refreshment of water, not only for cleansing but for restoration of body and soul, they agree. It is an essential dimension of God’s wonderful creation.

As the three rest in the warmth of the afternoon sun, drying off, Enoch engages them with stories of days from long ago. They hear of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Ebele and Mattawn. He tells of his wife Orna and his love for her.

This journey will be the first time the young men have been this far west—burial places of great men and women of the past intrigue them. Opportunities to meet the living excite me with joy.

“Grandfather Enoch?”

It didn’t disturb him that he wasn’t a grandson. Many followers are calling him grandfather.

“You have peace about you all the time. We see that you rest even when things are not peaceful around us.”

The other adds,

“You have entered a state of rest that transcends circumstances.”

Nokh responds with little sense of pride.

“I know I have.”

They both eagerly ask.

“Will you tell us how?”

Enoch walks them through his life in a relationship with God. There is confidence, an assurance that conquers doubt and fear.

Trust in God overcomes circumstances. The Lord gives us power, love, and sound minds.

“As you grow in your strengthening relationship with God himself, you experience the promised rest.”

He tells them it is not an experience or decision in time. It is a step-by-step growing love, living by faith, obeying God’s word, faithfully coming to God over and over again.

“Rest comes when you will meditate on God’s message day and night. Prayer is another element essential for this walk with God. Pray without ceasing!”

The two men are deeply disappointed. Enoch insists that they return to the city. At once! They must split up and go another way than they came.

“We must protect one another when we walk with God.”

The sacrifice is accepted by these men who are growing stronger. They ask about the gates of Eden.

“Are the Cherubim still there?”

Nokh speaks.

“They were standing there the last time I went to my special place of prayer where I loved being near God.”

Even though the joy of the Lord is their strength, sadness lingers as the two men turn toward home, in the city.

Steps in opposite directions unite them. They are faithful followers of God. Each one follows the way God has planned.

Chapter 51 SHOCK

Time spent with fellow workers is a great comfort to Enoch. Nothing will replace precious moments with Orna, the companion of his youth. This is God’s plan for him. He willingly submits. He has learned to be thankful for all things.

Orna has been gone for more than two hundred years. His love will never grow cold.

Memories help. The development of the riverside property continues to bless his thinking. Orna had worked with him, they were a great team.

Since their world needed little protection from the sun or extremes of temperature, they built for family closeness and beauty. The form was much more important than function. Their work displayed that they had both been created in the image of God. God’s work is beautiful. God is a God of order.

Their children loved life. They do all the things that young ones love to do. They climb, snuggle, run and jump, and play in water.

Sharing happy meals and worshipping at the simple altars is always a joyful routine that helps each one grow in God’s grace. Families work together with little thought that life could be any different than it is. They seldom disagree on what to do or how to do it.

Nokh does not think about taking another wife. He knows it is normal for most men to remarry but God has given Enoch assurance that it is all right to stay single and work hard on other types of relationships.

As years pass Nokh discovers that relationship with God eclipses everything else in his life. It is still difficult to explain but he genuinely considers God to be his best friend.

One day two younger granddaughters asked grandfather a question several weeks before he left the city. They were carelessly enjoying the refreshing waters of the river.

“Tell us what you mean that God is a friend!”

“It is hard to describe. You must experience it. That explains it best. A person does not jump into an intimate relationship with anyone quickly. Intimacy grows over time.”

He tells the girls that all spiritual growth depends on a person’s desire and submission to the Lord. God faithfully does his part. We need to be faithful to do all that he asks of us.

“I appreciate everything God does for me, but I am more thankful for all things—even the bad things we see in our world.”

As always, Enoch is very careful in explaining the core truth of his relationship with God.

“When we obey by offering blood for forgiveness at the altar, we trust God’s mercy and go from there to trust and obey.”

By faith, the faithful offer sacrifices. God requires the blood of the lamb.

“Our families share the succulent roasted flesh of the sacrifice. We enjoy it with friends too. The forgiven celebrate in fellowship with God and one another. That is the way with God—he shares all good things with those who walk with him.”

The young women face him with eager anticipation as he continues.

“Many times I experience the touch of God. His presence is real. This becomes one of the best parts of my walk with God.”

How does a person describe something like that? It is best to begin with a belief that works out through obedience, finally being fulfilled in personal experience. True rest follows continual reaffirmation of trust in God alone. It is not a climactic decision.

Enoch finally rests alone on his journey. He enjoys remembering the way his granddaughters had responded. He prays right now for them to grow in God’s grace and truth.

Time alone heightens a person’s sense of the presence of God. People and social interaction are essential for a godly life, but too many distractions rob the faithful of special times with the Lord.

Suddenly he asks himself.

“Why did I send the two young men to the city asking them to split up and go in different directions?”

Why did the men accept his words so quickly? God must have led them.

“Danger surrounds you!”

They are being followed. Gangs of wicked ones patrol this region, moving closer and closer to the source of the waters of life.

Enoch’s special love for Mattawn lifts his inner being even though he still senses danger. His youngest child has never wavered in his faith in God. He too walked. . .

This entire community has become God’s kind of people. Nokh often reports that Ebele and Mattawn’s village is the happiest place on earth.

Now, each step Enoch takes raises the hair on the back of his neck. He treads lightly in daylight. Travels mostly at night, by the light of the moon.

Gangs pass him. Traveling toward the city. They are celebrating with drunken abandon. He overhears,

“That should teach those rebels! They will no longer bring disaster to our world. Our children are safe.”

Running forward, on the final day of his journey, Nokh falls with exhaustion as he sees destruction in Mattawan’s town.

“Oh my God! Where is my son? Did any escape? My family! My loved ones! The people of God! My god! My God! He cries out.”

The shock is too much for him to bear alone. He crawls into a tangled bower of bushes and twisted vines obscured by towering trees and weeps until he collapses in a heap that comes only from extreme sorrow.

Awakening, only God knows when seeing the silence of death, Enoch stumbles to his place near the gates of Eden.

He does not know why.

“Will this place help me?”

Is this too much for one man to bear?

Chapter 52 GRACE

When fear takes over it leaves little place for faith. Minutes stretch into hours, hours into days, and time stands still.

Placing even one morsel of food into his mouth makes Enoch feel like heaving it up again—a sacrifice of a lamb borders on the impossible.

Nokh hates death as never before. He wants to run in any direction, far away as far as he can run. Never to look back!

In this weakened condition he can only walk twenty steps before he must stop to catch his breath. Yet he is drawn toward the garden. Anxiety becomes dismay.

God draws. Enoch feels the heavy hand of the curse of God’s just judgment on the earth. He questions.

“What have we done to deserve this? Did my people bring it themselves? They are good people. I am guilty, not them.”

Pride digs deeply into Enoch’s heart. He has boasted about his relationship with God. He tells all who will listen about Mattawn. The greatness of his leadership. His outstanding faith in the living God.

Then humbled, as seldom seen among men, Nokh laments.

“It is my sin, Punish me! I will take the place of my family. Let me die. Could you bring them back to life? Save them from the pit of darkness.”

The Spirit of God gently reminds him once again that all sin is forgiven at the altar. Sinners do not need to pay any additional price.

Sinners of any age, any generation, in the city and the country, need to do what God asks.

Enoch says.

“All right Lord. Where can I get a lamb?”

God answers.

“Wait! I will provide a lamb.”

Enoch sits and waits. He believes in the word of the Lord. This glimmer of hope nourishes him through his time of waiting. The promised sacrifice will come. God is faithful!

Strength returns to his body: sleep, cooling waters of the beloved river. Simple grains and fruit of the earth sustain. Fevers gradually ease. His head stops throbbing. Eyes once again focus.

The spirit of the man lags far behind his body but each day sees progress. Hope does not fail because God’s love has been poured into his heart. God is here.

The lamb comes most unexpectedly. It comes from a river that runs in a different direction than the Euphrates River. This flowing of waters when explored reveals amazing detail.

One river comes out of the garden. It then divides into four. Enoch’s waters move slowly toward the lands of the morning sun. Two meander toward the shadows of the darker sky away from the light.

The fourth provides a lamb.

Enoch speaks.

“How did this lamb come from the brightness of the mid-day sun?”

The lamb, so frail, so perfect and innocent.

“Thank you, Lord, for your gracious provision.”

His tanned and well-formed strong arm holds the little one, softly and tenderly. He weeps easily. Tears wash over the one who will give his life’s blood so this man can approach his holy God.

Life drips down the rough edge of a displaced stone. Nokh receives a covering. Free from the curse of sin and death. He will approach the God who cares.

When he settles into his private place near the entrance, but not too close, he sees the Cherubim. They frighten him.

The place has been tended. Pristine with no weeds or deadness of plant or animal. No tangled vines. Incredibly tall and majestic trees shelter from above. Verdant grasses, green and welcoming. Colorful blooms and flittering ladybugs add vitality.

One large, flat stone has been placed in the center. Sitting, Enoch looks directly at the messengers who guard God’s holiness. The gates stand open beyond the fiery swords.

Nokh sits for hours with no hunger or weariness. His soul revives. The glory is visible.

He hears.

“My child, do not be afraid for I am with you wherever you go.”

This majestic but beautiful sound quietly assures Nokh that he is not alone.

He responds.

“Speak Lord! I am yours.”

God answers.

“My grace is sufficient for you.”

Nokh bows his head, turning away from such dazzling glory, and says from the depth of his being.

“I believe.”

Chapter 53 DEVOTED

Enoch is not a man who will stop working for long periods. As a person of action, he will not allow his mind to focus on negative circumstances.

He chooses to think about things that are true, just, and honorable. He loves to remember the lovely graces of Orna, the praiseworthy actions of Methuselah, the dozens of altars that continually bring salvation, and the fellowship with like-minded followers of the Lord.

Positive thinking leads to productive action. God has a plan and he intends to step out in faith to fulfill it.

Turning back to the city, about a five-day journey on well-worn roads, is not wise. He chooses to leave Mattawn and Ebele’s broken world after taking care of the dead. The fires of destruction have turned to ashes. There are no signs of life.

Instead of facing wickedness, death, and hatred, he walks where he has never traveled.

Interesting discoveries on each side of the garden intrigue his thinking.

Just north of the Cherubim, who still guard the gate, right where the rivers pour forth, he finds a massive waterway. He is very surprised that it is quite close to Adam’s old place.

Enoch sees that two rivers flow through the unexplored territory. But the waters do not stay within their banks. Large expanses of ground are impassable.

Nokh has never seen land like this. Attempting to penetrate, he experiences odors and noxious rotting things. This new smell of death causes him to turn back. He says,

“The whole earth is dying.”

By returning the next several days Nokh maps out these waters of the northlands. He can make out the main rivers but the water-filled land between is only seen from the taller trees, which are the highest things in the area.

Biting insects of unusual size suck the life out of him—his skin itches. Red welts swell and last for hours.

Snakes slither into the darkness. His work here is done. He turns back.

Another water, much like his river of the east, flows in the opposite direction, away from the swamp.

These waters refresh his body and calm his spirit. Such familiar sensations draw him forward. He settles in beautiful surroundings: walking, sleeping, eating, floating away from the darkness he has known for too many cycles of the moon.

After such joy his whole body finds rest. Waking early and facing the rising sun, Enoch catches his image in still waters. This reminds him of the day so many years ago when he slipped away from his sleeping wife.

Laughter fills the air as he compares his body today with the one of his youth. He hopes his spirit looks better than his body. He quietly sings his song. The birds join.

“I love you, Lord

You are the source of life.

I trust you, Lord

Your grace holds me tight.

I turn from sin

There is no other way!

Then the refrain continues as he sets off looking for new adventures.

Forgiven! I walk your walk

There is no other way!

Your mercies are new every morning.

Great is your faithfulness!”

Music of life reaches the deepest corner of his being. The joy of the Lord is his strength.

Enoch had seen wise people of the eastern lands beyond the city use animal power to help them with the labor of making roads and buildings. As he lifts his pack, weighed down with supplies for this extended journey, he plans to make use of all the help he can get.

Pushing along the wide stream he looks for animals that may do his work.

That same day several young sheep surround him in the middle of the trail. Lambs are good for food, and more importantly, they supply the blood of the sacrifice. They still use the skin for coverings. He knows of no other way they could help. They are quiet, often weak, and helpless to even care for themselves.

These animals follow him. They find grass along the path. He leads them to still waters. He gathers them close to his side.

After a tiring journey, they set up camp and sleep. The lambs continue to follow. Within another half-a-day hike the forest trees noticeably thin. Grassy fields filled with flowers, mostly yellow and purple, spread in every direction.

The river moves slowly alongside for a long way. This area is not swampy. Solid ground supports the cloven feet of the sheep. Soft grass feels wonderful on Nokh’s feet. He runs and leaps like a deer with excited rejoicing marveling at the glory of God’s great earth.

Unusually tall and broad trees punctuate these parts. Enoch sees that it has been untouched by people who might misuse it. This would be a good place to live.

The lambs help him set up a simple encampment as they graze and lie down in green pastures. The river surrounds them on three sides. This gives them a sense of safety.

Toward the setting sun stretches a great expanse of grassy meadow. This is a good place. It provides shelter, safety, still water, and abundant food.

The Lord comes to Enoch in the night. Stars shine brightly. He remembers a dream.

“I have plans for this place. The Lamb of My choosing will come voluntarily. He will shed His blood for the sin of the World.”

Enoch wakes with little understanding of the meaning of the dream but he decides to build a new town right here.

Markers are set. They are permanent, built to remain for many years. Not to be worshipped. The altars must be temporary stones, built from place to place as the need arises.

Each week Enoch builds a new path toward the setting sun, lining each one up with the sunrise. The circuit of the sun provides the distance between each of these paths. He sets up ten.

People start coming. The paths welcome those who come to settle down and live together. Enoch does not know why they come. He doesn’t ask.

But he tells these newcomers that God is the one who leads them in this place. Nokh has no desire to control their lives. As settlers gather,  they arrange themselves in groups with similar interests.

Enoch settles with the shepherds on one of the pathways. Others join in avenues of metal workers or javelin and dart makers. There are musicians, scribes, grain growers, foresters, builders, and fabric weavers.

Enoch’s freedom allows him to continue to explore and visit his special place near the garden often. He faithfully sacrifices, feasts with new friends, prays continually, blesses others with good works, and always returns to the waters that flow from God’s Garden finding strength and refreshment there.

This walk with God progresses toward greater intimacy with the Lord.

His book expands. Enoch knows that most of his writings are not God’s words, these are written separately. They are his thoughts.

He desires to leave a witness, as a father, grandfather, and friend. He hopes many will benefit. He prepares a treasure.

“I have learned to be content because God is with me. As a son of Adam, I repent of my sin, over and over again. The God who created all things that are created is my God. I love him! I trust him! I devote my whole being to him. He is my greatest treasure.”

Chapter 54 ABIDE

Excitement blossoms like flowers as the new town grows. Those who come are hungry for a peaceful world. Most are refugees escaping the violence of the large city on the Euphrates River.

When asked about their journey, fear causes them to speak cautiously. They are uncertain about details. Eyes reveal horrific memories.

Three big-eyed boys cling to their mother’s covering. The material is of the finest silken texture, very rare; colored extravagantly with an unusual green of the deep forest.

Eyes tell a great deal about people. Terrified, they had escaped with their lives. Bringing no possessions they cling to the tattered pieces of clothing they wear.

A baby hides in the arms of a robust man. His disciplined frame speaks of healthy living, good food, and faithful exercise. Survival is now all he wants. Pleading eyes are pure and demonstrate a culture of godly habits.

“I felt this incredible tug on my heart to flee evil and come toward this new opportunity to build peace. My family did not want to come with me and struggled most of the journey. Now they are broken and need help.”

He respectfully asks to stay. Enoch does not decide who will stay. He speaks,

“This is not my town. I cannot be the governor of all these people.”

Enoch has seen how controlling leadership corrupts. Recent events in his own family make him cautious. Those who live in peace must somehow overcome those who do evil continually.

Many families come from the East. Enoch offers these kind words.

“Come! Find refreshments at our tables. You are welcome to stay if you work with your hands and love your neighbor.”

He trusts God for the outcome. The fertile fields, flocks, and resources of the earth provide a good life for all who are willing to accept the challenge.

Continual water of life and restful sleep bring peace even to the family with expensive clothing. They find an avenue of interest; they work diligently and soon enjoy friendships with neighbors.

Nokh plans to leave. This place will not become his permanent home. He yearns to move closer to the Lord at the Gates of Eden. It has been over a year since he left the faithful ones in the city. He will fulfill the promise he made.

“I will go!”

Nokh speaks to a friend.

“Will you continue the work I have begun? I do not know how large this town will become. Let’s plan to build new markers until we stop. We will know when that time comes.”

The first marker, closest to the garden, still stands. It wears its age well and marks out the largest gathering of like-minded residents. They are shepherds. Lambs for sacrifice prosper under their care. The friend responds.

“I will mark out the boundaries!”

They both have noted the sun’s movement along horizons from day to day. Since their world has no storms and no clouds, simple observation helps. Enoch concludes.

“I have a sense that the sun will reverse by the time I return, and I do plan to return. Then you will know how many avenues or pathways we should have in this new town.”

With that, he prays for God to bless and strengthen each family, lifts his pack, and walks eagerly toward his beloved Eden.

Nokh’s special place is still secure. Somehow it always stays in perfect condition. He settles in for a time and seeks the face of God.

On the third day, a Cherub beckons him to approach.

The glory of God surrounds the Gate as he moves slowly, with much fear, in obedience to the messenger’s call.

“My Master has instructed me to tell you that He will take care of his own. Just as your shepherds at the first marker care for their lambs, He will care for you.”

Then he adds this assurance.

“Enoch, you are doing the right things. The Lord your God abides in you. Do not be afraid for He goes with you wherever you go!”

With these words, the Cherubim flash their swords of fire. Nokh retreats to the shelter of his place.

It takes several days to recover from this amazing experience.

Peace overcomes fear. Faith overcomes doubt. He is doing what God wants him to do. Enoch gladly welcomes this assurance of unconditional forgiveness.

Soon Nokh travels along his former favorite waterway toward the rising sun. He intends to encourage believers in the city. He steps out in faith, no matter what it costs. He will preach the word of God – all this wickedness will be judged. God is holy!

The journey amazes him. Each step of the way is filled with grace and truth. They carry him along as the waters flow ceaselessly away from God’s presence in the Garden.

People he meets are encouraged. Many make decisions to follow God’s words.

Ywek and his entourage of men smile with feigned patience as he tells them of the coming catastrophe – the judgment of God. A group of women in the street near his old dart shop give him water and fresh grain roasted in a delicious loaf.

Three moons complete their cycles and Enoch has returned to his new town. Peace surrounds this wonderful place.

The sun markers are no longer built. There are now twelve. The sun moves back toward Eden.

Enoch tells those who come out to meet him.

“Gather the families that will protect us from wildness. We must protect our people, our animals, and our possessions.”

His skill in making darts leads him to move onto the pathway where the javelin and dart craftsmen live.

Longer, sturdier swords soon are found in the hands of those who protect this new town.

Genealogy papers have been kept and the cycles of the sun are integrated. The people now know that Adam died when it was nine hundred and thirty years after his creation on the sixth day.

It is now the year of creation – 962 CY!

Chapter 55 CHARACTER

Earth Year 965 CY

Swamp life amazes the senses with its microcosm of a whole new world but also with sinister corners of deep shadow. A huge predator Nokh has never imagined exists, crouches in the darkness with beady eyes sparkling, reflecting the mid-day sun.

A small group of dedicated explorers stop. They wait. Realizing they are not prepared to face such a beast, wisdom mandates that they proceed with caution.

After a moment, which seems like forever, a rabbit hops onto a tuft of grass in full view of the watching world. With a single burst of movement, on extremely small legs, the thing devours and slides smoothly under the surface of the still waters. The explorers cannot grasp the speed of such power.

While waiting the four observe teeming life at their feet. Mosses, lilies, tiny swimming things, turtles, large and small, seemed undisturbed. Swamp birds flit above and below the canopy of leaves. Some even land on the back of a large land animal that can swim swiftly, like a fish.

Two of the explorers, a new couple who have settled in with the grain growers, are the ones who had arrived with their four children. Charone, who is what the man calls his wife, comes from one of the wealthiest and most powerful families among the leadership of the city. Her superior training and wealth of knowledge challenged them to explore the territories far north of the Euphrates.

Enoch has desired to do that also and eagerly joins the couple. He leads them carefully around the Gates of Eden without revealing much of what he knows. Most of the people of his generation have no desire to approach the place. Stories tell of danger, even supernatural power. After a miserable ten days of mucking through the difficult waterways, the group senses higher ground. Setting up an encampment on the banks of a large river allows them to rest, hunt, and offer a sacrifice of obedience to God.

Nokh loves to demonstrate the way an altar should be offered. His teaching is new to Charone. The group eagerly accepts his words.

“The blood is the life that belongs to God. He allows us to feast on the flesh of the sacrifice. This meal is important for fellow walkers to grow in love for one another and to show the obedience of faith in God.”

He goes on to describe the Lord’s plan—life for life. Forgiveness not only affects what we have done in the past, but it also gives opportunities for our future. We can approach our Creator. We become the friends of God. This is God’s purpose for mankind as passed down from our fathers. We must listen and obey.

Charone is ready to believe. Her sins weigh heavily, like a pack, on her back. In acknowledging her sinful condition she says.

“I understand the depravity of sin. Our youngest girl, a beautiful baby, perfect in body and spirit was sacrificed on the high altar of worship. It happened three festivals before my family begged me to leave all the things that had been so dear to me.”

She tells her story.

‘We fought them all the way the night they came to take her. I know it is wrong. Some of my closest family and friends assured me that God would be pleased.’

She continues by telling of scars her husband bears on his arms and shoulders.

“I hate all of them, even my father! My tears will not stop. I cannot sleep. Are you positive they are wrong, Enoch?”

The trip does help this scarred couple to know God. They see the light of hope in the face of Enoch. He desires to continue searching but they seem eager to return to their children and part company possessing a measure of peace. They embark on a walk with God. When they greet their children hope strengthens them. They trust the word of God that Nokh has preached to them.

“We believe that God chooses to have a relationship with us like a faithful, loving father has for his children.”

Charone adds.

“Like a nurturing mother.”

All who witness this transformation, praise God. Many accept the truth of the old altar and the shedding of blood as the truth. They agree. There is no other way.

Nokh discovers a river slowly moving away toward a lone star, far away from the Garden. His companion turns back and he is alone. He sees that the earth has been disturbed. Standing on an unusually high bluff he looks out over the trees of the swamp. An eagle soars above. It swoops low, snatches a trout, seen only by its eyes, and ascends into the misty canopy above. Enoch bows in humble worship and sings.

“The glories of this world,

Point to God above.

Power observed displays,

Faith ascends beyond.

There is no other way!”

Enoch’s relationship with God spirals upward like the flight of the eagle. He loves beauty. He hates sin. His eyes see. They are open to every opportunity that God provides. A gleam of light flashes. Nokh is fast. Raising his right hand he pushes aside a sharp pointed shaft of metal pointing directly at his chest. The knife is one he made.

“Stop thief.”

“You could have killed me.”

“I didn’t want to.”

“What are you doing here?”

A stranger steps out of the shadows.

“I am protecting my home. Who are you?”

“I am Enoch! Seventh from Adam.”

“Peace. I know about you. I am a grandson of Mahalalel. We are family.”

The two men embrace. They experience awesome hours together for many days. Nokh learns about the swamp and the river of the north. It is called the Tigris River.

His cousin knows the territory, but like Adam, fear causes him to isolate himself from other people. He says,

“I have recovered things that were left from the desolated community on the far side of Adam’s place.”

Nokh’s heart beats rapidly.

“That is where my family lived. My youngest son, Mattawn disappeared when I went to the city on the Euphrates.”

He then describes the hatred people have toward him because he speaks the truth of God.

“I think they took vengeance out on me by destroying the place where my friends found peace with God.’

The two agree that this hatred for all that is good does not allow others to enjoy a peaceful life. Enoch treasures the carefully preserved artifacts from Mattawn’s town. Memories, doubts, questions, fears, and anger make Enoch feel that he is in the grip of a beast far greater than he can handle.

“Will I ever be free from these feelings? Why do they consume me? Oh my Lord and God, I need you!’

Bad things happen to good people. The cousins understand each other. Mahalalel’s grandson says.

“When Adam and Eve sinned it ruined all of God’s perfect creation. The gator you saw in the swamp, the eagle in the sky, and the anger of your enemies from the city, are the result of sin. We all sinned in Adam. Sin devours. Sin destroys. Sin separates from the glory of God.”

Enoch speaks.

“The stagnation, the stink of death in the waterways, destroys the life-giving water that refreshes my whole being.”

Both agree that they no longer wish to enter the waters of death. The one who knows the area says.

“You need to know that two rivers flow out of the swamp. One toward our lone star of the north and the other to unknown lands far away. They beckon us to bathe, and drink, and they hold out the promise of restoration and life to come.”

As Enoch urgently returns to his private place, close to the Cherubim, he rests in the knowledge that endurance in trials and temptations has strengthened him. This place restores his spirit as no other. He longs to talk with God. He waits.

A veiled presence much like a light source of glowing ashes moves slowly toward Nokh. He moves involuntarily toward the light. Absolute silence surrounds the welcoming embrace. The light speaks with a voice of blessed assurance, smooth and resonant.

“I am the Lord. I made you for my glory. Thank you for walking with me. You are my child.”

The light is gone. Darkness surrounds Enoch. The mist draws back like the curtains of his sleeping alcove so many years ago, where he lay with Orna his beloved wife. Stars shine brighter than the midday sun.

On his return to the old city, which irresistibly draws, Enoch meets fewer believers than at any other time. Remarkably, he can move about freely. Most people draw back into the shadow as he passes by. Ywek’s patience is done. Open attacks against God’s people have begun. Those who stand against wickedness are no longer welcome.

Chapter 56 VICTORY

Life does not resume with normal balance after a face-to-face encounter with God. The place in which it occurs is not important, the experience, the forever moment, the glory casts its glow, even though veiled, over a changed life.

Enoch knows God before the meeting. Now he knows more. There is so much more to learn. Transcendent power, authority, and steadfast love far exceed anything he has heard or seen. His eyes have seen, and his ears have listened to some of the glories that God has prepared for those who love him.

Now that Enoch knows God as never before he desires to learn more about him. He grasps the truth.

“I will never be satisfied with yesterday’s experiences. My journey must continue.”

Passion for friendship with God grows out of his fear of the Lord. A healthy respect leads to obedience, obedience in every circumstance leads to growth because he has settled down and is at home with God.

Sitting and waiting for another encounter with his creator is not an option. It does not enter into his thinking.

The Lord has placed us on earth for a reason. Nokh realizes this as never before and steps out in faith believing that God will walk with him every step of the way. God is the leader. He will follow.

Fascination with things he discovered in Mattawn’s town draws him back to the territory where a cousin lives. He calls him his friend of the North Star. Together they reconstruct from evidence; the attack, the murders, and even some reasons that it happened.

Enoch speaks.

“My biggest problem about all this is not how it happened or even why, but that this must be consistent with God’s steadfast love.”

Nokh’s cousin asks.

“Should God’s people find contentment in the fact that God is love and everything that comes to pass, including the difficult things, is a manifestation of God’s eternal love.”

They both agree and commit themselves to a life of surrender. If the Lord is the one that we claim him to be, we will submit to everything. It is wonderful to openly discuss God’s love and his righteousness, and they spend hours fellowshipping in the truth of God’s word.

The only appropriate outcome of true submission accepts even horrific events with thankful spirits.

Enoch’s yearly visit to families of the East comes and goes without incident. He sees that older people cling to God’s word but the younger generation, now numbering as the stars, have been drawn into the new religion promoted by the sons of God.

They claim superior knowledge. Their leadership has taken on characteristics that blaspheme the name of God. They do not follow the God of Adam, Mahalalel, and Enoch. Masses of people are following this new belief. They ignore and often ridicule the old ways.

At every opportunity, Enoch asks God for openings to speak out by giving his testimony of faith. He prays for opportunities. Some respond with a smirk as if to say,

“That is all right for you, but we have a greater knowledge, far superior to your outdated and judgmental thinking.”

The two friends, Nokh and his cousin, dream of exploring the river toward the setting sun. This unexplored river bursts out of the darkness with a vigorous swiftness and refreshing clarity. Companionship on the way with its discovery of things never seen before provides incredible days for both of them. Nokh reminds them.

“God made us to walk in fellowship with one another as much as for fellowship with him.”

An interesting and helpful response comes.

“Why do you call yourself Nokh?”

Enoch answers in a pensive voice after much thought. He does not remember the details.

“I think my cousin Haran started using it each time we made a notch on my javelin for a perfect throw. It is more difficult than one might think. We don’t have many notches.”

The two learn a lot about each other. Belief in God binds them together. Stories and knowledge of life and godliness increase appreciation. Sharing is good. Friends do that.

The North Star cousin says,

“I hope I can meet our cousin Haran someday.”

Nokh smiles.

“It is possible. He speaks of bringing his family to our new town on the south river. We call it the Gihon because its source is also the Garden of God.”

It would be radical for a family of that size and standing to leave the city. Nokh expresses doubt that it would be good for them or the people of the new town. He wonders if it is God’s plan.

Contentment in his own heart with Haran’s final decision replaces attempts to control others. Enoch accepts that each person is accountable to God for his actions.

“God fulfills his purpose and reveals a plan for each individual.”

Observing some small stones of unique color and weight draws them further away than they had initially planned. Collected pieces never lost their shine. Like stars of the sky, this new experience intrigues them. God’s world is amazing in their eyes.

When each returns to his place, peace overwhelms Nokh. He stops to visit the Lord at the gates of Eden. The Lord comes to him. He sees the hand of God. It is more than a vision or dream. Later he says,

“I felt the touch of God on my shoulder.”

Arriving at the new town on the Gihon River he senses an unsettling lack of unity. A few families have overpowered others and taken control of one of the avenues. Reports of envy disturb Enoch. He knows.

“Sin works itself into our lives in many ways.”

He hates sin. Attempts to bring resolution as a peacemaker are inadequate. Unity can only come when people trust God for help, walk in obedience according to his will, and work in harmony with one another. Reconciliation does not come.

Can a person who walks with God have victory over sin? A spectacular nighttime sky brings Nokh an answer. He has a settled assurance that anyone can move from hostility to harmony by coming to God with repentance and faith. This reconciliation is with God and people.

57 MERCY

Time stands still for Enoch. He knows God called him to life—abundant and free. Right now it is different. God asks him to come to meet with him at the gate.

Enoch comes.

“When I am with my Lord I lose all sense of time. Does God live outside the constraints of time?”

Now they talk, and they walk together. They embrace. Enoch sees a physical being who is at home in the world he created. He sees the mind of God, its wisdom, he sees perfection and righteousness, justice, and love.

Enoch begins to understand how all unrighteousness affects God. Sin Grieves God. It divides God from people. It demands a terrible payment. It enslaves.

The plan to break sin’s chains is not fully explained to Enoch. God cries out with sorrow at the awful price that will be paid to conquer sin and death.

Standing in the presence of the holy one convinces Nokh. Sin is rebellion.

The Lord talks about his nature, his plurality, and at the same time the simplicity of his oneness. Enoch accepts truth by faith. To attempt to understand is rebellion.

The voice of God causes him to bow down with respect even as his eyes look up and see that they are full of compassion.

Some ideas are not spoken. They rise in his mind. His will is captured. Nokh’s entire being dances with incredible joy.

Words come.

“Those who walk with me will forgive as I have forgiven.”

Enoch barely whispers through tears.

“Do you mean I could forgive the ones who killed my family, my beloved son, Mattawn?”

“I want you to be like me. If you love me, do as I do. Nokh, I have forgiven you. Forgive one another.”

Mercy is an action, not a feeling. God tells him that mercy restores relationships. It does not dispense judgment, but pays a price and takes the judgment on itself so that life can replace death.

Without mercy forgiveness fails. Grace flows gently from mercy just as the waters pass the Cherubim who stand guard at the gates.

“No one enters without my permission.”

Enoch worships.

“Thank you, Lord, for who you are.”

When he realizes the physical presence is gone he hears a voice.

“Go to your son Methuselah. He needs you. In recent years he has moved to the outer edges of life on earth. He is also moving to the edges of my grace. He acts as if he rejects my mercy.”

Enoch steps back.

“I think he accepted the truth years ago. He is faithful at the sacrifice of the altar. He believes the blood is sufficient. You have forgiven him.”

“Yes Enoch you are right, he believes and acts on his belief, but he foolishly attempts to live by the flesh after accepting by faith.”

Enoch looks up incredulously.

“How can I help him?”

The Lord patiently instructs his friend reminding him why he is named Methuselah. He is the man of the dart. Like a dart, he is becoming an instrument of judgment in my hand. Methuselah will live a very long life, longer than anyone else, and his death will trigger my wrath against unequaled wickedness.’

The Lord then tells how this sincere servant is forcing his convictions on others, and how he attempts to control the community of believers with his man-made darts of condemnation. He demands conformity to his standards of righteousness.

“Methuselah must grow in steadfast love. I do not desire performance. I want him to know me as you know me. You can help. Will you go?”

“I will go.”

Nokh never gets tired of any journey. He keeps his mind on the goal and makes the most of each step of the way. A special joy is shared over a meal with Haran and his family in the city.

“It is much worse than I thought.”

Enoch says to the group. Haran has maintained his place on the Euphrates in the city but it looks like a walled compound with sturdy structures and coverings on door and window openings. A majestic olive tree still standing in the front plaza welcomes all who enter. Haran warns.

“Please guard your words carefully. Spies for the unity guards have embedded themselves everywhere. We do not know who we can trust.”

The warning is taken seriously and any talk about God is avoided in large gatherings.

A young woman joins them and tells of her faith in God and the secret meetings she attends. Numbers are few but faith is strong. Nokh prays and rejoices with them.

Before leaving the city he meets privately with other believers. They encourage one another and bless each other. Several wish to go with Enoch to visit Methuselah who lives far to the east.

These encouragements allow them to worship in small groups throughout the city. Fervent prayer shared by all goes with them as they step out in faith. The journey is an act of worship. Nokh’s leadership is a blessing.

Each evening they rest beside vernal pools. The river is far behind them. Some have never been so far from the security of the river.

Mists cool them after the exertion of travel. The warmth from the earth sustains comfort at night. Fruit, grains, and green things are found in abundance along the trail. God supplies their needs.

Enoch’s example makes a difference. He gives glory to God. His consistent faith, his love, and the way he speaks the truth make others feel safe. He cares for people.

The party settles beside one of the spectacular pools. Amazing surroundings include profuse shades of green, luxuriant bowers with flowing streams of pink, red, and yellow roses, birds, bright orange with touches of blue, and delicate purple orchids rising like sentinels to the tops of evergreen trees.

Mists hover around balls floating, or perhaps suspended, in mid-air reflecting predominant shades of blue with shining twinkles, both red and gold. Variations combine to dazzle the eyes. After long, bone-wrenching travel they stand under a mist ball allowing its healing waters to caress their tired bodies. Emerging their skin tingles. Minds and emotions embrace clean energy and renewed focus, rejoicing because of God’s great faithfulness.

One of the travelers, more than one hundred years younger than Enoch asks,

“Father! How do you keep such a joyful spirit when we are surrounded by perverse hatred, violence, and danger?”

Enoch says.

“I have learned to enjoy the moment. As I walk with God, his joy is my strength. Look at the waters. We do not know where they come from and where they go, but God has given them to us. Without water, we could not survive. Every good gift comes from above, from the only one who is our father, who does all things for his pleasure and our good.”

Water is essential for life. It takes many forms. Thirst is quenched, it soaks into the ground and waters the earth, and it comes down from above. Things float on water. Water cleanses.

Families make devices that drift in quiet waters. Children play in shallows for much of the day. Men use watercraft to transport materials.

When the group arrives at Methuselah’s home they are amazed to see a well-ordered community. Shelters are substantial but look alike, plain, and foreboding. The people wear tight, somber clothing and all look alike. There is no display of affection.

Nokh finds faith, at least they speak of belief in God, but something is missing. He watches and asks God what he is supposed to do.

They speak of love for God and one another but a lack of warmth casts a shadow over the entire community.

When they have a quiet moment together, Enoch asks his eldest son,

“Do I see an unnatural legalism in your life?”

Methuselah answers without offense.

“That is what we are. We walk circumspectly so God will be pleased.”

“All right, I will ask you a question.”

Methuselah continues to look his father in the eye and shows no sign that he is upset.

Enoch asks,

“Do you have a list of things you have to do each day to please God?”

Methuselah says with no hesitation.

“Yes!”

He immediately goes through its carefully thought-out contents. It includes wonderful, healthy, and godly attitudes and activities. He explains that by keeping these things our minds become pure. Our works show that we are walking in God’s will—we come close to all that he wants us to be.

“Those of us who religiously follow these concepts most perfectly have an assurance of a right standing before God.”

Enoch finds it difficult to argue against anything on the list but he is confident that this approach to God is not what the Lord desires. He has said enough. Only God can convince Methuselah that he wants a relationship, not a performance. Enoch prays. He blesses his son, Methuselah, his firstborn, the son he appreciates and loves. He and Orna had given their son to God years ago. He lets Ged take care of his own.

God’s words echo in Nokh’s head.

“The blood of the lamb pleases me. Do not add to my words and do not take away from them. I have given you all you need for life and godliness.”

Now alone on his long walk home, wherever that may lead him, Enoch faces refreshing pleasures, dark dangers, and an unknown future, meditating on the word of God.

“My grace is sufficient for you.”

58 RESPECT

On the journey back to his new town on the south river, Nokh spends quality time with his cousin. They often sacrifice personal interests to get together.

Growing relationships require this spirit of openness and willingness to share resources, time, and words of appreciation. In some ways, they are closer to each other than ever before. Even though they live far apart, their minds are now knit together because of the Lord.

Haran talks seriously about moving with his family to the new town on the Gihon. Enoch cautions.

“Please wait for our Lord’s direction on making such a major change in all of your lives. Delight in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.”

They agree that wickedness is increasing in every place. Moving to a new location does not make it any easier to walk with God.

Haran says he will seek to follow God’s plan for them. They hold each other in a firm hug. This final sign of their love eases the pain of being apart.

The situation in the new town is not much better when Nokh arrives home. It begins to rival the big city so many new families have arrived. Empty houses are quickly filled with new residents. Hearts take longer to heal when most come because of unhappy separations.

His old neighbor on the metal workers avenue is happy to welcome Enoch and says to him.

“You have earned the respect of most people in town. If you take charge, and step up to the work God wants you to do, our community would be a better place to live. Your leadership will make a difference.”

Enoch is tempted because he begins to believe what the people are telling him. A group of people decide to take his leadership role seriously. Women and children speak highly of him. In their minds, he is the best choice. His intelligence, handsome appearance, and vast reserve of experience appeal to followers. In addition, younger women often speak of his singleness.

Enoch sees too many of these people obey God in faith believing, and then live with no restraint against sin. They misunderstand freedom from sin to do whatever they want to do and trust that God will forgive them.

Methuselah and his followers add rules to God’s word. These new townspeople disregard too many of God’s words. As Enoch ponders these things in his mind he receives assurance that either pattern is not what God wants. It is like these followers are walking in ditches on the side of the path. Both are living according to the works of the flesh. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. All who come will walk by faith, not by sight. A person cannot see faith. In contrast, the works of the flesh are visible for all to see.

God has revealed that he sees the inner being of each person. He sees faith. Enoch does not need to prove that he has faith. God knows all things. The Lord reveals to him,

“I have prepared things for you to do. If you are walking by faith you will do them for my sake.”

Enoch understands that the works God has planned are unique for each person. God had told him.

“You should not force good works on your family or friends!”

God’s voice is much different than Nokh expects. It is not loud or frightening. There is no feeling of hurry or threat. It is a still, small voice.

The first thing that comes into Enoch’s mind upon waking from a long, restful sleep is God reminding him,

“I have made you clean on the inside. You cannot make yourself clean in my eyes by your works of righteousness.”

Enoch’s lips are parched. He feels they have been touched gently by a hot knife.

It takes more than a week of days, the pattern of seven that God designed in creation, for Nokh to speak to the people of each avenue in the new town. He assures them of his love and deep concern for each family. They are encouraged to walk with God as a solution for unrest, impatience, and jealousy.

Enoch will not become their leader.

“I will not take the place of God in your lives.”

Enoch’s walk with God is a spiritual reality. He often speaks of it in physical terms but knows that is only a way to describe it. When asked what you mean that we should walk by faith, he answers,

“One step at a time.”

God appeared to Enoch with real physical presence, just as he walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the evening in the garden he prepared for them.

Enoch sings aloud as he walks toward that garden. His lyric singing with rhythmic intonation lifts his spirit toward God.

“The path I chose is Mine. With joy, I will endure.

Tears and groans abound. You wicked, sin-cursed place.

Alone yet not Alone. Innumerable steps Sublime.

Step after step: My Day. There is no other Way.

My Guide, my Friend: I pray. Onward: I cannot stay.

With You, Spiritual: Real. God’s tug continually feel.”

By the time he reaches the waters issuing from the garden, still united as one; his love, his devotion to God reaches a high place of praise and adoration. Sitting quietly he perceives something he has never observed in all his travels. This has to be the summit of the earth. How else could the waters move so swiftly? Is it possible that God created a globe with one land mass and the waters flow ceaselessly to fill everything else?

Silently an angel stands, waiting just a few steps from him. Enoch speaks first.

“Why are you still guarding the entrance to the garden after so many years?”

An angelic voice answers. The lyric quality is far superior to anything human.

“Our master has asked us to do so. We stop people from entering the garden. It concerns the Tree of Life. God does not want anyone to eat of it at this time. In the future humans will eat its fruit, but it would be very bad for them to do so at present in your sinful world.”

He explains that the tree is still standing, majestic and healthy.

“If you or any other human would eat the fruit you would live forever in your sinful condition. Nokh, you are not destined for such an eternity.”

They talk with one another about the killing of animals, the sacrifices, the blood, and how people can enter the presence of God. Then suddenly a multitude says with angelic voices,

“God has a better plan. We do not understand. Our work is God’s command. This is our joy.”

Then something unknown to Enoch in all of his experience; a dark shadow moves across the sun and he hears these somber chords.

“We know God also calls us to destroy. We feel the heart of God. We weep when he weeps.”

This glorious sound reaches Enoch’s heart. There is so much he does not understand. There are no more questions. He rests in the word God has given him.

The angel tells him about the nature of free will. Humans have the freedom to choose God’s pathway which leads to life. Angels were created before time. One of them rebelled against God and huge numbers chose to follow him in his rebellion. They made their choice. They have no hope. They are trapped as rebels forever and ever.

Humans, on the other hand, have fallen into the pit of sin because Adam sinned. God had chosen Adam to be the only representative for all mankind. When he sinned, all sinned. Therefore every human is separated from the glory of God. The glory of God is at the Tree of Life.

“You see we are not human and you will always be human. Your rebellion is different than ours. You have hope of salvation through the blood of the sacrifice. We do not!”

Enoch asks,

“Did I make the wrong choice when I refused to become the leader of my town on the south river?”

Another angel in clothing just like Enoch’s steps close and speaks so quietly that Nokh puts a hand up to his ear to hear.

“You mean that new one where you have many friends who say they are following God just as you do? You did what you felt our Master would want you to do. That is all I can say.”

He explains that those who read God’s word, treasure it, and talk to God continually begin to think as God thinks. Their choices will be the ones they should make.

The first angel agrees and adds,

“God has great plans for the place where the south river town stands. It will affect every person who ever lives on earth.”

They explain that the place where Enoch lives will see the fulfillment of God’s plan for all ages. Enoch murmurs.

“The town is falling apart. How is that possible? Am I the one who could make a difference?”

He hears,

“No place will ever prosper the way you wish as long as sin controls the thoughts and intentions of the human.”

Nokh lifts his hands toward the gates as he feels an intense blast of heat from the flaming swords. He falls to the ground. There is no place for pride or position, abilities, or influence. Enoch’s ambition changes course. From that day forward he strives to be very distinctively God’s in every haphazard circumstance.

It is difficult. Many times he is tempted to assert his ability to control. As long as he stays on course, peace replaces frustration. He even takes naps in the middle of the day.

Two cycles of the sun pass before Enoch returns to the faithful of the big city. Reports from Methuselah encourage him. Grace wins the hearts of believers. Every time Nokh has an opportunity he gives the same message.

“All truth points to God. Sin separates humanity from God. God is love and because he is God he makes a way for many to walk with him; it is the way of hope. Treasure the words from the Lord. They are  sharper than the best knives and darts I have ever made.”

Without direction from God, he would not be the man he is. His respect for the words of God has marked him. He has become God’s kind of man. Not perfect. But marked as the man who always speaks the same message. A message of salvation and hope, without compromise.

59 WISDOM

Earth Year 970 CY

Days of rest on his journey often allow him to catch up on his writing, meditate on the words of God, and most importantly pray without interruption. This time Enoch pushes forward with urgency to arrive before the mid-year festival; the biggest one of the year.

People travel from every outlying corner of the globe to participate in the spectacular event. Crowds are estimated to reach a million. Among the travelers are some families of faith who live in South River which has become known as a place of peace. Nokh calls it by that name since the Lord revealed plans for its future.

Enoch and his friends approaching the outskirts of the city are disturbed by reports of sinister activity, all in the name of the children of God. Properties have been confiscated and turned into places of ritualistic practice for neighborhood groups. These small groups demand participation from all those who live in the vicinity.

Enoch also learns that Haran’s beautiful and well-kept riverside property will be taken before the high feast.

An official announcement published throughout the city claims.

“We will establish twelve community centers for the good of the people before the brightness of the moon, God will prosper us.”

After a restless sleep, Nokh begins pushing through the crowds to reach Haran by the end of the day. He and his companions draw back into the shadows when they see a large party moving toward them.

The crowd moves toward the western edge of the city. Why is this group leaving? They are going in the wrong direction. Forest trails of years ago have become broad walkways in these large population outskirts. Enoch and his friends listen carefully and hear disturbing phrases almost lost in the crowded street.

“Why are those fugitives crying?”

“Look at their faces. They are afraid!”

“That is my grandson with them.”

“Hide us in the forest. The unity gangs are pursuing us.”

Haran’s wife and children carry him to a deep grove of trees, known only to Enoch just a few steps from their beloved river. Alone and feeling safe, they clean Haran’s wounds and the water refreshes him for only a brief time. Enoch holds his cousin close to his chest as the breath of life leaves Haran and he slips quietly into eternity.

Throughout a seemingly endless night, Haran’s wife clings to his cold body, hoping her warmth could bring him life. They pray that God’s mercy will prevail. Even the stars appear dimmer—in the presence of death. It always seems so final.

For Enoch, God’s word is his hope of life beyond the grave. Questions cause struggling family members to believe that death is final and there is no life in the place of the dead. Another says,

“Where is God’s mercy when good men die?”

Haran’s body is placed in a shallow, hastily dug grave on the other side of the river. This may protect those who hate the faithful so much they will desecrate their bodies by dragging them through the streets.

The bereaved emerge slowly from the waters which have always sustained life, but not this time. For many hope dies. Grief conquers. Most return to the city to finish their years in obscurity protected, they think, by their submission to the authorities of community religion.

Haran’s wife and a few others turn upstream with Enoch. He leads them to the old site of Adam’s place. It has grown thick with no care. Weedy vines are covering once majestic, now dying trees. This place protects wicked watchers. Superstitious people avoid Adam’s place.

Women care for Haran’s widow. They tenderly care for her in this new, overwhelming circumstance. As faithful followers of God, the gathering family draws close to one another. Their beliefs tie them together with the cords of love.

Nokh knows that God is calling him to bind up the wounds of the broken and help the hunted ones find a place of safety in this wicked world.

It takes him many days to take the first steps to his place of communion with God. This time he talks to the Cherubim. The distance from the gates seems much closer than it was years ago. Has his secret place moved closer? He knows of no human hands maintaining such pristine beauty. This is a place of order in a world cursed with chaos. The angel asks if he can help. Enoch answers.

“I will wait for my friend who walks with me.”

The Lord, not bound by time or space, comes at just the right time. He is never late. Tears run down Enoch’s entire body. Will they never end? Nokh fixes his eyes on the gate and hopes.

“My son do not be afraid. I will overcome the world.”

God’s voice surrounds Nokh. Jumping up and then falling to the ground wishing for protection from the deep bass vibration as if the earth is crumbling beneath him the man sees for himself an open door to the very presence of God.

“Do not be afraid! I will never leave you or forsake you.”

That same mighty arm lifts him softly and tenderly moving toward the gates of Eden. Nokh’s legs will not move: God carries him along.

Cherubim’s flashing swords of fire stand at attention, blocking the entrance. Enoch sinks as if into a dream. He feels as if he is surrounded by the waters and would have drowned had not the hand of God reached out to grasp his hand.

Then a voice speaks to the angels. It is an unknown language but there is no question who is in charge. Enoch is given its meaning.

“Move away from the gates. I am the Lord and Creator of Heaven and Earth. I can enter with whomever I choose to bring. I am the only God of the Universe.”

On the short journey back to Adam’s old place Enoch attempts to fathom the events of his day. Darkness approaches quickly as glory fades. The mist of the sky draws aside. Stars light the pathway with a brilliance seldom seen.

Nokh bows his head as he enters the quietness of his sleeping community. Going into God’s Garden has humbled him more than he could ever imagine possible. Pride dissipates much as the mists leave so silently at the end of each day. He is not wise in his estimation. God is his life. Without the Lord, Enoch is nothing because everything he does is for the glory of the Lord.

“To describe what I experienced is utterly impossible.”

Haran’s slowly healing widow listens reverently. Human attempts would bring God down to the level of his creation. The gulf is too wide. Words could not express the glory, the power, the love, the holiness, the awesome beauty, the wisdom of his person.

“Just stop and think about it, God veiled his fulness from me, for no man can live in the presence of God’s glory.”

Haran’s wife asks,

“Did he say if my beloved is with him in Heaven?”

“No!”

Enoch looks straight into her eyes as tears run down his face.

“I have faith to believe that Haran is safe in the arms of God.”

Love, joy, peace, and patience fill all his days. He does not ask to go into the garden again. Nokh has learned to be content wherever he goes, with his friends, his family, and in the marketplace.

Walking with God is all he seeks. Enoch has learned to think as God thinks, not because of experience, but because of the word from God. Goodness, faithfulness, self-discipline, gentleness, and humility are characteristics of a person who has walked with God for a long, long time. Enoch has. For him, it is the only way to live.

It is not like he is perfect. The works of the flesh continually pull him into selfish excesses. Lust and evil people continue to lure all those who are walkers. The evil one can make sinful habits look beautiful.

However, when Nokh does sin, God has a way of letting him see his failures. Walkers come to the place of forgiveness. It is better than waters of rivers, mist showers, or even crystal pools.

Only God can make him clean. It is real.

60 WORSHIP

A shiny dart tip worn smooth with constant rubbing becomes a source of peaceful comfort throughout the long days of her life.

Grief still lingers long after Haran’s death. It all happened so quickly. The attack, her husband’s strength in defending his family and home, and then silence as the marauders fled, fearful that maybe they had taken the fight too far.

It was one of his darts they removed from Haran’s side. Nokh could easily identify the distinctive craftsmanship of the work.

She says as she hands the tip to him.

“Would you take this and show it to God?”

Enoch nods and wonders how she knows so much about his relationship with God,

“Perhaps if I do as she asks, God will teach us why our good people die and the wicked prosper.”

For much of the next week, he stays at his private place before the gates. Others do not ask about his business there. They respect him and his strengthening relationship with the Lord of the garden gates. Nokh drills a hole in the tip of the dart, threads a thin piece of animal skin through it, and ties it around his neck.

Widow Haran had been greatly comforted that he might talk to God about it. When they prayed together as they often did, strength slowly restored life and vitality for both of them. They have been family and friends for most of their lives.

Enoch prays with others often. His life has become a source of encouragement and edification for all who are willing to listen to him. He listens well, sits with friends, sometimes in silence, seldom criticizing, offering a helping hand to those in need.

His example sets the tone for the small group which continues to gather at Adam’s old place close to the gates of God’s Garden.

Frequent visits to the town of peace on the south river encourage Enoch. Mutual help and strategic meetings with the faithful stir up love and good works.

It is mutual. Nokh needs them as much as they look to him. They learn contentment in every circumstance of life. The sun does not go down on anger. They know the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. Peace of God fills these communities even though sin abounds in the wicked world around them.

The heavy dangling dart weighs heavily on Nokh’s dark tan skin which stretches over a perfectly sculpted upper body even though it is now three hundred and fifty years of age. This is the beauty God created.

Heart palpitations are so strong it feels like the dart is vibrating in its hiding place close to the heart. Nokh does not worry if the Lord will choose to come as a physical person but he does have deep concern about talking with God about the dart. He plans to ask,

“Am I responsible for all of these horrible deaths because I made the instruments of death?”

A Cherub moves, they never seem to walk, they just come. He approaches and speaks a message from God.

“God sees that the wickedness of man is great in all the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of man’s heart is only evil continually.”

The messenger then tells Enoch that he should gather his close friends and help them resettle through the marsh waterways to the river that flows toward the setting of the sun.

“If you do as God asks these people will dwell there in safety until he calls all of you to his heavenly home beyond this world.”

Even though Enoch often sins in thought and deed, he sincerely confesses his failure. The more a person knows God, the greater sense of wickedness overshadows that person’s entire being.

Nokh seldom disregards explicit revelations from God. In truth, his worship of God is always a response to the word of the Lord. This communication motivates him to make a sacrifice and humbles his whole being in submission. This obedience of faith is worship.

He does not fully grasp why, but he has never made a sacrifice with blood at an altar near the gates of Eden. Here he comes boldly into the presence of God: Forgiven. His place is a growing spot where his relationship with God is being strengthened.

Enoch forgets about himself when he worships the Lord. God is his focus, his master, his life. He submits in all things to the will of his maker—the best friend he has ever had.

With so many changes in the world, friends tell him he should not go back to the largest city on the Euphrates. It has been two years since he made the trip. It is dangerous.

But he will not listen, memories flood his weary mind as he heads east once again to keep his promise. On the outskirts, he crosses over the still mighty river and checks his cousins’ burial place. He prays.

“I do not even know where my beloved wife, Orna is buried. That was so many years ago. I love her with my whole heart. Thank you for the time you gave us together. Thank you for our children and our children’s children.”

Visits to people of faith in the city are more difficult. Encouragement is scarce, danger prevails on every side.

Returning to his most recent ministry of obedience and faithfulness he rejoices to see that faithful friends have moved through the marshes to the incredible new location toward the setting sun. This is quickly becoming a place of refuge. It promises rest for the weary who follow God.

A cleverly handcrafted basket is passed among the people. Colorful reeds and sturdy branches have been woven together with a short handle and it holds interesting treasures. They are shiny yellow pieces of stone that weigh a great deal more than their size would indicate. It is good that the basket is strong.

Everyone agrees that these stones are of no great value but they demonstrate the divine wisdom and power of the one who would create such things. Each person shares with no thought of hoarding. Perhaps the collections could be used for God’s glory sometime in the future.

When he least expects it the Lord takes the man into his presence. He immediately knows that the widow’s questions need answers.

They walk past a withered, grotesque remnant of a once mighty tree that the Lord explains is the reason for the death of good people. Enoch reaches resolutely to his neck, fingers trembling, and removes the shiny tip from over his heart. He places it at the base of the foreboding mass of twisted destruction.

Burdens fall away at the same moment. This instrument of death belongs to the tree of death. Never again does he carry the guilt for making darts. Sin kills! Instruments do not!

The Lord leaves his friend with an assurance that death is not the end.

“Precious in my sight is the death of my people. My steadfast love provides deliverance from sin and death forever.”

As a result of belief in God’s words, Enoch shares his life unconditionally with all who cross his path. Loving God and loving people means that he boldly witnesses God’s steadfast love. Nokh’s love for God makes him bold to tell others of God’s provision for eternal deliverance. He treasures God’s truth so much that he tolerates no compromise in the message.

“Death is an enemy. I hate sin. It not only separates us from God but it destroys families and ruins friendships. The good news reconciles. God is waiting for us to come to him.”

With much difficulty, the oldest ones have made it through the marshes into the protection and quietness of the gathering place on the wild river of the west. It runs much faster than any Nokh has ever seen. He works tirelessly to prepare a solid pathway around the swamps so all who desire to come, may come. Then they carefully camouflage the entrance so only those who are invited may find it.

Joining this new community has helped people to walk with God as Nokh walks. Sin increases in every place except for this one.

“Have you noticed widow Haran that people who faithfully follow God are dying at much younger ages than our ancestors died?”

Enoch describes what he knows of God’s plan. The whole world participates in a progression toward death. Our first man sinned and death passed to everything including every man, woman, and child. Widow Haran now realizes that her grief is only a very small part of God’s grief over sin.

“Do you believe there is eternal separation from God?”

“Yes, there is eternal separation in a place far worse than death.”

There is a place of eternal separation immersed in fear, hatred, bitterness, and all that is evil. Enoch continues to explain that God has chosen those who will live with him forever. As difficult as this is for him to believe he tells her that all people are also responsible for the choices they make. No one can ever accuse God of not choosing them.

God has revealed that sinners do not tolerate the presence of God’s holiness. Those who come to the light must come by their obedience—the obedience of faith.

The widow’s question about the dart tip does not seem important after this talk with Enoch. He does tell her what God said and how he left the tip at the base of the dead tree. She rests well with renewed submission to God’s will.

Even though it has been more than a complete cycle of the sun since Enoch has seen the Lord, he is not disturbed. The Lord continues to walk with him and they talk with one another at all times. Nokh goes with the Lord wherever his journeys take him. God’s love amazes him more than he has ever experienced. He knows with all his senses the one he worships who has become his trusted friend.

Then suddenly he feels God’s embrace. It is flesh touching flesh. A perfect hand grasps his and goes toward the garden, one step at a time. They walk side by side.

The pathway leads deeper into the garden than he has ever gone. A meadow of unfathomable beauty suddenly opens before them. Its absence of separate colors does not startle Nokh, for he sees the purity of whiteness with its dazzling spectrum. He is overwhelmed.

In the center, a circle of something with a total absence of light, tinged with red, utterly devoid of all beauty, looks like an entrance to a different world: A bottomless pit with fiery torment. It is deep and menacing as if attempting to extinguish all light.

“What is this?”

Nokh asks in a hoarse guttural voice.

“This is where death first invaded my very good world.”

“Is this where Cain killed his brother Abel? Is his blood crying out for vengeance?”

“No! There was death before Abel’s murder.”

Then Enoch realizes his error. Abel’s blood was not the first. The first was shed by God himself to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve’s sinful depravity.

He sees that the Lord still grieves over the first blood that was shed. Sin’s tenacious grip requires an awful price.

“I will pay the final and ultimate payment for sin. It requires life for life. Death for death, blood for blood—it is the only way.”

A lingering embrace calms Enoch at the entrance as even the Cherubs slip into shadows and their swords dim during this tender moment, God and man reconciled.

Enoch rejoices, not with exhilaration, but with reverence. God alone is awesome.

“He touched me, and oh the joy that lifts my soul, thank you, Lord. I love you!”

Nokh does not hold his head high because he met with God. He bows toward the earth with a broken heart and contrite spirit, walking slowly.

“Wherever he leads, I’ll go.”

61 THANKSGIVING

Earth Year 975 CY

An unusually large person, who overpowers others because of a dignified stature, looks intently into Enoch’s eyes. The strong voice carries conviction.

“The festivals of the new moon are filled with thankfulness for the bountiful lives we enjoy. We have built this fine city far from the one down on the Euphrates and now we will establish a grand festival altar here.”

She goes on to explain that the beautiful garden that the people have developed along the south river where the waters flow on three sides will be the place for the worship of God.

“Hear! Hear!”

Many women standing with her at the intersection of Music Makers Avenue and the main north-to-south boulevard eagerly applaud her leadership.

The decision has been made before the men even know about it. Enoch looks to the east at the point of land where the river turns with placid calmness around a peninsula before it continues on its southward journey. The trees, grasses, and flowers rival some of the beautiful ones that Enoch has seen in God’s Garden.

He remembers that this is the very place where he first set up camp when arriving with the sheep that followed him so many years ago.

A very young mother holding a baby on her left hip murmurs.

“Why has it taken so long for you to do something about this?”

Enoch responds with grace.

“Why are you asking me? I am not the leader of our town. However, I call this a place of peace. We must work together if this brings glory to God.”

The spokesperson sputters losing some of her dignity to passion.

“Don’t tell us that! You know that whatever you approve of will happen. If you oppose anything—that is the end of the matter.”

It grieves him that what she says may be true. Why are people quick to put more belief in what he says than what the Lord has instructed?

Later that evening he speaks privately to a friend at the house where he is staying. His own home had been given to a needy family many years ago. This man and his family live on the avenue at the far south end of town. These settlers protect the borders with spears, darts, and swords.

Nokh loves the new craftsmanship they use in making these tools and weapons. It makes some of his work look primitive. Of course, he started over three hundred years ago. He examines a sword that has two sharp edges and the hilt is shaped like a cross. The friend encourages.

“Your work Enoch is nothing to cause you shame. Some of your tools have such a perfect balance that we still use them all the time. They are incredible pieces and over two hundred years old. You stand tall among us.”

Nokh answers humbly desiring to keep his focus on God not thinking of himself more highly than he should.

“God has amazing plans for this very piece of ground upon which we stand.”

A large and unique outcropping of stone provides a massive threshing floor for the grain growers to harvest. The people use it to winnow the chaff from the precious grains. Crops grow continually with the daytime mists, strong diffused sunlight from above, and gentle breezes of the night. Some growers have learned to direct the mist bubbles across their fields with success.

An elder from the grain group has joined the conversation and adds.

“It is part of life that the seeds we plant die to bring new growth and then we beat the harvest which separates the good from that which is of no value. Those annoying weeds that invade our crops cause terrible problems.”

The trusted friend who provides loving hospitality says without caution.

“I do not appreciate these false teaching groups who are planning an altar that rivals the big one in the city.”

They know it would be futile to speak out against the plan.

“If people will not listen to God, how can we stop them?”

Nokh has never seen people work as hard as they do to complete this new project. They toil day and night in blessed harmony, sparing no expense as they build a festival ground to rival the grand altar of the city. Pieces of glistening stone that some are now calling metal are placed on the central altar which burns continually with a sweet-smelling fragrance.

The faithful followers of God do not leave town. They choose to live in peace with everyone. They continue to pray, love others, and serve the community. Their small group gatherings bring them together as they work together to follow the Lord. Most agree to co-exist with false teaching and say,

“We can be good people even though false beliefs begin to control our town.”

Enoch has a great concern about the rapid growth of compromise not only about the blood at the altar but now there is a growing interest in the serpent and his influence in the world. Do people celebrate the serpent’s victorious introduction to the knowledge of good and evil? He shudders because a large group of settlers, exceedingly handsome and tall, whose fathers were the sons of God have been welcomed into the region.

Everyone works hard to live exemplary lives. The peaceful large town on the Gihon becomes a model, the perfect place to live, surrounded by like-minded sincere people. New residents anticipate that this will be a wonderful opportunity to bring up children. Mysteries about the shining altar intrigue the entire world. It takes only a few months for everyone to participate without hesitation in the excitement of the festival.

The silence of God puzzles Enoch. By faith, he overcomes and continues his walk with contentment. Exploration of unknown regions frequently draws Nokh to a different kind of walk. It is his comfortable activity.

Travelling south of town he discovers chasms with water cascading into deep places—more unanswered questions. Small craters running in the same direction as the river make Nokh think that the earth could swallow him up along with the largest animals and tallest trees. A big chasm could hold an entire town. Some of these go deep enough for a person to stand in them without being seen. Then the further he travels south; forests thicken making progress impossible.

Pure waters satisfy his thirst. Enoch discovers with great excitement heated waters for soaking which buoyantly lift his mind and soul as well as his body.

Resting in God’s plan for the earth and his own life he learns to trust every circumstance. There is no need to ask why. He is content with partial knowledge. The God who created all things is the all-wise one who knows all things. His wisdom is perfect.

In times like these Nokh wishes he could just go along with the popular thinking of people in the community. Should he press his convictions on others?

The divided world begins to affect Enoch—the promise to visit the city each year, his concerns about Methuselah who lives in the far away eastern land away from the river, the false teaching of south town, and lately the new settlement in the other side of the marshes. Even his private place at the gates of the garden does not encourage as much as it once did.

Since it has been almost three years since Nokh has gone to the city he decides to do that first. Action is the best way to overcome discouragement. Great blessings, or extended moments of happiness, begin to restore the spirit as Enoch joins small group meetings and participates in private sacrifices at altars. The sharing of meals with like-minded friends, simple times of prayer, and recitation of all the Lord has told them strengthens him and his friends to be faithful in their walk with God.

Large assemblies are not permitted. So this fellowship from house to house helps them strengthen their relationship with God. They discover that those who walk with God enjoy a greater ability to love each other.

After a busy day and evening visiting people throughout the city, Enoch walks toward the house where friends have prepared a meal and a guest room for him to spend the night. He is alone. It is dark.

An official-looking person of interest follows him. Enoch attempts to see why this man is tracking him. He turns left on a side avenue, then quickly jogs to the right. The man follows. Neither rushes. Enoch has no fear. After coming to a watering place with parklike beauty and broad comfortable gathering places, he sits on a bench beside a trellis with night-blooming jasmine. The fragrance reminds him of his former home out by the river. The plaza shows how advanced the people of the city have become.

The man who follows walks right on past with a greeting and Nokh knows that he was alarmed for no good reason. Danger lurks throughout the city because even though Ywek still holds the leadership securely, the festival has taken on a life of its own. Hatred toward God and God’s followers is a movement bigger than one man.

Just as Nokh thinks about walking on, without warning, a dark figure stands close to Enoch’s left shoulder. How did this one come so quietly? Is he a supernatural being like the Cherubim?

“I have a message for Nokh from our esteemed leader, Ywek.”

Nokh stands his ground even though he feels no immediate threat.

“Ywek wishes to meet you privately tomorrow when the stars begin to shine. He asks you to find him at your old family dwelling on the banks of the Euphrates.”

Silence on Enoch’s part says a great deal. How does this stranger know so much about him—even his nickname, Nokh? Then he threatens.

“Do not fail. If you do you will regret it!”

The man slips away into the shadows. Nokh does not get a good look at the stranger nor does he recognize the voice. Tension builds, like a crouching animal ready to attack, and he hurries to his friends where he settles down for the night. He eats the meal prepared and prays with friends then sleeps well.

Morning brings hope for God’s faithfulness. Nothing new develops and as the day passes Enoch decides to go to his old home even though he wonders what the Lord is going to accomplish. He knows that the people of the festival and what is becoming the central controlling group of the city have taken over his property. They are making the area into a shrine and park to rival the one on the south river.

The stars begin to shine dimly and he slips onto the property a back way. Nokh knows the territory better than most. Old landmarks are gone but the river has not changed. The shocking sight of his home, which has been altered with representations of the devil’s glory warns. Some of his interwoven, hand-rubbed, and oiled branches with incredible markings and shapes still form the ceiling of his arbor. The stars shine through as if they are lights floating above the comfortable sitting area.

Ywek comes alone. This unsettles Nokh. He expects a power play with guards and authoritative grandeur. The leader wears a simple piece of clothing like most other people. It is a deep purple color and that is special. Enoch has not seen Ywek face to face for years but is not surprised that he is fit physically. Like all men of the city who work hard and eat healthy foods Ywek’s handsome appearance elicits respect.

The cool night air stirs and for quite a while the two men sit watching reflections of stars dancing in swirling eddies moving slowly down the Euphrates. Ywek, the leader of the people God created, speaks first.

“This new system of worship has taken over my whole being. I imagine this is like one feels who is drowning. It is bigger than I am.”

Enoch does not say anything but he knows God hears his prayer. Ywek continues.

“At times I am truly sorry for the wickedness it promotes. Am I responsible? Is there hope that I could experience the peace that you have? It must be a peace beyond anything I could understand.”

Nokh’s pulse races, his eyes dilate even in the darkness, and he feels his heart beating against his chest. He moves close and touches the director’s arm.

“God speaks to every man who needs to come to him. Now is the time to believe his words. Open your mind, and your innermost being, and have faith as a child. He has told us that we must obey by faith. It is the only way. God’s steadfast love endures forever.”

The stars turn on their axis. The two men talk till the dipper stands on its head. Ywek questions. Enoch gives a reason for the hope he possesses. It is difficult for one to receive what his inner self refuses to believe. Ywek knows the words of God. He uses his knowledge to fight against God when he says,

“Where is your appreciation? I have guided our people, and we still are supposed to be one, to our present height of accomplishment and prosperity.”

Night passes. Is Ywek done?

“You know that we are to give thanks in every circumstance. God says we should rejoice all the time. Why are you so divisive Enoch”

Nokh says,

“It is never too late. God waits for you to come.”

Ywek stands, turns, and says with his gentle voice.

“Do you think it is that easy to persuade me?”

Those are the last words Nokh hears as this one he has known for more than three hundred years slips quietly toward the coming dawn.

Both heads hang low. One depends on God’s steadfast love, the other laden down with guilt.

62 APPRECIATION

Earth Year 980

The trail on the north side of East River proved to be interesting but extremely difficult and it took at least three times longer to travel to the sheltered group beyond the swamp toward the setting of the sun. The hiker loved every step of the way.

No one remembered when three rivers were given names, East toward the rising of the sun, South, and North. South River Town claimed they were the first to name theirs—others followed. Pride in their community influenced everything South Town did. It became the best place to live in the whole world. Its influential position among men was known to the ends of the globe.

Enoch said little about the recently discovered river that flowed toward the setting of the sun. South Town had found a few sun-colored shiny things, and Nokh’s people had gathered a great deal more on their river.

Five years had passed. Enoch journeyed to East River City each year as he promised. Believers were encouraged and comforted in the fellowship. They showed affection and mercy to one another. Nokh’s humility, gentleness, and patient words of hope showed how much they were loved.

On every trip, he determined to witness to Ywek before he left. Three times he was able to meet him face to face. Messages were left when he could not see him. Nokh prayed for Ywek.

Enoch influenced people wherever he journeyed. His testimony of faith in God earned him respect even among the false teaching groups for they said he practiced what he preached. Believers loved him with a special love. They knew he cared for them.

Angels ministered to Nokh as God’s messengers. He lost count of the number of times they had escorted him to the gates. Someone had made a cleansing basin at the entrance and out of it the three rivers flowed. A cleansing in the pure waters became a normal procedure before he reached up to grasp the hand of God and walked with him past the flaming swords. Did God’s holiness require this washing of sinful flesh?

Total submission to the will of God took the place of questions. There was no need for them. He accepted everything God did. Even the death of good people made sense when he understood the alternatives. Knowing God elevated his knowledge of sin and its consequences. The experience proved he was no different than anyone else.

Walks with God in the perfection of his dwelling place on earth never ceased to take Nokh’s breath away. Orange poppies scattered among taller purple lupine shaded by trees that always displayed marvelous blossoms, flourished in the presence of their creator when he walked past them. Every shade of blue sparkled brightly from the depths of crystal pools. Yellows glowed with light from within reflecting the light that surrounded God.

Reds hid successfully and seldom punctuated the scene. Fruits with much more than sweetness—texture, moisture, color, and deliciousness like water drops dripped from every tree. Waters from springs tasted of flavors and provided coolness on the lips.

They talked quietly. There was no rush. Many times no words were spoken. Closeness of the man’s body to God satisfied every longing of the flesh. He yearned for the Lord more than anything else this marvelous creation had to offer.

Sin’s lure was empty. Enoch saw it for what it was—rebellion against a holy God. Satan’s trickery exposed itself as shallow, incredibly stupid, and ugly. Purity was beautiful. Sins of the flesh, the mind, and the tongue spewed black bile over everything they touched.

“Do not go to East City this year. I ask you to take the North River Trail and make your way over to the plains of Ararat in an unknown way. Your journey will be long and arduous. Take time to grow in grace and truth. I will instruct you and guide you with my eye.”

The lover went out not knowing the path he was taking or what he would do when he arrived. This journey was going to be interesting. He would enjoy every moment. He loved hiking with God.

“Spend lots of time and build relationship with Methuselah’s family. Take special notice of his firstborn son, Lamech. He is now nearly one hundred years of age on this earth. Teach him how to walk with me. I love you Nokh.”

“I love you Lord with my whole being, with my mind, my heart, and soul.”

“Thank you.”

It took days of preparation for a new and interesting trip. Nokh loved planning, gathering, and thinking about this new adventure. He had learned to live off the land. Its bounty never disappointed.

“I do not know why he sends me on this mission, pray for boldness to testify of God’s greatness, love, and holy judgments against sin.”

The group of older women, including widow Haran promised they would pray. Nokh’s absence might be long. The little group had never grown beyond its original number. Peace prevailed. God’s rule flourished.

North River turned wild within a half-day’s journey. After all of his travels, Nokh had never experienced anything like it. Wooly beasts, broad-backed panthers, and white bear roamed freely. Fascination became disgust when he saw how ferociously they attacked birds, small animals, and one another yet they did not come near the observer.

Thank you, God, I know you are protecting me from these wild things. When I see the works of your hand I praise you but when I witness terrible scenes with horrible destruction of life, I agree with you—I hate what sin has brought into our world!

Stately oaks more than eight hundred years old untouched by wind or storm stood like sentinels showing Nokh the way to his destination. As he sketched a tree in his mind he realized that a huge root system held it solidly in place. God revealed application to his life.

My strength comes from you Lord. You are like the root and trunk. I am the branches. You are my life.

Amazing lessons were learned as forest trees closed in around him. He could hardly breathe. Brambles so thick he had to walk on top of them made the way impossible. There was no path. He was lost. No one could crawl under them. Thorns tore bloody scars on Nokh’s legs and arms. Infection like he had never seen caused seeping sores. Itching and scratching irritations took weeks to clear up.

By the time he arrived at the flat places of Ararat, he only wanted to enjoy the cooling waters.

Why did you bring me on such a difficult journey Lord? You did teach me to hate sin. I appreciate that even though I felt lost you did not leave me. You led me in the way. I am not sure about the rash that still itches so badly. It is hard not to scratch it and that makes it worse. Our bodies you have given us are amazing. Thank you for walking with me. I love the quiet times too.

The Lord brought Lamech to him. He was still soaking in the pool not knowing he was so close to the place where Methuselah’s family sheltered. The son was a mighty man even though still a youth.

He jumped right in as if they were old friends. Enoch asked his grandson, “Has my son learned grace?”

The answer to this question would tell Nokh a lot. Lamech understood and assured him that God had taught all of them many important lessons about grace and compassion. They did not compromise

God’s truth. The community became exemplary with growth in grace and truth.

“Everyone says that you are responsible for the change that has become the new normal for all of us.”

“Thanks for your appreciation, but give all praise and glory to God.”

Then he shared stories of his treacherous journey of recent weeks and expressed much appreciation to God for faithfulness each step of the way.”

Sacrifices at altars, complete forgiveness of sin before God, the forgiveness of personal offenses in the community, feasting, loving, planting, weeding, harvesting, laughing, and speaking the word of the Lord filled many days. The time came for Enoch to return. He would stop briefly at East City on the trail which follows the north side of the Euphrates River.

Nothing could be as difficult as the far North River route through the oak forest. Lamech was to go with him. God had a plan. Everyone trusted and obeyed. Their minds and hearts were right. Their belief in God and his word determined their actions.

When the two men came to the main fork in the trail, one toward the city, the other toward home, Nokh said to his grandson, “I will go. inquire about Ywek, the leader of the city.”

“Will you go with me?”

“Is it dangerous? Would you advise me to wait here?

“Yes!”

Nokh wanted Lamech to make his own decision as God would lead him. The two went and stayed close to the river, coming downstream to the old family home. Small groups of women and men stood apart in deep conversation with serious faces.

Ywek had been attacked by rivals seeking to take over control of the city.

“He was brought to this quiet place, but we do not know if he will survive.”

“He is asking for you, Enoch.”

The two old rivals talked at length. Each day Ywek was strengthened. Nokh told him again, as gently as possible, of his total reliance on God. Ywek appreciated the kindness. He survived.

“I do not know what may happen tomorrow,” he said as they prepared to part, “I do know that God judges all sin. He has told me judgment will come on this wicked generation. Those who obey the word of the Lord will be rescued.”

63 INTIMACY

The joy of discovery drives six people toward the setting sun. They do not know where the river will lead them. The hike is much easier than Enoch had experienced on the north river. Open fields interspersed between large groves of deep green fir trees provide great hunting for food, downed wood to burn, and some of the softest places to set up camp.

Large cats prowl throughout the night. Enoch carries one of his trusty darts. It has served him well. These animals have a mysterious beauty. Yellow eyes pierce into the very soul of those who are fortunate enough to see one. They can pounce on their prey with unmatched speed after sitting for hours without motion.

The travelers have decided that these beings must be the most majestic and powerful among the animals God created. When they cuddle their young a loud purring sound is heard. Sleepy eyes often undetected, unconcerned of any danger, look out upon the world.

The river fascinates them because of the swiftness of the waters which still meander through forest and meadow. The eye thinks there must be a steep incline but the level horizon reveals that the territory is surprisingly flat.

Everyone in the group learns to float, which adds speed and excitement to the trip. They remind themselves.

“We have to walk back to our starting place near the marshes.”

Another imagines,

“Is it possible that the waters could swallow us and we would be lost in the center of the earth forever?”

No one knows the answer, but it causes them to continue with caution. The days pass since they had started and Lamech reports,

“This is the thirtieth day since we left your comfortable community, Enoch, on the downriver side of the marsh.”

He is the most cautious having no experience around so much water and forest. Lamech lives with his father, Methuselah, on the plains of Ararat far away from any river on the eastern edge of the world. God’s grace has helped him since he journeyed with his grandfather Enoch through cities and towns crowded with people, and then through swamps and marshes. Because he has a happy spirit and talks a lot, he survives good-natured teasing and overcomes the many fears he has in this different world. The Lord has helped him to replace fears with power love and clear thinking. He has earned the respect of the group.

Strength of character, integrity, and sincere desire for God’s truth inspire each man. They form a tight bond of love even as they experience hardship, laughter, tears, and exhaustion on the journey. When Enoch talks about his experience on the far north trail to Lamech’s place they cannot comprehend how he could survive that trip. There is trust and reliance on God and each other.

One of the group, and no one remembers how he joined, is more comfortable keeping the others at a safe distance away from him. He likes being alone. This man has always lived in the big city on the Euphrates. Even though he is of average height, he speaks of his parents as giants. One of the men moans,

“Is he a spy?”

Nokh remains calm and builds friendships with everyone. His leadership always brings God into the discussion. Sacrifices of small animals and sharing a meal together draw each person into the spiritual reality of discovery.

“My greatest desire is to know God. I yearn for relationship with him as much as we all look with joy to the morning light after a night listening to the prowling cats.”

He begs each one to grow into intimacy with the Lord.

“We cannot comprehend all there is to know and we must not pretend to know all that God has for us.”

Nokh explains that just as each person is responsible for carrying his weight on this hike, God expects each one to live up to their potential. He adds,

“As we obey what he has revealed, God will reveal more, and if we act positively we enter into a strengthening relationship with God himself.”

They are now almost at the end of the fifth cycle of seven days when a change in the air alerts them to something unknown.

About two days later, toward evening when the mist would normally draw back to reveal the stars they see the sun as never before.

Over vast waters the sun causes them to gasp in unbelief. Gazing with caution because of the brightness which hurts their eyes they see a brilliant orange sphere slipping over the horizon of the waters. Lamech says,

“We are standing on the edge of the world. We see what no other person has ever seen.”

The world is round since it drops off far to the left and the right. Spellbound they marvel at thousands of golden reflections dancing upon the water. Then when the stars are the only lights, numberless, unnamed clusters of stars reveal a glory beyond imagination. They all hear these words,

“Eye has not seen nor ear heard what the Lord has prepared for those who love him.”

Each man falls to the sand, silence reigns except for the gentle lapping of the strange waters upon the shore. Those who share experiences that few others have known form a tight unit of friendship that lasts forever.

More cycles of the moon pass on the return trip. Enoch continues to share his thoughts on relationship with God. The younger men listen attentively. Walking, eating, resting, and conversation become opportunities to learn God’s ways. Nokh often speaks of his walks with God but does not talk about doing it in God’s Garden. For him, the spiritual reality is more important than the physical experience. They ask how to become intimate friends with God.

“It has taken most of my life to travel this path. Lamech, when your father was born two hundred and ninety-three years ago, I decided to walk with God.”

For Enoch, it was a dedication of his entire being, body, mind, will, and activities of life. Later he says,

“Our journey has taken less than half a year, yet we have a growing friendship that is deeper than ever because we have spent time together. I come closer to God when I spend time with him.”

Lamech asks,

“How do you spend time with God?”

Enoch has a ready answer.

“Pray without ceasing and read the words of God continually, day and night.”

God is God, there is none beside him, he is the master of the sun, moon, and stars. He requires obedience. A walker's obedience proves itself every step and every moment, with complete trust. God has revealed his will to his people. Good intentions do not build character, action does.

“We rejoice in hope of the glory of God by entering into God’s grace by faith. It is our responsibility to be found faithful.”

Grandfather is blessed but puzzled when Lamech asks,

“What have you done to make the Lord your best friend? Do you fear God?”

Enoch humbly bows his head and feels that his words are not sufficient. He prays,

“O God our God how excellent is your name in all the earth. Please teach us by your spirit, which hovered over the deep in creation, how to walk with you. Thank you!”

In a couple of days, they should arrive at Nokh’s community by the marshes. Enoch reflects not realizing that some of them are listening.

“God comes to those who seek him. He desires obedience and if we do not obey our sacrifice is meaningless. That is the reason we build the altar each time out of loose stone. We obey the smallest details. The process leads us to agree with the Lord about our sin. We seek forgiveness as the wood is placed and then the valuable, tied lamb. Our knives cut the throat and blood runs down. Life seeps out. It is gone.”

He knows that the lamb is symbolic of a greater reality. With lyric voice and harmonies of rushing water, birds tweeting, and men preparing food for supper, Nokh sings,

“My blood, my life His.

The will of God is known.

Now gladly, I obey,

There is no other way”

As evening hastens the young man from the city asks Nokh to talk. Nokh agrees and the younger leads the older far away from camp to a place downriver where he had stopped for personal reasons and cleansing before catching up with the group.

Uncovering a pile of stones he reveals a stockpile of what they are now calling gold. They shine in the brightness of the moon.

The others looked at each other with distrust when the two had left camp. One says,

“Should we follow them to make sure he does not harm Nokh?”

They decide it is not wise to pursue them.

The two talk most of the night sitting beside material stockpiled on the ground. The younger starts.

“I am angry. I have been taught all my life that it is hard to come to God.”

As he continues his concept of God is of one who demands obedience. He will crush those who disobey his many rules.

“If there is a God, he delights in making humans miserable. He requires bigger and costlier sacrifices and asks for more blood, even from humans, to please him.”

Nokh always prays first. There is silence between them. Then Enoch asks,

“Do you believe that is the way to God?”

With innocent voice the young one says,

“That is what I have always believed.”

Nokh listens and gives little advice. God will take care of those who believe in him. He says,

“I beg you to believe what we have practiced on this journey instead of what your friends have told you to believe. God requires only what he says and is satisfied with our lamb.”

Nokh continues to explain truth passed down through seven generations from Adam to his day. The truth is ancient, timeless, and still relevant.

The other says,

“It all seems so simple.”

Enoch answers,

“Yes, and after you agree with God and repent of your sin the real journey begins.”

They talk about the trip, its dangers, discoveries, hardships, and joys. They talk about friendships that last and intimacy with God.

“Following God’s leadership is a lot like our expedition.”

The student, for he listens well also, asks,

“Thank you. I wish to ask one more question.”

With a nod of approval, Nokh boldly says,

“Some of our team think you came to report our activities to the officials of the city.”

As morning light exposes their faces, a smirk passes quickly over the city man’s countenance.

“That is partially true. I came because of Ywek. When he breathed his last breath, I was with him. He whispered in my ear the final words he ever spoke. He said, ‘Go to Enoch.’”

Tears flow freely down Nokh’s face. Kneeling in prayer for a long time, so long that his companion feels uncomfortable he does not notice that the man stands, turns, and creeps back to his bed. The others still sleeping do not notice.

“I wish this trip could go on forever.”

One of the hikers says as the six men walk the last mile toward town. Their packs, empty of supplies, are heavy with gold. Each stone is added to the community collection. Not one is missing.

Warm welcomes, feasting which is always greatest after a lengthy trek, thanksgiving with stories of discovered things end with the large group gathering at an altar. Heightened intimacy from all this fellowship among like-minded God-fearing people brings incredible joy.

The young man from the city needs to return to his home and Enoch decides to accompany him through the marshes. Because waterways are constantly changing he needs a guide.

Water moves dangerously around them. Darkness closes in making them feel as if they would suffocate. Beasts of unusual size threaten. Short daggers give some security. The young man asks,

“Could we protect ourselves if something rushes toward us?”

Enoch laughs,

“No! But God can.”

When they part Nokh embraces his new fiend. They weep, kiss, and go in different directions. One heads downriver to the east and an uncertain future. He will always treasure the trip and the long talks.

Standing alone, Nokh thanks God. Then he walks slowly toward his quiet place. The fear of the Lord comforts him as tears of reverent devotion for God bless his inner self.

Angels meet him and lift his head with words of music.

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, among those with whom our Lord is pleased!”

64 HONOUR

Earth Year 985 CY

When God created the heavens and the earth in six days he started the clock of time. It would never stop. The tick, tick, ticking of time continues and is relentless. Second, by second, everything in the universe is bound by its constraints. This is God’s plan.

Every person has the amount of time on earth that God allows. Enoch uses his time to move toward his Creator. He does it by faith. The Lord rewards Enoch’s trust with insights that others do not experience.

Faith is the portal that ushers a person into the presence of God. Those who measure the circle of the sun, moon, and stars carefully record years of life, birth, and death. Methuselah’s people have abilities to measure more accurately than most others. Lamech learns cycles, numbers, and distances. He marks steps and observes,

“I have traveled ten times to World Edge which is as far from the city on the river and the marshes.”

He first came to the marshes with his grandfather. They also visited the town on the south river that now rivals the original city east of Eden. Time, as recorded by his family, indicates that the cycles of the sun since creation are now nine hundred and eighty-five. God had created man from the dust of the earth, breathed into him the breath of life on the sixth day, and named him Adam.

After Eve sins, God reveals that woman will bear weaknesses in her body every cycle of the moon and this pattern will allow her to bring forth life from what he calls,

“The seed of the woman.”

Even though the seed is from man, it becomes part of her when it is placed in her body. God tells woman that she will nurture a baby for nine cycles of the moon before it can live without the supply of her blood. Baby girls and baby boys inherit their sinful condition from the seed of the father. Therefore life is in the seed.

The great wickedness of Enoch’s generation, perhaps the worst sin of all, is worship and participation in this seed of the man. Those who practice this false worship religiously participate during the proper cycle of the moon. They teach that God requires these practices. The sons of God who possess self-proclaimed superior knowledge demand obedience.

In contrast to the elaborate rituals of the ungodly, those who obey the word of God originally given by God in the beginning continue to practice it as the truth. They do not follow a religious cycle of keeping days but live with reverence every day in the eyes of a holy God.

A sacrifice is made when needed. Forgiveness for sin is always current. The worship honors the Lord more than all the costly rituals of the wicked. No one can turn back time but those who obey know that all sins are forgiven.

Enoch allows the Lord to lead him in this path of righteousness for God’s sake. All glory, honor, and praise belong to God.

That is the way it is with time. Each moment counts. Those who walk with God use their moments to come closer in relationship with God and others.

Enoch speaks a consistent message.

“We choose to walk with God. He exists and faithfully reveals his will to us. Believe and obey. This is the way. Walk in it.”

All people have a word from God.

Nokh told Methuselah and his family years ago as they shared a meal of grain, cheese, and the fruit of the field.

“Knowing about God is not sufficient. He calls us to love as he loves.”

In those days they often discussed how families live together because they belong to each other.

“Abiding means that we know where we belong. We are part of the family and dwell together—all the time, in every situation. This is a place of belonging, not a level of relationship. Relationships are unique and frequently changeable; belonging is consistently the same.”

Lamech as a young unmarried youth added a thought that all agreed on.

“Grandfather, you are a notable example. I like your way of life. It is not what you say, it is what you are.”

Enoch’s visit to the plains of Ararat had caused Lamech to follow him on this long and incredible journey. It must now end. On the way north from another south town visit, Nokh decides to do something he has never thought of doing before this time. He will take his beloved grandson to the private meeting place where God and angels meet him. He says,

“Lamech, we will go to my special sanctuary where I have never taken anyone else. Please understand I do not boast. It humbles me to think of the glory of God I have seen there. Why has the Lord chosen me? It is not about me. All I can do is open my life to him.”

Lamech’s heart beats fast as they head in this new direction. Enoch races furiously as they approach the place.

“What!”

With a cry of distress, he says,

“It is gone!”

They stand rigid with disbelief, searching intently, eyes wide open. Nothing is destroyed. Trees look like all the others in the surrounding forest. Nokh’s sitting stone has been taken away. A mature climbing red rose looks as if it has been there for years. They see untouched beauty.

“Are you sure this is the place?”

The younger man thinks perhaps his grandpa is not remembering because of his age. Nokh responds.

“I know this was real—much more than a spiritual reality, it took place in time and in this space.”

Then Enoch moves toward the Gates of Eden which are partially obscured by the roses. He assures his grandson that he can come too. They walk toward the gates. Lamech falls to the ground in fear at the sight of the Cherubim. Flaming swords stop them.

“Are you sure this is safe grandfather?”

“I did not say it is safe. I said it is good.”

For some unknown reason, they make a hasty retreat toward the mysterious darkness of the swamps in the marshes. Beasts threaten. Familiar walkways are gone. Unseen warriors surround them. With heroic effort, they stumble toward the river that flows out to the setting of the sun.

Enoch does not know what has happened. In the night when they are camped on solid ground beside the clear and stilled waters of the river, an angel shows Nokh the sitting stone that God has taken away.

This is the stone upon which he had spent so many wonderful hours delighting in the presence of the plurality of God’s majestic fullness. God had said,

“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”

The angel speaks of the only way to God.

“The one who created everything that has been created is the only way anyone, including your grandson Lamech, can approach. It is by him and through him and for him.”

Nokh submits,

“I trust you. Thank you for the word of God. I know how much he loves me.”

Before leaving, the messenger says,

“Send Lamech to his people. Ask your community to send the gold with him.”

The people eagerly obey God’s messenger and help Lamech prepare for the journey. Four godly youths, full of energy with adventurous minds are chosen to go with him. Each one will carry a backpack loaded with shiny pieces of stone.

Two are vibrant women ready to take on the world. The group, listening to Enoch’s guidance planned to take the seldom-used pathway on the north side of the Euphrates. When they get to Haran’s grave they could make a new trail north toward Lamech’s home in Ararat. It will not be an easy trip. Danger surrounds them on every side.

The group avoids notice by traveling in darkness. At this time there is only one people group, one type of dress, one language, one heritage. There is one message from the Lord and He desires voluntary submission to Him by all people in all things.

After camping at Haran’s burial place, the five set out on the lengthy and unknown trek toward Lamech’s home. It becomes a great adventure. They all thrive and enjoy the moments because they know God is with them. By the time they arrive safely, Lamech makes a life-changing decision. He is attracted to the beauty of the young women who come with them. He chooses one.

She shares much in common with him. They love calculating distances, years, and people’s ages according to the cycles of the moon, sun, and stars. Her hiking skills surpass his. She is beautiful from the inside out, with a happy spirit that brings others joy. Her amazing dark complexion is so silky and smooth, and most importantly her openness in trusting God surpasses understanding.

He asks.

With a typical lyrical voice and a giggle, she replies.

“I desire with all my love to be with you the rest of my life. Will your father approve?”

Enoch, still with his people on the back side of Eden, realizes he needs to make another trip to River City. There are fewer followers in the city, but he must keep his commitment to God to help them.

Dropping in as he often does to his old home place, he sees things that stagger his imagination. Shrines with glittering gems under elaborate arrangements of overarching branches have all been placed throughout the grounds. Altars of fire with the fragrance of piney woods smoldering in yellow basins cause him to catch his breath. It is well done. He feels refreshed.

An ancient olive tree he had nurtured stands in the center with characteristic majesty.

People in highly decorated costumes acknowledge his presence. There is no sign of alarm or animosity. Nokh notes instantly that persons of great stature dress without specific man or woman features. He wonders,

“Could they be angels?”

Groups intently discussing intellectual topics are scattered throughout vast, well-maintained plazas. They smile pleasantly as he walks among them. One of them approaches offering a small vessel holding a fruity opaque but white substance. Enoch foolishly partakes and immediately feels relaxed in the strangeness of his former home.

Another young man suddenly appears at his left side placing his arm around Enoch’s shoulders. He says with powerful but gentle words,

“Enoch come with me.’

Even in his haze, Nokh recognizes the voice instantly. His costume and demeanor show that this man is a participant of these shrines which are certainly connected with the wicked festival of the city.

He leads them to the far western edge of the homestead. A simple stone marks a burial place. It is not extravagant but indicates that this is the final resting place on earth for the greatest leader the city has ever known. Ywek’s body is here. Many looked up to him as if he were their God.

Without a word and wishing to steady himself, Enoch sits on a stone bench next to the grave and asks,

“Do you think he believed in God the way I believe?”

He hears a distinct voice even though his eyes flash with swirling lights like fast-moving stars.

“I do not know. I saw an incredible peace in him as I cradled him close to my chest and his breathing ceased.”

Then almost as if he wants to instruct Enoch.

“A celebration of man heightens knowledge and will one day bring salvation for the entire world.”

Nokh needs to know.

“Do you, my friend, believe?”

“Yes, I believe with all my heart! Ancient words speak truth. New knowledge reveals more.”

The young man turns and walks firmly back to the main plaza. Enoch sits with a broken spirit on the bench for a long time. No one approaches. He is alone.

With God at his side, he walks to the city and quietly makes his way through the familiar old streets and pathways. The old shop is now a place of indecent blasphemy against God. The whole area has become a gathering place for men to pursue their fascination with the source of all life.

There is no sign that anyone still believes that God created the world from nothing.

Man has become the creator.

Gangs, enforcers, persons of violence, wickedness, and proud, arrogant, brutishly profane souls do not answer.

The faithful have left. The city is alive with youthful enthusiasm. Old people and ancient truths have gone away. No one knows or cares where they have gone or if they ever got there.

Enoch thinks they would have gone to the plains away from the river.

Darkness has spread throughout God’s beautiful world. A few see the light of God’s truth. It is a fact, spoken by God himself—Man is not the source of life. God has said.

“The Seed of Woman is the hope of the world!”

65 TAKEN

With heaviness of heart Nokh returns to his home, he says it is his home now, the one beyond the marshes. An erratic beating in his chest slows him down some. He thinks this unparalleled ungodliness disturbs the very center of his body. So many things are changing.

One fact does not change—Enoch trusts God with his whole being, body, soul, and even his inner beatings. His trail on the north side of the river still provides safety, peace, and opportunity to spend great times with God. Like most people of this seventh generation from Adam, his mind has total recall.

Words and stories from God and people are remembered without fail. God has not been silent. Every human on earth knows his words. They may disobey them, but they do not forget them.

Enoch does not hurry. There is no need to rush through projects and activities when each moment is lived in harmony with God.

Peace among people for two cycles of the sun finds Enoch faithful to God, his family, and his ministry. Every faithful follower has a ministry and Nokh takes his seriously, doing the best he can to walk worthy of his calling.

Widow Haran dies peacefully having been strengthened in faith with full assurance that she will go to be with Haran in God’s care.

Her community dwindles in size as disease and age take their toll. Each one departs with the hope that they have a future forever. This belief blesses the entire group. There is no despair. By faith, they have overcome the sting of death.

God has not met Enoch at the gates of Eden since long before he last approached alongside Lamech, his oldest grandson. Faith does not need to see to believe. Nokh believes.

As he addresses the community on a notable occasion everyone, including children, stops and gives him their attention. Every day sounds, noisy, and happy become silent. Men put down their tools. Shopkeepers move toward the plaza. Women stop grinding, washing, and teaching.

“I am going to the gates of Eden. God is drawing me to himself. Thank you for the love you show to God and one another. Your devotion to his word has encouraged each one of us. We do not know what will happen in the future, but we know who holds our future.”

One of the women speaks rather loudly to her neighbor.

“Well, now we know there is something about the garden that he does not tell us. I wonder what he is thinking. Why does Enoch not talk? I like to be told.”

Her friend answers.

“That is all right. He will tell us if God wants him to share it.”

“Your faith in him is stronger than mine.”

Echoes across the street.

The second woman wonders if her friend means faith in Enoch or faith in God. Wisely she does not ask.

They part and walk toward their dwelling places. One struggles with doubt, the other smiles, greets neighbors, and after preparing the evening meal, shares peace and joy with her family.

Enoch dislikes the wild waterways of the swamp so much he looks for a safer route around the garden. He does not find one. But nothing stops him from meeting with his Lord.

If the swamp is the way he will walk through it even if the powers of the devil oppress him. Demonic spirits which he cannot see surround him. He hears cries. His chest throbs. Hot breath presses against his face.

The old paths have disappeared. Muck with brackish grime clogs the waterways. Dead trees fall. Fear grips him and once again he feels the loneliness of evil. Can he face it?

A cat with a golden mane lands noiselessly between Nokh and the deepest darkness. Was this the cat that followed the hikers on their long trek?

Struggling onward on hands and knees, slime covers his body, and suddenly he feels a breath of perfumed freshness. The large animal guides him to familiar waters coming out of God’s Garden.

“My Lord and my God.”

Nokh cries out as he falls limply with exhaustion on solid ground. The magnificent cat purrs and walks on ahead pausing to drink deeply of the water of life.

A right hand rests on Nokh’s shoulder. Then the voice of God, awesome with authority, wise beyond all comprehension, surrounds him and whispers.

“Fear not, I am your rock, your fortress, and redeemer.”

The strong arm lifts this broken man from his miry clay. He sets his feet upon solid ground and leads him with boldness right past the flaming swords.

Time has no power over Enoch when he walks with God in the garden. A day may pass or a month, or perhaps even more. He does not know. They embrace. Nokh sits at his feet. Their pulse is one. Remembering God’s special revelation to every man he learns about accountability. There are no excuses for rejecting God’s word. They talk about the way prayer reaches the heart of God.

Nokh learns the purpose of creation and of human responsibility to care for all that has been given. Life is dependent on a woman, created from Adam’s body. Childbearing is a miracle. Hundreds of perfectly timed interactions bring forth a person also made in God’s image.

Animals, unlike humans, are not created in the image of their creator. They perpetuate God’s plan and always reproduce after their kind.

The magnitude of a vast universe, each part known by God, overwhelms Enoch’s finite mind. These truths declare the glory of God—his eternal power, and divine nature. They are clearly seen by every person.

Worship is the only proper response but those who come to him must come with clean hands and pure hearts. Individuals are required to approach God sincerely—in spirit and truth.

“I am the God of all creation. It is by me, through me, and for me.”

Nokh looks intently into the face of God, realizing his fullness is veiled, for no human can stand to see the glory. God says.

“You are right. You only see what I desire for you to see. We are spirits, but we can appear in angelic or even other forms when we choose to do so. That majestic cat which followed you for so many days came to teach you reverent fear of me and he protected you. He also kept extremely large and dangerous animals, flying beings, who could devour you easily, from coming near. You did not even see any evidence of them, but they are in the region where you walked.”

Then the Lord says without words.

“You encountered great difficulty in the swamp just a short time ago not because Satan had power over you but because you thought you could come to me on your own. That does not honor me.”

Humbled, Enoch learns new truths about God even after three hundred years of walking with him. He submits.

“I want to know you. You are my life. I desire you more than anything else in the whole world. Nothing excites me more than my relationship with you.”

God answers,

“I know. Now go to your old place on the south river. Tell all who will hear that I will come to conquer sin and death with myriads and myriads of angels. Do not forget Enoch that I am the only one who can overcome sin in this world.”

Enoch knows the mind of God.

“He regrets that he made man on the earth. I grieve with him.”

Tears well up in their eyes and then sobs of intense sorrow punctuate this place of beauty. He feels the sadness that sin brings to the very heart of God.

Enoch cries out.

“It is my sin O Lord, I am sorry. Please forgive me for your name’s sake. I humble myself in your sight and offer thanks for your loyal love.”

So the Lord says.

“I will destroy ungodly sinners throughout the earth of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which these ungodly sinners have spoken against me.”

This destruction will affect animals of all sizes, creeping things, and birds of the skies, for they too have been ruined by Adam’s sin.

They stop suddenly for no reason but when Enoch looks up he sees that they are within sight of the most amazing sight he has ever seen. It is a tree. Spectacular with light emanating from within. Is it the only tree?

“Yes! It is the Tree of Life!”

Enoch looks to his side and sees the fullness of God—the wisdom of a protecting father, the sacrificing son fulfilling his father’s will, and a third person, a spirit communicating and empowering life to all who believe.

It is the one tree.

Standing in silence time once again calls and Enoch is ushered safely away from the garden. Walking along his well-known and comfortably traveled south river road he witnesses a brightness in the sky behind him. The universe lights up with a tremendous flash. Having never experienced anything like this, he calls it lightning of the sky.

In the Garden, God falls to the earth, weeping, at the Tree of Life, knowing the awful price He chooses to pay for the sin of the world to restore his created order. This price will rescue those who will be saved. He knows them by name.

Heaviness deep within makes each step difficult. Entering town a mob runs toward him with anxious faces. They ask all at once.

“Did you see that?”

“What was it?”

Many fall to their faces and cry aloud in agony. Words cannot express their wonder, fear, and sense of impending doom.

Enoch answers,

“It is God!”

Then he preaches the message of the Lord with renewed energy. This word spreads from house to house along each avenue. Large groups gather to hear.

After preaching in south town he goes to the big city and publicly proclaims to all who will hear. They also had seen the light in the western sky and it captured their attention.

A group of faithful followers go with him north and east away from the river to the region of Ararat. They preach the message wherever they go. People ask,

“When will this happen?”

Enoch answers sincerely.

“I do not know, but believe this—it will come. Do not think you can wait and decide at the final moment. Be ready!”

When the party arrives at Methuselah’s place Nokh says,

“I believe the judgment will come soon.”

One of the little ones asks,

“Will we all die?”

Enoch, always the encourager, blesses them with truth.

“God will spare his people because he is steadfast Love.”

From that day forward faithful walkers remind each other that they are in the safety of mercy. Fear of God does not mean that they are afraid of what will happen to them during the judgment. Enoch speaks Truth in such a passionate way that many of his family and friends believe.

One thing remains that Nokh cannot answer satisfactorily in his mind. When God takes his faithful followers in death, which is precious in his eyes, why are they dying at younger ages than the ungodly?

It helps when he thinks that death delivers from the terrible future. He says as he makes his way to find a quiet retreat with intimate friends toward the setting of the sun.

“I do not want to be here when that day comes!”

Comfortable agreement among the walkers helps them move forward knowing this fact: Absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

On a typically perfect day, which they always have in their world, two people find a path that takes them around the back side of Eden. Dry riverbeds show drastic and recent changes. They ask each other,

“Did God do this so we would not go through the swamps again?”

God is like that. He does nice things for his people. They are blessings from the windows of Heaven. Together these two lead the people of the setting-sun community to relocate to the south town. This friend brings brightness into all of life for these people. She can encourage these elderly people to come along for their good. Vitality with an optimistic vision for the future overcomes feelings of despair.

Nokh likes working with her. Friendships often thrive among co-workers. They have similar goals, and interests, and work well together. Enoch has been hoping for a lasting, forever friendship relationship. It is a longing in his heart. She asks him.

“Is your relationship with God enough?”

His answer shows his true longing.

“My hope is in God alone, not in the circumstances of my life.”

And he truly means it.

Toward the end of the year, as the sun rises and sets in line with the northernmost avenue in town, Enoch is drawn by God’s light to come. He approaches knowing he has been faithful. The good news of deliverance from the coming judgment has been preached to the whole world.

“Come to my resting place on earth. I have prepared a meal for us to enjoy.”

Angels step back from the table as the man takes his place across from his Lord. He is seated on his familiar stone. Nokh has never seen this place before, even though it is very close to the entrance of the garden. He leans into the presence of God. Fear flees. In its place is love, joy, peace and so much more.

God guards Enoch’s mind by leading the conversation. They speak of things that are true, honorable, just, and pure. They’re in perfect union with lovely, commendable, excellent thoughts.

Authentic worship replaces performance. They do not even think of the shameful behavior of those who do ungodly things in secret.

A meal of bread and wine, fresh and sweet, coarsely textured yet flaky pieces of fish served alongside plates of delectable fruit provide a satisfying accompaniment. Both of them enjoy the moment. Nokh asks,

“Can I stay here with you forever?”

The host responds with infinite wisdom.

“You cannot do that for this is not my home!”

A huge smile locks itself on Enoch’s face. God knows his deepest thoughts. Such knowledge is too lofty for finite minds to comprehend. Those who believe bow down in humility. They do not think of themselves more highly than they ought to think.

“You should not wish to stay here forever. This garden will also be destroyed in the judgment. The whole earth will be rearranged. You have announced the judgment to every community in the world. This garden will be gone.”

No person will ever see it again. Searchers will look but never find my garden on Earth.

“Think about it. I may make a new earth someday where sin cannot enter?”

Nokh looks up into the light of God and says,

“A long time ago I stopped asking questions, but could I ask one now?”

God permits all who sincerely ask.

Enoch learns that the longsuffering Lord will delay judgment for several hundred years. God adds,

“Your son Methuselah will live longer than any other person on earth. When I take him in death, the destruction will come.”

Nokh nods,

“Thank you! You do all things with fairness, goodness, and righteousness—Oh the glory of grace.”

Of all that God has created, Nokh likes water the best. It is the sole source of his existence. Therefore if the Lord chooses to use water as a judgment against sin that is his choice. Enoch will still praise the Lord.

God puts truth in the minds of those who live in Enoch’s generation. Separation from God forever and ever is a fact. The cost of redemption requires a place of eternal separation from the merciful love of God. Sinners can never be comfortable in the presence of holiness. If there is no Hell, the price of redemption from sin is too great. Those who believe know the facts of eternal life and salvation.

God said to bring a sacrifice. They come through the lamb exactly as he said.

With many unasked questions, Enoch’s faith overcomes all doubt. God looks to the joy beyond the judgment and is pleased. Nokh does not know that this sacrifice has been determined before time began.

The creation of humans in his image is not an afterthought. He creates people, like himself, with intellect, emotion, and will. They, unlike him, have free will to choose between good and evil. God can only choose good. That is one of his glorious attributes.

Believers have chosen well.

After their meal ends, and on earth all good things do come to an end, the two walk in the shadows of majesty. Trees surround them. They stand tall as they have for close to one thousand years since they were called into existence on the third day.

Enoch has walked with God for three hundred years. On this walk, the two walk through the waters as if that is a normal experience. Why does the Lord take Enoch through the water? Will it be the instrument of God’s judgment?

Then they see the first light of a new day. Has it been that long? Morning light is dim in the presence of the one who is the light of the world.

“Thank you, my Lord, for walking with me. This closeness, so intimate, brings me incredible joy. How can I express gratitude? I give you my soul, my life, my all!”

Time interrupts and causes Enoch to shudder. He is not afraid. Physical reality attempts to push spiritual reality aside.

Light draws him back. Darkness threatens. Angels surround them. They rejoice with voices that earthly beings have never heard.

God takes them to the northern edge of the garden. The one closest to the swamps. The evil, utter darkness of that putrid place pushes hard, attempting to overcome the man. He feels it. It is real.

The Lord rebukes the darkness. He flees.

A shining portal takes the place of darkness. Angels ascend and descend. Enoch cannot look at the intense brightness coming from far above.

With reverence, he looks into the face of his Lord and Master, his friend, the only God of all things.

Eyes meet with gentle reassurance. God’s voice is clear and resonates. It echoes through Enoch’s entire being like a lyrical vibration.

“Nokh, my friend, you have walked with me these three hundred years. I choose to do for you that which I will do for only one other person in the true story of the world.”

Enoch’s wonder begins to turn to sight.

“Speak Lord. Your servant hears. I will do anything you ask.”

The Lord smiles.

“How would you like to come home with me?”

With silent words unformed.

“I cannot breathe. Yes! Yes! I will come! Oh my Lord and God! I will come with you.”

He falls and worships.

“Thank you! Thank you! I am not worthy.”

God reaches out.

“No! You are not worthy. I am the One. I Am!”

Grace is like that is it not? Yes! God is grace.

Enoch reaches out, his hands touching the light. God grasps them firmly and two friends walk hand in hand through the portal into a land without time.

The good news spreads rapidly. Family and friends are not surprised that God has taken him away. They know.

“Enoch is not, for God took him.”

Scoffers, those of ungodly deeds, the speakers of harsh words that ungodly sinners speak against God say it is a lie.

Rebellion against God and God’s people and God’s plan on earth is the lie of Satan’s darkness: that serpent, the deceiver of humanity. The swamp spreads with unnatural powers. Earth is not safe for the ungodly.

Those who believe follow Enoch’s good example. Each one learns to go with God wherever he leads. They meditate on the word of God—day and night. Prayer without ceasing becomes their constant companion.

For some, the journey continues for several hundreds of years. Others die at unusually young ages according to the steadfast love of the Lord.

The path each of the faithful takes is the Way of Faith—one step at a time.