

~Were Elijah and Enoch Raptured to Heaven?~

By John L. Bray

In answering the above question, we need first of all to ask whether or not Jesus told the truth when He said,

"And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven"
(John 3:13).

Here Jesus said that NO man had ascended up to heaven. So we must believe that, at that time, no man had ever gone to Heaven--no one had ever been there, but Jesus Himself.

What then, is the answer regarding **Elijah** and **Enoch**, who are believed by many to have been taken up to Heaven?

1) ELIJAH:

In 2nd Kings 2:1 we read that "the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind."

In 2nd Kings 3:1 we read that "Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel." Note that this is a whole chapter after it tells us of Elijah's experience.

In 2nd Chronicles 21:1 we read again how Jehoram reigned in the stead of Jehoshaphat, his father. We are still thinking in terms of sometime after Elijah's experience.

Then in 2nd Chronicles 21:12 we read how that after Jehoram forsook the God of his fathers and did wickedly, he received "**a writing, to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus says the LORD God of David thy father,**" etc. Elijah was writing to Jehoram telling him how the judgment of God would come upon him because of his actions. Remember that Jehoram did not begin his reign until sometime *after* Elijah was caught up in the whirlwind. Surely, Elijah did not write his letter from Heaven!

Now here are a few things more to think about:

Elijah did not go up in a chariot, as so many believe (and I used to preach). The Bible says that as Elijah and Elisha were talking together, "there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and **Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven**" (2nd Kings 2:11). Elijah did not get on board the chariot. The chariot simply came down and went between Elijah and Elisha and "parted them both asunder."

Then, the Bible says that "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (vs. 11). It was not the chariot, but a whirlwind, that caught up Elijah and took him into heaven.

The word "heaven" here is from the Hebrew word shamayim or shameh, which means the sky, referring

to the area where the clouds are and also the higher area where the stars and the planets are. It is the same word as used in 2nd Chronicles 7:13, "If I shut up heaven that there be no rain..." It is also the same word as used in Genesis 1:8 when it said, "And God called the firmament Heaven." This firmament called "Heaven" was the area which divided the waters above from the waters below (vss. 6-7). So you see we are not here talking about Elijah being carried up into the Heaven of heavens, but simply up *into the sky*.

The whirlwind simply carried Elijah to some other place. This was like it was when "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip" who was found later at Azotus preaching then in other places (Acts 8:40). Elijah could not have been carried into outer space if he were transported by a Whirlwind, for there would have been no wind that high up to move him around.

So Jehoram began to reign after Elijah was caught up, but Elijah was still around somewhere after Jehoram was reigning and doing wickedly so that Elijah was able to write a letter to him reprimanding him regarding his ways.

Then what about the transfiguration scene, when Elijah appeared with Moses? Where did Elijah come from-Heaven? Read Matthew 17:9 and see that Jesus said this event was a "VISION." A good dictionary will give the definition of "vision." Elijah did not come from Heaven in a resurrected body. He was not glorified and "representative of the redeemed who have entered the kingdom by translation" as stated in the Scofield Reference Bible 1917 edition, p. 1023.

But someone may say, "But Peter, James, and John recognized Moses and Elijah." How could they have recognized them when they had never seen them personally and did not know how they would have looked? And they certainly had not seen a photo of them nor seen them on television! It was only in a vision that "appeared" (vs. 2) that they heard Moses and Elijah talking to Jesus. How they knew it was Moses and Elijah we are not told.

As Jesus said, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." (John 3:13).

2) ENOCH:

Next, we consider Enoch. Did Enoch go to Heaven without first dying? Let us look at what the Bible says. And keep in mind also what Jesus said in John 3:13, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven."

About Enoch there are two passages in the Bible (other than where he is quoted from the Apocrypha as prophesying about Jehovah coming "with ten thousands of his saints" [Jude 14], probably referring back to Deuteronomy 33:2, as the past tense is used in this verse).

Genesis 5:24 says, "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." Three things are mentioned here:

1) He walked with God; 2) he was not; and 3) God took him.

Hebrews 11:5 says, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

Here we see three things: He:

1) should not see death; 2) God translated him; and 3) he had "pleased God."

In Genesis 5:24 it says that God "took him." The word "took" is from the Hebrew word laqach. It means to take in many ways: accept, bring, buy, carry away, drawn, fetch, get, unfold, place, receive, reserve, seize, send for, take away, etc.

I think anyone would agree, from the use of this word in the Old Testament, that it *does* mean to move something from one place to another-regardless of how it is done, or to where the movement goes. So all we can say from Genesis 5:24 is that Enoch was not in the same place he previously was because God removed him. "He was not; for God took him." There is nothing said here about his being taken to Heaven.

The other passage in Hebrews 11:5 is a little more difficult. The essence of the passage is that because Enoch pleased God, God "translated" him, and because of this, he did not see death.

Keep in mind, nothing is said here either about his being "translated" into Heaven, but just translated so he would not see death.

Here both words, "translated" and "translation," are from the same Greek word metatillemi, which means to transport, transfer, ex, change, change sides, carry over, remove, etc. There is nothing said about any of this being done to get him to Heaven.

One of the words from which this Greek word is derived actually means to "place...in a passive or horizontal posture." If this is the meaning, then it would mean that God "took him" in death. (I know! It says he "should not see death." Keep reading.)

Because this word, "translated/translation," is used only in this one place in the New Testament, perhaps we should look elsewhere for further meaning to these words.

In the Wisdom of Solomon (the Apocryphal book written before Christ) there is a chapter which tells how God removed certain righteous men (took them away) from the ungodly so that they would not be contaminated by their wickedness and deceit. Here are several verses:

"But though the righteous be PREVENTED with DEATH, yet shall he be in rest." (4:7).

Notice in the next verse the comparison to the New Testament saying about Enoch:

"He PLEASSED God, and was beloved of him: so that living among sinners he was TRANSLATED" (4:10). How was he translated? Verse 7 spoke of his being taken by death. In reading this, one could easily think the writer was writing about Enoch himself.

"Yea, speedily was he taken away, lest that wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul" (4:11).

"For his soul PLEASSED the Lord; therefore hastened he to take him away from among the wicked" (4:14).

This is sufficient to show how someone who pleased God could be translated in the sense of being removed from the land of the wicked so their own character would not be spoiled.

If it be objected that we here use extra-Scripture readings, we reply that we are simply trying to show the meaning of words and expressions as understood by Jesus and the writers of the New Testament, as they

also read from the Apocrypha. There are no other verses in the New Testament itself that would give light on this exact word translated "translated."

So Enoch was one who pleased God to this extent, that God translated (removed) him from the environment of those who did not please God. God laid him down in rest in such a way that Enoch never saw death. It was not that Enoch did not die, but, rather, he never "saw" death. How God did this we do not know. Perhaps Enoch died peacefully in sleep or in some way in which he never "saw" death.

But Enoch did die! We know this because Hebrews 11:13 says so. After mentioning the different heroes of faith, including Enoch, the writer said, "These ALL DIED in faith..." So Enoch died, as it said. His translation consisted of being transferred out of the land of wickedness and laid to rest where no harm could come to him.

Summary

So the Bible says that Enoch died, and it says that Elijah was removed from one place to another. And so it is true that "it is appointed unto men once to die" (Hebrews 9:27). And so far as anyone being taken to Heaven back then, Jesus said, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13). And remember, too, that twice the apostle John said, "No man hath seen God at anytime" (John 1:18 and 1st John 4:12).

So if what the Bible says is true, Elijah and Enoch never went to Heaven until all others would be resurrected from the dead. Hebrews 11:39, 40 indicates that all the Old Testament heroes of faith, though receiving a good report, "received not the promise" for "they without us should not be made perfect."

What I am trying to say here is there seems to be no record of anyone ever going bodily to the Heaven of heavens into the presence of God, until after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I could be wrong about this, as there may be something I do not see nor understand; but then again, I could be right. Any suggestions from the audience will be appreciated.

(While not agreeing with the following mentioned book as a whole, I mention that some of the facts in this article were first triggered in my own mind by the book, **Thou Shalt Surely Die, by G. Marsh Hilbourne and Michael T. Wark [no date]. Published by America's Promise, Box 5334, Phoenix, Ariz. 85010).**