

# IS ELIJAH IN HEAVEN?

Why did Jesus say "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). Jesus, who had just come *from* heaven, and who appeared in human flesh, said, plainly that *Elijah was not in heaven!* Yet the Bible says, ". . . Elijah went up by a whirlwind *into heaven*" (2 Kings 2:11). Is this a *contradiction*? It certainly *appears* to be so! Surely Jesus did not tell an *untruth!* Yet He plainly *contradicts* what 2 Kings 2:11 *SEEMS* to say! Is there some difficulty between the Hebrew and the Greek words for "heaven"? Where did Elijah go? What did Jesus mean?

*By Garner Ted Armstrong*

**T**he prophet Elisha, who had followed Elijah doggedly, claiming he would never desist from following him, was absolutely *shocked*. For, while Elisha was asking for a "double portion" of the spirit of Elijah, ". . . it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a *chariot of fire, and horses of fire*, and part them both asunder; *and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven!*" (2 Kings 2:11).

Elisha *saw* this happen with his own eyes!

Down through the centuries thousands of impassioned sermons have been preached using *this verse* to underscore the *hopes of heaven* for the saved!

Who has not heard preachers wax eloquent about the proverbial "pearly gates," the heavenly city with streets of gold and glittering mansions; about being in *heaven*, forever and ever?

*Millions* believe that immediately upon *death* the "souls" of Christians *go to heaven!*

Then WHY did Jesus say what He did?

WHY did He say ". . . NO MAN HATH ASCENDED UP TO HEAVEN"? After all, He should have KNOWN, shouldn't He? He had *been there*, with the Father, and the 24 elders, and all the angels. He had just come from heaven to this earth!

WHY do literally MILLIONS of churchgoing, professing Christians believe Jesus Christ didn't know what He was talking about—or that He *lied*?

Do You *believe Christ*? Or do you prefer to believe, instead, what you have always *been taught*, by *men*?

## **What Happened to Elijah?**

Did Elijah *die* and go to heaven? No. Elijah was not even ill—he was still doing the *work* which God had set before him and was merely *talking* with Elisha, walking along engaged in conversation. *Suddenly* Elisha saw what appeared to be a *fiery vision*, and Elijah was *taken, bodily*, up into "heaven." No doubt Elisha watched him *until he was out of sight!*

*Where* did Elijah go?

If it was a bright, clear day, *how long* could Elisha's eyes have followed Elijah as he departed?

Probably, if Elisha had normally good eyesight, he could have seen Elijah, plus the blazing, glittering spectacle of the fiery chariot and Horses, for several miles, perhaps even as much as 15,000 or 20,000 *feet*.

But, eventually, *distance* would have seemed to "swallow him up," and he would have no longer been *visible* to Elisha's startled eyes!

How many times have you had the experience of hearing the muted thunder of a jet airplane from very high overhead, only to look up into the sky and be unable to see the aircraft? Perhaps you remember an occasion or two when you have been able to see the *vapor trail* left by the engines of the aircraft, and perhaps could even see it forming, *moving* across the sky high above, and still the airplane was so high your human eye could not pick it out.

Yet aboard that airplane could be more than 100 people—flight attendants serving meals, pushing carts up and down the aisle, the flight crew at their places in the cockpit, an airplane so big that a 6-foot man could *stand up* in the intake of only *one* of its big jet engines—and yet, because it is *so high in the sky*, you cannot *see it!*

If it was a cloudy day when Elijah was "taken up into heaven," then Elisha could only see him for a few hundred, or a few thousand, feet.

Actually, Elijah was taken up into the air. The word for "heaven" is *shameh* (pronounced "shaw-meh") in the Hebrew language, which comes from a root word *meaning* "to be lofty." The word means "the *sky*" (as "aloft") and alludes to "the visible arch in which the clouds move, as well as to the higher ether where the celestial bodies revolve." The word means "AIR" as well as "heaven" (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*).

One or two outstanding examples of the interchangeable usage of this *one word* should suffice, although there are MANY in the Bible.

Notice! "And the windows of *heaven* were opened ..." (Genesis 7:11). "The windows of *heaven* were stopped. . ." "The rain from heaven was restrained. . ." (Genesis 8:2). "...Whose top may *reach unto heaven* ..." (Genesis 11:4).

These are only three examples of literally *dozens* in the Old Testament where the word "heaven" is *OBVIOUSLY* referring to this earth's *immediate atmosphere*. In the first few quotations, reference is made to the *flood* of Noah. The "windows of heaven" refer to thunderous *rainstorms*, and are therefore dealing with the immediate *envelope of air* which covers this earth like a mantle and is, in fact, a literal PART of our earth and its immediate environment.

The scripture from Genesis 11 deals with the famed "Tower of Babel," when mankind attempted to construct the very first "skyscraper."

Now, notice how the *identical word* (*shameh*) is used for the word "*air*."

"The fowl of the *air*. . ." (Genesis 1:26, 28). "...And every fowl of the *air*..." (Genesis 2:19). "...Gave names ... to the fowl of the *air*..." (Genesis 2:20). "...Winged fowl that *flyeth in the air*..." (Deuteronomy 4:17). "The birds of the *air* to rest on them..." (2 Samuel 2:10). "The way of an eagle in the *air*..." Proverbs 30:19).

In *each* of these, and in 21 separate examples in the Old Testament, the *identical Hebrew word* translated "heaven" is rendered "air."

Why? Because the translators knew that, when the Bible was referring to that "firmament" above the earth in which *birds fly*, it *must mean* "the air," and not the heaven of *God's throne*.

Actually, as we shall see, the Bible clearly speaks of THREE "heavens," and positively identifies the "third heaven" as the heaven of God's throne!

What Elisha saw, then, was the *disappearance* of Elijah, by a miracle from God, in a fiery chariot—*up into the AIR*, until he was taken up out of Elisha's *sight*!

Elijah did not go into the *heaven of God's throne*. Jesus Christ of Nazareth SAID SO!

### **Do "Souls" Go to Heaven?**

But, some will argue, Jesus didn't say no souls ascended into heaven! Some will argue, "It isn't the *man* who goes to heaven—it is the *soul* of the man!"

But wait!

Elijah *did not die*. Elijah didn't even have a *headache*—was not ill, or anywhere near death!

He was walking along, *talking* with Elisha, and SUDDENLY, by a great miracle, the fiery chariot appeared and whisked him away up into the air

God did not leave Elijah's "body" behind and just take some so-called "soul"! No, the *whole man* was taken up by the fiery chariot!

*ELIJAH* was taken up into the air out of Elisha's sight!

In *studying* the definitions of the word "soul" in both the Old and the New Testaments, NEVER does the word "soul" mean anything which is *extraphysical*; spiritual or IMMORTAL!

The word "immortal" appears only ONCE in the Bible! It is found in 1 Timothy 1:17, and it refers to Jesus Christ of Nazareth! It reads, "Now unto the King Eternal, IMMORTAL..."

The word "immortality" occurs only *five times* in the Bible, and on each occasion shows that immortality is something *which God now possesses*, and which is *promised* to man, in *the resurrection*!

Your Bible plainly says that *GOD ONLY* hath immortality! (1 Timothy 6:16).

WHY do millions of churchgoing, professing Christians believe the *exact opposite* of what the Bible *plainly says*?

*Look* at this striking example!

"For the wages of sin is *death*; but the GIFT OF GOD is *ETERNAL LIFE* through Jesus Christ our Lord"! (Romans 6:23).

Millions believe the *exact opposite* of what that scripture plainly says.

They would argue, "No, the wages of sin cannot be DEATH, for man *does not die*, only his BODY dies, and the man—the *conscious man*, the *personality*, *character*, the real person—continues to *live* on, either in heaven or in hell!"

In other words, people argue that the wages of sin is not really DEATH, it is ETERNAL LIFE! It is *eternal life in a different place*, and not *death!*

But this is the *opposite* of what the Bible plainly says!

Next, they would argue, "No, eternal life is not the GIFT of God. It is something with which we are *born*. Every one of us is *born* with a 'soul,' which means we have *eternal life* already dwelling within us!"

But your Bible, the holy Word of God, plainly says that the wages of sin will KILL YOU! It says the penalty for breaking God's Ten Commandments is DEATH!

It says that, *on the other hand*, the GIFT of God is the OPPOSITE of death; it is ETERNAL LIFE!

The Bible insists that God ONLY has immortality; and that we *can* ultimately inherit immortality, but only *through* our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth!

You *do not have* an "immortal soul"! You are a physical, human being, subject to *death*. When we die, we go to the *grave*, and we are completely oblivious, *unconscious*, of the passage of time, where we await a *resurrection!* (Job 14:14).

No, the argument that the *body* may die, but "souls" go up to heaven, just *does not apply!*

Remember! Elijah *did not die!* He was not even mildly ill! Whatever happened to him happened BODILY; he was taken up out of Elisha's sight into the AIR!

Later you will see that he was very much *alive* for a certain number of years. You will see that he was still *aware* of what was happening in his nation; that others were communicating with him, and that HE communicated with the king who succeeded Ahab and Jezebel! Though God took Elijah into a place of protection and "retirement," he was still active enough to send a *powerful letter* to the king of Israel some years later! Read on.

## **The Kingdom of God Will Rule ON THIS EARTH**

WHY have the millions been deceived into believing *they* are going up *into heaven* when the Bible clearly says Christ is coming back DOWN HERE?

*The gospel of the Kingdom of God* was Christ's message.

That message was the good news about Christ's coming KINGDOM; it has, as its great, central HOPE, the RETURN OF CHRIST TO EARTH!

Literally *dozens* of scriptures throughout the Old and New Testament plainly show that the Kingdom of God will reign on *the earth*.

Consider only a *FEW*: "We shall reign on the *earth*," (Revelation 5:10). "Blessed are the meek, for they shall *inherit the earth!*" (Matthew 5:5). ". . . This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). "Behold I *come* quickly [back to *this earth!*]: ... Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God ... and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is *New Jerusalem*, which cometh *DOWN OUT OF HEAVEN* [onto *this earth!*] from my God..." (Revelation 3:11,12). "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; *AFTERWARD* they that are

Christ's *AT HIS COMING*! (1 Corinthians 15:22, 23). "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep [are *dead*!] in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the *coming of the Lord* [He is coming back to *this earth*!] shall not precede [margin] them which are asleep [are dead]. For the Lord Himself shall *descend from heaven* [He is coming BACK to THIS EARTH!] with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in *the clouds* [a part of this earth's immediate atmosphere] to meet the Lord IN THE AIR [He is coming all the way down OUT of heaven, TO this earth, to the lowest level of *clouds* where the human eye can *see* Him!] and so we shall ever be with the Lord"! (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17). "And His feet shall stand in that day [the Day of the Lord; the day of the Battle of Armageddon, and the return of Christ!] upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east ... and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee ... and the Eternal shall be king OVER ALL THE EARTH. . ." (Zechariah 14:4-9).

These are but a *few* of the many, many plain, incontrovertible scriptures which absolutely PROVE that Jesus Christ is coming back to this earth!

Jesus continually preached the GOSPEL.

What is the gospel?

The gospel means "*GOOD NEWS*"! It is the good news of the soon-coming *GOVERNMENT OF GOD*, which Will RULE all nations with a *rod of iron*! (Revelation 2:26; 3:21).

*Where* are those human, physical nations over which Christ will *rule*?

*ON THIS EARTH!*

Notice! "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Eternal shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and *people* shall flow unto it." (A *mountain* is typical of a *large* government, while smaller mountains or hills are typical of smaller governments or nations. The "mountain of the house of the Eternal" is clearly a type of the *Kingdom of God*!)

"And many nations [physical, human beings comprise 'nations' on *this earth*!] shall come, and say, come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Eternal [the capital of the *Kingdom of God at Jerusalem*!], and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for the law shall go forth out of Zion, and the word of the Eternal *from Jerusalem*.

"And He shall judge among many *people* [these are human, physical nations, ON THIS EARTH!], and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

"And they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Eternal of hosts hath spoken it" (Micah 4:1-4).

*People*, NATIONS, are not "up in heaven"! There are no weapons nor factories converting swords, guns, tanks and aircraft into shovels, rakes and hoes up in heaven! There are no vines and fig trees up in heaven!

This is a great, sweeping, GLOBAL picture of the beginning of the KINGDOM OF GOD on *this earth*!

Notice a parallel scripture: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Eternal's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

"And many *people* will go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Eternal, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Eternal *from Jerusalem*.

"And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:2-4).

Now look at the picture of Christ's Kingdom given in Ezekiel 35! "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

"It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy in singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Eternal and the excellency of our God . . . Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

"Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

"And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water ... and it shall be called the way of holiness ... No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there.

"And the ransomed of the Eternal shall return, and *come to Zion* with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 35:1-10).

Next, read the great prophecy of Ezekiel 36! "But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come.

"For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown:

"And I will multiply *men* upon you, all the *house of Israel*, even all of it: and the *cities shall be inhabited*, and the wastes shall be builded:

"And I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bring fruit: and I will settle you after your old estates ... Yea I will cause men to walk upon you, even my people Israel ... for I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your *flesh*, and I will give you an heart of flesh,

"And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

"And ye shall dwell in the land *that I gave to your fathers*; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God" (Ezekiel 36:1-27).

This great prophecy of the coming *millennial reign of Christ*—the picture of the regathering of the scattered remnants of God's people Israel from the four corners of the earth, and the picture of desert and wilderness places blossoming "as a rose"; the beginning of agrarian reform, *perfect* weather conditions, resettlement of the land, every individual possessing a piece of *property*; the picture of the regathering of *families*, and a time of world *PEACE*—*this* is the subject of many, *many* prophecies in the Word of God!

*Nothing* is more thoroughly PROVED—nothing stands more absolutely SURE—in the holy Scriptures than the FACT that the glorious KINGDOM OF GOD Will reign *ON THIS EARTH!*

Now, *what will you do* with certain vague, seemingly contradictory, scriptures which *you think* say the saints go to heaven?

I have shown you but a *few* of the many scriptures which absolutely PROVE the following:

1. Jesus Christ is coming back *to this earth!*
2. He will catch up the righteous living, and the righteous dead, to meet Him in *the air* and descend the *same day* to Mount Zion!
3. He will establish His Kingdom *on this earth*, in Jerusalem.
4. Jerusalem will become the CAPITAL of all the earth.
5. All nations will soon recognize Christ's rule.
6. Christ will require that all implements of war be converted to implements of peace.
7. His *law*, a completely new administration of justice and "equality for all," will issue forth from His capital city!
8. The "House of Israel" will be resettled in "their old estates."
9. The *saints* will be *ruling* WITH CHRIST (Revelation 2:26; Revelation 3:21; Revelation 24; Revelation 5:10).
10. The very "heaven" OF GOD'S THRONE will descend from God OUT OF HEAVEN to this earth (Revelation 21; Revelation 22).

*Nothing is surer* than the many, many promises and prophecies of *Christ's return!*

And what is the *order* of events so far as dead men (like *Elijah*) are concerned?

You have already read it, but *read it again*: "For as in Adam all die [just as Elijah DIED]: even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

"But every man *in his own order*: Christ the *FIRSTFRUITS* [Elijah was not the firstfruits—he was not resurrected, he was not taken to the heaven of God's throne—he is not alive today—CHRIST is the firstfruits!]; *afterward*, they that are Christ's [including Elijah] at His coming" (1 Corinthians 15:21, 22, 23).

Your Bible says Elijah is *dead*. Jesus plainly says, no matter *what* "other preachers" have told you, that "no man *hath ascended into heaven!*"

*Christ* is the "firstfruits" from the dead! He was to have, in all things, "the preeminence"! No one was resurrected to *eternal life* prior to Jesus Christ!

There *were* miracles performed, by Elijah himself, and later an individual was raised from the dead by being thrown into a grave and touching the *bones* of Elisha!

Jesus raised the dead; Peter raised Dorcus, Paul was used to raise a young man who died when he fell out of a balcony; and some elderly people who had died were resurrected to human, physical life, at the time of Jesus' death!

But NONE of these was resurrected to spiritual, *eternal life*!

*Only Jesus Christ* has been resurrected to *spiritual, eternal LIFE*!

Only JESUS CHRIST has *ascended into heaven*!

But Jesus will not REMAIN in heaven for much longer! Even now, He is on a "countdown" to come back down to *this earth*, FROM heaven, and to RULE with a rod of iron!

### **What About King David?**

Is King David, described in the Bible as "a man after God's own heart," a *lesser* person in God's eyes than Elijah?

First, let's see what is to be David's final REWARD.

After the end of the dynasty of ruling kings over the northern, 10-tribed house of *Israel*, AFTER Israel had been taken captive by ancient *Assyria*, *Babylon* subjugated Judah, and, in the days of King Hezekiah, the remnants of the *Jews* were deported from Jerusalem and taken to Babylon.

One of the captives was a prophet named *Ezekiel*.

He was prophesying from a "concentration camp" inside the land of Babylon more than *120 years after* the captivity of Israel!

Remember, after David died, his son Solomon reigned in his stead. Following Solomon's death, the kingdom was divided, and the dynasty of kings over northern 10-tribed Israel began, under Jeroboam.

The dynasty of the kings of *Judah* continued, unbroken, under Rehoboam.

Through hundreds and hundreds of years, we read of the successive, ruling *dynasties of kings* over these separate, individual nations until, finally, both Israelitish kingdoms (the northern "ten tribes" with their capital city at Samaria, and the southern tribes of Judah, Simeon and Levi, with portions of Benjamin, with their capital city at Jerusalem) were taken into captivity.

Now that you have the historical setting firmly in mind, turn to and read Ezekiel's prophecy!

"And I will set up one *shepherd* over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant DAVID; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

"And I the Eternal will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Eternal have spoken it. ."  
." (Ezekiel 34:23, 24).

Here is a prophecy, given from God more than 120 years after the last ruling king of 10-tribed Israel *went into captivity*, *hundreds* of years after David died, plainly saying that David will be *resurrected!*

He will be *raised from the dead* to become the KING over the human, physical nation of *Israel* in the millennial reign of Christ!

Peter spoke of David's future resurrection, and of his *present state*, in his famous sermon on the Day of Pentecost!

"Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both DEAD and *BURIED*, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day" (Acts 2:29).

David is *dead!*

He is utterly *unconscious—unaware* of the passage of time; he is *in his grave!*

Notice how the apostle Paul reaffirms this: "And what shall I more say.? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barach, and of Samson, and of Jephtha; of *David* also, and Samuel, and of the prophets . . ." (Hebrews 11:32).

And what *happened* to these, together with all of the great patriarchs, such as Joseph, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who are mentioned in Hebrews the 11th chapter?

"These all DIED in faith, not having received the promises . . .!" (Hebrews 11:13).

Notice it carefully! God tells you *twice* in this famous "faith chapter" that David is DEAD!

They did NOT "receive the promise"! What was the promise? It was the promise of *eternal life*; corulership with Christ!

"And these all [including Elijah *and* David], having obtained a good report through faith, *received not the promise*:

"God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Hebrews 11:39, 40).

*Why have you not been told the truth* about Elijah and David?

Peter said, "FOR DAVID IS NOT ASCENDED INTO THE HEAVENS"! (Acts 2:34).

Will you *believe* the *very Word of God*; will you believe your own *eyes*, *and* your OWN BIBLE, or will you believe the oft-repeated *fables* of ignorant men and *deceivers*?

### **What About the Transfiguration?**

The transfiguration *was a vision!*

Notice how, just *six days* before the transfiguration took place, Jesus plainly said that "some" (*not all*) of His disciples would not "taste of death" till they "see the son of man coming *in His kingdom*"! (Matthew 16:28). The *only way* you can understand this plain statement of Jesus Christ is by the transfiguration—a VISION—of "the son of man coming in His kingdom" which took place just six days later!

Otherwise, this would be a clear error—and the very Word of God would appear to contain a *colossal mistake*.

*Every* one of the apostles DIED without having seen "the son of man come in His kingdom"!

However, *three of them* DID see "the son of man coming in His kingdom," *IN VISION*, just six days later!

Now read the account of the transfiguration of Jesus Christ in Matthew 17 verses 1 through 8.

Notice that Peter *understood* that the translucent, glowing, radiant visage of Jesus Christ, Moses and Elijah was as if they were *spirit beings*, already *in God's Kingdom*.

Peter suggested that they might "...make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias" (verse 4).

The Feast of Tabernacles (or "booths") foreshadowed the *Kingdom of God*!

Peter had kept this important annual Holy Day season all *his life*. So had *all* believing Jews and Israelites of the house of Israel.

After they heard a booming voice (no doubt from an *angel*, for Jesus plainly said no man had seen the face, or heard the voice, of God the Father), they "...fell on their face, and were sore afraid." Jesus came to them, told them not to be afraid, "and when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw *no man*, save Jesus only" (verses 6-9).

Now notice the *absolute proof*, from the Word of God itself, that what they saw was not REAL—but a miraculous VISION!

"And as they came down the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, *tell the VISION* to no man, until the son of man be risen again from the dead."

Now, Peter, James and John understood they had seen ONLY A VISION! They *knew* that they had not seen a literal *resurrection*; and, of course, they KNEW that what they had seen had taken place *right there* on the mountain, before their startled eyes.

Knowing what the scribes said, and a fair amount of the Scriptures, they asked Jesus, "Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?"

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.

"But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the son of man suffer of them.

"Then the disciples understood that he spake of them of *John the Baptist*"! (Matthew 17:10-13).

Note well this important discussion!

The reason James and the others asked Jesus about what the scribes really meant concerning "Elijah must come first" was because they KNEW Elijah had *not yet been resurrected!* They KNEW that what they had seen was a VISION! Jesus plainly TOLD THEM SO!

Unlike millions of professing, churchgoing Christians today who ASSUME Jesus literally brought Elijah and Moses "down from heaven" to be with Him for a temporary stay, and to let the startled eyes of James, Peter and John SEE these two great men who were allegedly already "up in heaven," the disciples KNEW that they had merely seen a VISION!

They *believed Christ!*

Do *you?*

In the remainder of the discussion, you see how Jesus revealed to them that John the Baptist was a *type*, a "forerunner," of the prophesied end-time prophet who is to come in "the power and the spirit of Elijah"!

The ministry of John the Baptist was one Of PREPARING THE WAY for the *first* coming of Jesus Christ.

The ministry of the latter-day prophet who will come in the power and the spirit of Elijah is to PREPARE THE WAY for the *second* coming of Christ!

Can anything be plainer?

If you *believe Christ*, and not what you have "always assumed," or what you have "always been taught" by religious teachers, then YOU KNOW, and YOU KNOW THAT YOU KNOW, that Elijah *was not then IN HEAVEN!* YOU KNOW that what the disciples saw was merely a VISION!

You know that Elijah is *dead*.

You know that he "received not the promise" (Hebrews 11:13, 39, 40) and that, like David, Elijah *is not ascended into the heavens!*" (Acts 2:34).

### **Enoch Is Dead!**

Notice what the Bible says about Enoch.

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

Read the whole chapter of Hebrews 11!

Notice how many great men of God—sages, prophets and patriarchs—are mentioned. They include Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Joseph, Moses, Gideon and Barach, Sampson and David, Samuel, and many other prophets!

*Twice*, in the 11th chapter of Hebrews, God's Word says, "THESE ALL DIED IN FAITH, not having received the promises, but having seen them *afar off*. . ." (Hebrews 11:13). "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, RECEIVED NOT THE PROMISE!" (Hebrews 11:39).

Your Bible plainly says Enoch DIED!

Jesus plainly said no man hath ascended into heaven. The sacred Word of God insists that Enoch and Elijah are *dead*.

Then what does it mean when the Bible says "Enoch was 'translated'"?

The Greek word *metatithemi* is used only in Acts 7:16, Galatians 1:6, Hebrews 7:12, Hebrews 11:5 (twice) and Jude 4.

The word means "CARRIED OVER—REMOVED"! Notice the *identical Greek word* as it is translated in the books of Acts, chapter 7 verse 16: ". . . And were *carried over* [*metatithemi*] into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money. . ."

Here, the very same word which is rendered "translated" is given as "*carried over*" concerning the bodies of Jacob and others of the fathers.

Now notice the next example: "I marvel that you are so soon *removed from* [*metatithemi*] him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel . . ." (Galatians 1:6). Actually, the expression should be rendered "removing," or that they were in the process of *moving away from* the original body of truth to false doctrine!

Notice the force of the Greek word *metatithemi* as it is rendered in the English expression in this verse: "*Remove from.*"

Now, note the next use of the *same Greek word*. "For the priesthood being *CHANGED* [*metatithemi*] there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Hebrews 7:12).

This scripture deals with the change between the priesthood of the sons of Aaron (the Levitical priesthood) to the divine priesthood of Jesus Christ.

*None* of these expressions has anything whatsoever to do with being *taken up to heaven!*

*One* has to do with removing from true beliefs, from the body of truth of God's church. Another has to do with the *change* in the priesthood. Another had to do with the *transporting of dead bodies* from one place to another!

Now, note the example in Jude 4. "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men turning [Greek, *metatithemi*] the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

The word "turning" means CHANGING, EXCHANGING, SUBSTITUTING.

What does the word "to translate" mean to you?

Notice I avoided its usage when I spoke of *changing* a word from the Greek language into the English, choosing to use "rendering." This was to avoid confusion so I did not use the word "translation" twice in a row. Otherwise, I would have said, "The word 'translated' was translated as. . ."

When you "translate" one word into another, you are *changing from one language* to another, but you are preserving the *meaning*.

By no stretch of the imagination does the word "translated" in the Greek language mean that Enoch was TAKEN TO HEAVEN!

Now, notice that the apostle Paul said he "was not *found*."

WHY was he "not found"? Because there were those who were *looking for him*.

Enoch was called the "seventh from Adam." Actually, if you study the genealogies carefully, he was only the seventh as figured in the lineage from *Seth*, and was not, really, the seventh firstborn from Adam.

It was stated that Enoch "walked with God" (Genesis 5:22).

There were two men named "Enoch" mentioned in Genesis, and the Enoch with whom we are concerned was the *second*, the son of Jared, and the *father of Methuselah*.

The Bible plainly says that, *because* Enoch "walked with God" (and no higher compliment could be given to this patriarch!), God "*took him*."

But WHERE did God "take him"?

Ah, that is the question! Now, *remember* what Jesus Christ *plainly said*. He plainly said NO MAN had ascended into heaven!

*David* was a man after God's own heart—and Peter tells us, in his inspired sermon on the Day of Pentecost, that David is both dead *and buried*, that his sepulcher remains with us unto this day, and that David IS NOT in the heavens! (Acts 2:29, 34).

The apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, tells us in the book of Hebrews that ENOCH, together with all the other prophets and patriarchs, including David, DIED!

However, Paul further tells us that Enoch "*was not found*"!

Obviously, since Enoch was one of those *few* men during that pre-flood period who truly "walked with God," there were others, *enemies, going Satan's way*, who were LOOKING FOR HIM! WHY?

We are given none of the details, but it is interesting to note that, in the book of Jude, a quotation from a book written by Enoch concerning the *second coming of Christ* is given!

"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of *these* [Satan-inspired false prophets], saying, 'Behold the Eternal cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they had ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him'" (Jude 14, 15).

Enoch was one of God's faithful *prophets*. As one of the very FEW during that violent, sinful period, he was *preaching the gospel* as a WITNESS against evil, sinning, satanic men!

While we are given none of the details, the Bible is explicitly clear that God decided to SPARE Enoch from murder at the hands of his antagonists, just *like Elijah*!

God "*took him away*," and he "was not found" (by those who were *looking for him*).

We are not told WHERE God took him—but WE KNOW that it was not "into heaven," for Jesus Christ plainly *said so*!

It is also obvious that, at some later date, and, hopefully, under pleasant circumstances, Enoch DIED!

Like David, he is "*dead and buried*," and, even though we do not know the location of his grave, he "received not the promise"!

The Greek word *metatithemi*, which is rendered "translated" (inaccurately, and confusingly!) on two occasions, SHOULD have been rendered "*transferred; removed; taken away; transported*"!

No, Enoch is not in heaven!

Elijah is not in heaven!

David is not in heaven!

To this date, the ONLY human individual who has ever walked this earth to be assumed bodily into heaven is Jesus Christ of Nazareth!

### **Can You Believe Jesus Christ?**

It is *absolutely essential* that you understand this GREAT PRINCIPLE!

*THE BIBLE DOES NOT CONTRADICT ITSELF!*

Do you believe this?

For, if you do *not*; if you believe the Bible is filled with errors, mistakes, inaccuracies, or outright lies then you have No *BASIS* for your belief in GOD! YOU have no *basis* for your belief in Jesus Christ as *your Savior*, and you have *no basis* for believing you can be SAVED!

If even *one word* of the Bible is untrustworthy, then ALL of the Bible is untrustworthy.

WHY are so many sincere, yet *deceived*, persons so *IGNORANT* of this great principle?

I have met such people many times in the course of my many years in Christ's ministry.

Like the balky mule, or the horse you can "lead to water but cannot make him drink," there are people who, while seeing with their *own eyes*, in the pages of their *own Bibles*, the PLAIN TRUTH of God's Word, will absolutely *REFUSE* to accept it, so long as there is some fuzzy, vague notion lodged in their minds which *was put there* by religious teachers, parents, friends, or by their own misunderstanding of the Bible.

Review, in your own mind, what you have SEEN with your own eyes from YOUR BIBLE!

*Look at the accurate meanings* of each of the Greek words used for "soul" in the New Testament!

Review what you have read about the *state of the dead*; the RESURRECTION; the fact that Christ will return to and rule ON THIS EARTH; and the plain statements that "WO MAN HATH ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN" given to you by Jesus Christ of Nazareth Himself!

Now, please come to understand one of the *primary* requirements of *Bible understanding*.

*FIRST:* Jesus Christ thanked His Father that the Father had revealed these things "unto babes." You must first become a "babe in Christ," like an innocent, wide-eyed *child, hungry and thirsting* for God's Word. You cannot *want your own way*—you cannot cling doggedly to preconceived notions, opinions or previous religious teachings. Rather, like an innocent little child, you must yield your heart and your *whole* being completely to GOD! You must ask HIM to be your *teacher* You must confess Jesus Christ, not only as your personal Savior, but as your *RULER*, and as your *BOSS!*

*SECOND:* God says, "...To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit [meaning humble, not spiritually proud] *AND TREMBLES AT MY WORD!*" (Isaiah 66:2).

Do you tremble before the divinely inspired, holy and sacred *Word of God?*

If you Do, then you would *tremble in fear to reject* God's truth. You would tremble *in fear* to doggedly cling to a preconceived notion, argument, personal point of view or *opinion* of your own—especially when those opinions are proved *WRONG* by the divinely inspired Word of God!

*THIRD:* Jesus said, "The scripture *CANNOT BE BROKEN!*" (John 10:35). Think for a moment! Jesus Christ is described as the *WORD* (Greek: *logos*)—He is the *Scripture*, the Word of God *personified!*

Will feeble, ignorant, deceived mankind presume to ascend up to heaven and pull Jesus Christ from His throne? Can the preconceived notions and opinions of deceived persons nullify the very *AUTHORITY* of the *living Christ?*

Jesus Christ is absolutely *SUPREME*. He is untouched, aloof and inviolate—totally *above* the puny presumptuousness of man. Sarcasm, haughtiness, anger, rebellion at being told the truth—the petty emotions and resentments of human beings—are as meaningless and useless to Jesus Christ of Nazareth as a germ on the hind leg of a tiny spider lost in the vastness of the Mato Grosso of Brazil!

Petty, argumentative, human opinions simply *DO NOT COUNT* in God's sight!

But *how few* are willing to *face the Bible* with *that attitude*.

How shockingly *FEW* are willing to read Jesus' plain statement, "No man hath ascended up to heaven"! and simply, humbly *BELIEVE* it!

Instead, they become confused.

They say, "But how can this be?" They querulously say, "But what about *Elijah*, what about *Enoch*, what about all the saints who were resurrected?"

Instead of *believing Christ*, they place *greater weight* on the oft-repeated *FABLES* of their religious upbringing. They remember the hoarse-voiced preaching of the perspiring tent-camp evangelists of their youth. They remember the hundreds of radio and television evangelists they have heard over the years. They remember their parents' teaching and the "Christian" upbringing of their church!

Not so with the *true* Christian.

The *true Christian* approaches the study of God's Word in total *subjection*. He will approach the study of God's Word in trembling and great humility. He will *FEAR* to misinterpret, misapply or attempt to *read his own* meaning *INTO* the Scriptures.

He will realize that, even as Jesus Christ of Nazareth stands at the supreme position of the LORD OF THE UNIVERSE, so do the *written Scriptures* stand inviolable, untrammelled, unsullied, immutable and absolutely SURE!

*Therefore*, when the true Christian sees his own Savior, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, saying, "For no man hath ascended into heaven"! he BELIEVES Jesus Christ Himself.

Then, armed *with that belief*, he approaches other, apparently nebulous or ambiguous, scriptures *from the point of view of that belief*

In other words, he knows the Bible tells him that he needs to be a "workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Because he *trembles* to misinterpret or misapply the Bible, he will use the PLAIN, incontrovertible, impossible-to-be-misunderstood scriptures to assist him in understanding the vague, or ambiguous, ones.

Are you such a person?

Does Almighty God need to tell you something *twice*? Three times? Twenty times? One hundred?

Or are you a *converted Christian* and when your very Savior, Lord and Master, High Priest and soon coming KING tells you something He need only speak once?

*Apply that concept* to all you have read in this article.

Carefully look up each scripture in your own Bible. Underline or make a mark beside the ones that are outstandingly important. Let them sink *deeply* down into your mind.

*Believe* them—and do not confuse yourself by *deceiving yourself* into believing you are "disagreeing with Garner Ted Armstrong"! What I think or believe has NOTHING TO DO with *your salvation*!

Your salvation is between you and the living God! If I tell you the truth, quote it for you out *of your own Bible*, no amount of dogging or evading that truth—no amount of taking issue with me as a human being—can nullify or make void that eternal TRUTH you have been told.

Jesus said, "You shall know the *truth*, and the truth shall make you free"!

When you *know the truth*, you become *responsible* for it!

Each time you learn *new truth* from the sacred Word of God, it becomes "*dangerous knowledge*"!

For, once you learn *new truth* from God's Word, you become RESPONSIBLE for it!

Almighty God expects you to *apply* it.

He not only expects you to learn His truth, He expects you to become so joyous *at discovering* new truth that you will eagerly and anxiously desire to *share it* with *OTHERS*!

You should approach all your Bible study in this fashion.

Never believe men. Always believe the Bible, but realize that the New Testament King James English is a modern-day translation, and that it is sometimes necessary to obtain the precise meaning of the original *Greek* and other languages; it is necessary to do as Christ said and "rightly divide the word of truth"!

You need to remember and believe that "all scripture is given by *inspiration of God*, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

When Paul informed the young evangelist Timothy that some false teachers were claiming the resurrection was past already, Paul said, "Nevertheless the FOUNDATION OF GOD stands *SURE* ..." (2 Timothy 2:19).

*Yes, regardless* as to the petty disagreements, arguments and vanities of ignorant, deceived men, the *foundation of God*, the HOLY SCRIPTURES, stands *SURE*!

Jesus *did not lie*. No MAN has ascended to the heaven of God's throne! ELIJAH was taken up, by a miracle, into the AIR, and was transported safely away to some other location. *Years later* Elijah was taken to a place of security, a *letter* was received by Jehoram, the new king in Jerusalem.

Notice! "And there came a writing to him from *Elijah the prophet*, saying, "Thus saith the Eternal God of David thy father, "Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah . . ." " (2 Chronicles 21:12-15). Then followed a description of the horrible fate that Elijah, who was STILL ALIVE, described would occur to Jehoram!

Elijah was still alive, ON THIS EARTH, in some other place!

Now YOU KNOW!

Elijah is dead. Enoch is dead. They await a RESURRECTION upon the return of Jesus Christ!

Read this scripture carefully—note it well:

"For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Corinthians 15:16-23).

*There it is!*

Elijah and Enoch HAVE NOT RECEIVED THE PROMISES.

But they WILL.

When?

Christ is the "firstfruits" from the dead, and AFTERWARD—they that are the "dead in Christ" (including Elijah and Enoch) will rise from their graves to IMMORTALITY (1 Corinthians 15:50-52) AT HIS COMING, and not one second before!

-End-

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