

# IF ENOCH AND ELIJAH WERE IN HEAVEN WOULD CHRIST NOT HAVE SAID SO?

It is an indisputable fact that Enoch and Elijah will be among the nobles in the glorious and everlasting Kingdom of God. They were men renowned for their religious devotion and intrepid faith. However, for the fact that none of the ancient faithful before Christ, according to the Scriptures, has a place in heaven, the belief that Enoch and Elijah are in heaven is, undoubtedly, a misconception.

The time has come for people to make serious godly endeavour to know and accept the unadulterated truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ and put away sentiments as well as teachings and beliefs that have no foundation in the Holy Bible. Many doctrines in the major denominations of Christendom are fraught with errors and lies. And that is why countless numbers of people have been misled and are very ignorant about vital doctrines of the Christian faith.

Many people – as a result of the false teaching of the clergy have the strong feeling and conviction that by reason of their contributions towards church work they will, in the event of death, be carried by angels to heaven. This is so because they have been taught to believe that heaven is the home of all the faithful. Certain clergymen and teachers in their efforts to justify this teaching often make reference to Enoch and Elijah as those whom God had taken to heaven to enjoy His Kingdom.

It is this hope of heaven that has inspired many people to make great sacrifices morally, financially and otherwise to meet the demands of their church organizations. They believe that they will be rewarded in heaven when they die. But, unfortunately, they are misguided!

It is of great interest to know that it is not everyone who receives approval for salvation that will be in heaven in God's Kingdom. Those who will be in heaven are comparatively few – and all of them must be Christians. They constitute the class of Christians that Christ called "Little Flock". (Luke 12:32) And since Enoch and Elijah lived and died before the advent of Jesus Christ, it is obvious that they were not Christians and could not come under the grace of the heavenly calling.

## Enoch

Now let us get a clear view of the fact about Enoch. It is stated in the Holy Bible that Enoch, who was the son of Jared, was the seventh in descent from Adam. (Genesis 5:18; Jude 14) He lived in a manner consistent with the will of God and thus pleased Him. Indeed this testified to his faith and righteousness.

The end of Enoch was marked by a peculiar incident. He did not die in the manner that is common with men. He, having attained the age of 365, disappeared in that God took him away from among men. It is written of him: "And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." – Genesis 5:22-24

Concerning the faith of Enoch, St. Paul wrote: "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. But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." – Hebrews 11:5, 6

The teaching of some people that Enoch was taken to heaven without passing through death is inconsistent with the truth of the gospel it is therefore wrong. What actually happened was that God removed him from among men that he should not die in the ordinary way. He is not existing anywhere. He would be among other faithful men and women of ancient times that would have part in a better resurrection as stated by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Hebrews chapter 11 verses 1-40.

## Elijah

The case of Elijah is similar to that of Enoch save that he (Elijah) was actually seen being taken up heavenward. It is significant that Elisha, upon whom the mantle of Elijah fell, was present when he was taken up after both of them had crossed Jordan River.

Here is the Bible account: "And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: *nevertheless*, if thou see me *when I am* taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." – 2 Kings 2:9-11

From this account, taken on the surface, one may be prone to arrive at the conclusion that Elijah is in heaven with God. But the real, spiritual understanding of the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 2:13-14; Colossians 1:9; 2 Timothy 2:7) reveals the truth that Elijah did not and will never go to the dwelling-place of God in heaven.

This, in the first instance, will lead us to the definition of heaven. According to The New Imperial Reference Dictionary, heaven means "the vault of sky overhanging the earth; the upper region of the air; a very great and indefinite height; the dwelling-place of God." All of these definitions are in harmony with the Scriptures.

In the Bible it is written: "God called the firmament heaven." (Genesis 1:8) The birds are

described as “fowls that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven” and also as “the fowls of heaven”. (Genesis 1:20; Job 35:11) In Proverbs 25:3, it is stated: “The heaven for height ... is unsearchable”. And the Psalmist said, “...the Lord’s throne is in heaven...” Psalm 11:4

For the reason that there are several heavens the Bible describes the dwelling-place of God, which is the greatest and highest of all as “the heaven of heavens”. – Deuteronomy 10:14: 1 Kings 8:27

Elijah was taken up by a whirlwind to a very great height in the upper regions of the air and was turned to nothing. He did not go to heaven which is the abode of God and His angels.

The Incident of Enoch’s translation and that of Elijah took place long before the advent of Jesus Christ. If they were in heaven Jesus Christ who came down from there (John 6:38) would have said so. Rather he unequivocally stated: “No one ever went up into heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man whose home is in heaven.” – John 3:13, N.E.B.

The Bible shows clearly that none of the ancient faithful – from the first righteous man, Abel, to John the Baptist, the last prophet before Christ – would be in heaven in God’s Kingdom. This understanding was given by Jesus Christ in his statement concerning John the Baptist, to wit: “Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than him.” – Matthew 11:11

If the least among those in heaven is greater than John the Baptist, and none of those (including Enoch and Elijah) who lived before him (John) is greater than he, it is therefore obvious that all that lived from the genesis of man’s creation up to John, the forerunner of Jesus Christ, are excluded from the class of those who are favoured to be in the heavenly realm.

In fact, it would not have been possible for Enoch, Elijah or any other of the holy men of old to have gone to heaven since Jesus Christ, the Messiah, had not come to the earth to shed his blood to redeem mankind from sin, and since he had not been glorified and, consequently, the Kingdom of God had not then been set up in heaven.

It is Jesus Christ himself who after his resurrection went to heaven to prepare it for the saints – the anointed Christians – and left promise that he would come again to receive them to himself up there. To the apostles he said: “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” – John 14:1-3

When Jesus Christ further told them that they knew where he was going and the way to it, Thomas said to him, “Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?” Jesus Christ then answered: “I am the way the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” – John 14:4-6

It is clear from the foregoing statement of Jesus Christ that all who will go to heaven must go

through him who is the way. So the point of Enoch, Elijah or any other person going to heaven before the advent of Christ is completely ruled out.

## Transfiguration

Moreover, certain religious teachers have made reference to the appearance of Elijah during the transfiguration of Jesus Christ as a proof that he (Elijah) is in heaven. They are very wrong.

St. Matthew's record of the Transfiguration runs thus: "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their face, and were sorely afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only." – Matthew 17:1-8

In the whole account there is no reference whatsoever to heaven and so it would be groundless to infer that Moses and Elijah are in heaven. And the mistake of some people is that they take it to mean that Moses and Elijah who appeared were literally living. They lose sight of the fact that it was a vision intended to confirm the faith of the spotless in the majority of Jesus Christ. That the appearance of Moses and Elijah to the apostles was a vision was plainly stated by Jesus Christ himself; as it is written: "And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead." – Matthew 17:9

There is no record in the Bible that Moses was ever taken up to heaven. Rather it is stated that he died on the Mountain of Nebo in the land of Moab but his real burial-place was unknown to any man. – Deuteronomy 34:1, 5-6

Certain professed Christians believe that David too is in heaven, and in their devotions they often say: "David pray for us." But St. Peter stated quite assertively, "David is not ascended into the heavens"! (Acts 2:34) It is not only in heaven that all the faithful will enjoy everlasting life and bliss, it is the earth that shall be inhabited by majority of them in perfect peace and happiness forever in God's Kingdom in fulfillment of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as *it is* in heaven." – Matthew 6: 10

The truth of the whole matter has been brought to light. Let no one be deceived as to believe that Enoch and Elijah are in heaven. They are not. Rather, they, as well as all other holy men and women of old before Christ, shall be brought back to life on Resurrection Day to inherit God's Kingdom, NOT in heaven, but on earth in perfect peace and happiness. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth", said Jesus. He did not say they shall inherit heaven. – Read Psalm 37:9-11; Proverbs 11:31; Matthew 5:5; Luke 13:28, 29 etc.

In the eleventh chapter of the epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews, he gave a comprehensive account of the faith of the ancient faithful beginning from Abel, and which faith they demonstrated by marvelous acts and meritorious works. About them he wrote: "...Who through faith subdued Kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises...Women received their dead raised to life again..." (Hebrews 11:32-38) It could be recalled that the son of the widow of Zarephath was raised to life by Elijah. – 1 Kings 17:17-24

St. Paul further pointed out that all those devout worshippers of God did not receive the promised inheritance and that without them, the anointed Christians (the Saints) whose grace is much greater; the ancient faithful could not be perfected. Thus concluding the chapter, St. Paul stated: "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith received not the promise: God having provided some better things for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." – Hebrews 11:39, 40