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Elijah taken into Heaven.

(2013)

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Elijah taken into Heaven.

Topics.

- The LORD is about to take Elijah up into heaven by a whirlwind.
- Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.
- Elijah, Jesus and the Mount of Transfiguration.
- Visions.

INTRODUCTION: since the following Old Testament Scriptures seem to contradict Jesus words in the New Testament because the LORD states that He would take Elijah into heaven and yet Jesus told his disciples, "No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man" (John 3:13) which means if Elijah did ascend to heaven the Bible contradicts itself (as some believe), but even worse than this it means that Jesus words are not true. Since these two statements appear to be a very clear contradiction this study sets about to discover if they can be harmonised with the entire teaching of the Bible.

The LORD is about to take Elijah up into Heaven by a Whirlwind.

2 Kings 2:1 ----- ¹And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. ²And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said unto him, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel.

Heaven: comes from the Hebrew word (shamayim) and can refer the sky or air, as aloft; alluding to the visible arch in which the clouds move or to where the celestial (angelic or divine) bodies revolve (figuratively to be lofty).

Whirlwind: comes from the Hebrew word (ca`ar) and refers to a hurricane or a violent storm. It should be kept in mind that whirlwinds do not go past the stars or even up to them.

Elijah the prophet and Elisha leave Gilgal together and travel to Bethel and to Jericho.

2 Kings 2:3 ----- ³And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. ⁴And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. ⁵And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.

Here we see that when Elijah and Elisha arrive in Bethel Elisha and the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel and at Jericho already had some kind of understanding that the LORD was going to take Elijah.

2 Kings 2:9-10 ----- ⁶And Elijah said unto him (Elisha) Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on. ⁷And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan. ⁸And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

NOTICE: Elijah is continually telling Elisha to stay behind, but Elisha is determined to go wherever Elisha is going. Remember Elisha knows the LORD is about to take Elijah, but it is unlikely he knows how.

Following are two possible reasons Elisha was determined to stay with Elijah and Elijah kept telling him to stay behind: -

1. Both Elijah and Elisha knew Elijah was going to be taken, but they may not have known how (we only know because we are told after the event) it is possible that Elijah and Elisha thought Elijah was going to die and that Elijah wanted to spare Elisha from seeing such sorrow and that Elisha wanted to be with Elijah when he did die.
2. Clearly Elijah had the Spirit and power of God upon him and Elisha wanted this same power so there was no way he was going to depart from Elijah especially since he knew the LORD was about to take his master.

2 Kings 2:9-10 ----- ⁹And 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. ¹⁰And 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.

Elijah fully aware he is about to be taken asks Elisha what he would like him to do for him. Since Elisha doesn't just ask for the same power of God that was flowing through Elijah, but asks for twice as much these verses shine a spotlight on the truth that Elisha did desire (as most would) to have the power of God flowing through him as it was with Elijah. Elijah tells him if is with him when he is taken he will have what he desires.

Elijah went up by a Whirlwind into Heaven.

2 Kings 2:11 ----- ¹¹And 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. ¹²And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces. ¹³He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan; ¹⁴And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the LORD God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over. ¹⁵And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him.

Elisha sees Elijah taken he receives the double portion of God's Spirit and parts the Jordan River with the mantle of Elijah that fell from him as he was taken up. He crosses the river on dry ground, the sons of the prophets from the city of Jericho see all that has happened and clearly recognise that the Spirit and power of God that was on Elijah is now upon Elisha.

Since whirlwinds do not go past the stars or even to the stars and chariots and horses are not made of fire, we know the author is using figurative language in a similar way that David and Habakkuk in the following verses speak of the LORD.

- He makes the clouds his chariot; he rides on the wings of the wind (Psalm 104:3).
- Was your indignation against the sea when you rode on your horses, on your chariot of salvation? (Hab. 3:8).

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

No doubt Elisha told the sons of the prophets that Elijah had been taken in a whirlwind, if he told them that chariots of fire, and horses of fire, had taken Elijah up to heaven it is obvious they did not believe such a story, but they clearly did believe

he had been taken in a whirlwind since they expected to find Elijah dead on a mountain somewhere so much so that they begged Elisha to let them send fifty strong men to search the area to see if they can find Elijah. Clearly these sons of the prophets never believed that Elijah had been taken to heaven the place where God dwells.

Summing it up.

The great prophet Elijah had not only been the head of Israel and served God faithfully as a prophet, but had also destroyed four-hundred prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:19, 40). In the New Testament we read that John the Baptist was a prophet like Elijah in that he also spoke openly against the kings and the prideful, hypercritical religious leaders of his generation and he was killed because of it.

It is certain that just as John stirred up the fury and wrath of the religious leaders of his era Elijah would have had stirred up the wrath and fury of many in his generation (i.e., consider all the followers who worshipped the gods of Baal that the four-hundred prophets proclaimed).

The book of Leviticus says: -

- From thirty years old up to fifty years old, all who can come on duty, to do the work in the tent of meeting (Num. 4:3).
- From the age of fifty years they shall withdraw from the duty of the service and serve no more (Num. 8:25).

Priests of God were to stop serving when they reached fifty years old, maybe if God had left Elijah in the ungodly environment of his age, the kings and religious leaders of his day would also have killed him as they did John. Perhaps, because of his faithfulness and his age, it was time for Elijah's ministry to come to an end and be passed onto the younger man Elisha.

The authors use of the words, "Chariots of fire, and horses of fire" are most likely typical biblical lofty language (the Old Testament often uses this type of language) to highlight the glory of God and the great prophet that Elijah was especially since it is very unlikely literal chariots of fire, and horses of fire actually descended.

For further information concerning biblical lofty language, see the title: -

- Language (Includes Lofty Language of the Bible).
- In Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

It is more likely that there was a real whirlwind and God used it to translate Elijah through the air as he did with Phillip in the New Testament to a safer place on earth where he could live out his life in safety, since God had passed Elijah's power onto the younger man Elisha and especially since the following verses show that Jesus was the first to be taken to heaven.

- Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (1 Cor. 15:20).
- But each in his own order (to be raised) Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ (1 Cor. 15:23).

If Elijah was taken to heaven then Christ is not the firstfruits of all those to be taken to eternal glory in heaven because of this it is far more reasonable to suppose that God translated Elijah by means of a storm to a safer place, somewhere on the earth to serve out the remainder of his old age in quiet and peace.

There is evidence that Elijah was back on earth after he was taken away in the whirlwind since it can be shown that the king of Judah gave Jehoram a letter (2 Chron. 21, 9-12) from Elijah the prophet, after Elijah had supposedly been taken to heaven.

Either the letter was written before he went to heaven and delivered by a messenger on earth (unlikely), or Elijah was caught away, as was Philip from the Gaza Road to Azotas, (about 17 miles) (Acts 8:39) for an unspecified purpose and returned to the earth. Since Elisha the much younger man had taken over the duties of Elijah in the reign of Jehoshaphat (2 Kings 3:10-11) it is very likely Elijah being a much older man was now living peacefully without the fear he once had of those seeking to kill him and rather than travelling around as he did in his younger years was simply writing letters concerning the things of God and having faithful messengers deliver them.

Elijah, Jesus and the Mount of Transfiguration.

Some will of course rightfully point out the following New Testament Scripture that states: -

- After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John up a high mountain and he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him (Matt. 17:1-2).

But the fact that Elijah appeared at the transfiguration, is not in itself proof that he was taken to heaven since it is just as possible that God raised him from the dead for this occasion in a similar way as Samuel was raised from the dead. Added to this Jesus after this glorious event gives the following command to Peter, James and John as they were walking down the mountain: -

- Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead (Matt. 17:9).

These words may simply mean do not tell what you have seen, or they may imply that Elijah and Moses were not bodily present, but what occurred or transpired was an illusionary imaginary or mental experience since a vision does not necessarily have actual reality (Acts 10:3, 10, 17).

VISIONS: can relate to a spectacle gazed at by the eyes or a movie played out in the mind. In most cases God gives the picture or vision then the prophet speaks or writes it in their own words. Sometimes the same biblical event or experience is spoken of as an actual and real event, while at other times the same event maybe recorded as a vision (an image or mental experience within the mind).

A biblical vision is always under God's control and can appear as a movie played out on the screen of the imagination of the mind (similar to a dream) or it may appear as a hologram appearing in the air that is actually seen by the eyes of the prophet or to whoever God chooses to give the vision to. The vision communicates the LORD'S will or future events to the prophet who then proceeds to tell the vision to the people, sometimes in their own words and at other times in the exact words the LORD has spoken to them in the vision.

Visions Cornelius and Angels.

- Cornelius saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him (Acts 10:3).

Visions Peter and Angels.

- Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold (Acts 10:17-18).
- Peter went out and followed him (the angel) he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision (Acts 12:9).

Visions and Paul on the Road to Damascus.

- Now as Saul approached Damascus suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. and falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one (Acts 9:3-6).

Here a light appears to Paul on the road to Damascus and Jesus voice speaks out of the light. Paul and the men with him fell to the ground, because they also saw the light, but only Paul heard the voice of the Lord. This is a real and actual event, but I later when Pau was telling King Agrippa the story Paul refers to it as a vision (Acts 26:13-19).

Visions and Women at the Tomb of Jesus.

- While the women were perplexed about this (Jesus body missing) behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel (Luke 24:4).
- When the woman did not find Jesus body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive (Luke 24:23).

Here Luke presents the account of the angels appearing to the woman at the tomb as a vision and also as an actual real event. This is because the same biblical event or experience can be spoken of as an actual and real event or as a vision.

This is because even though a vision does not have actual reality, but is an illusionary imaginary or mental experience it still affects the human body and the emotions in the same way as a real event does. The reason for this is that our nervous system does not have a brain of its own and therefore it cannot tell if a vision of the mind is a real event or an imaginary one (especially if the vision is vividly clear like in a dream) and therefore our emotions respond accordingly.

CONCLUSION.

We began this study to discover whether Elijah ascended into heaven and to see if the Bible contradicts itself (as some believe). With all the above information in mind and the fact Jesus himself very clearly states: -

- No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man (John 3:13)

It seems very unlikely that Elijah was taken up to heaven the dwelling place of God, the angels and the Lord Jesus Christ.

For further information see the title: -

- Death (What happens when we Die).
- Heaven.

Both titles are in, Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).

End.