

Dear Simon,

Thank you for writing us at Christian questions Radio. You wanted to know where Enoch and Elijah went since flesh and blood cannot enter heaven.

“Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.” (Genesis 5:24) The Apostle Paul confirms this thought in Hebrews 11:5, “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him.” Notice, neither of these scriptures mentions that Enoch went to heaven to be with God. In fact, he could not have received a heavenly reward at that time, since Jesus had not yet come to earth to pay the price of redemption that would enable the faithful ones to enter heaven.

What, then, happened to Enoch? God took him away as a young man of 365 years (Genesis 5:23) so that he would not see death in the normal way. He was taken in a supernatural way, as is evidenced by the word “translated.” According to Strong’s, Thayer’s and Bullinger’s Greek Lexicons, “translate” means “to put or place in another place, to transport, to transfer.” The same Greek word is rendered “carried over” in Acts 7:16 where Jacob’s body was ‘translated’ or ‘transported’ to Shechem where he was buried. Likewise, God took Enoch and buried him somewhere so as not to be found, just as He did with the body of Moses in Deuteronomy 34:6. No man knows where either Moses’ or Enoch’s grave is. God hid them for reasons known only to Him. It is our belief that both of these Ancient worthy ones will come forth from their graves at the time God has appointed for them.

“Suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared . . . and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.” (2 Kings 2:10) Yet, over nine hundred years after this event, Jesus himself 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) Are these two Bible statements contradictory? If Elijah did not go to heaven, then where did he go?

The scriptures use the word “heaven” to describe three places, not just one. The first heaven is the earth’s atmosphere where birds fly (Genesis 1:20, Jeremiah 4:25; 34:20, Lamentations 4:19, Zephaniah 1:3). This Hebrew word *shamayim* is translated as “sky” in the scripture comparing Genesis 7:3, “fowls also of the air,” with Genesis 7:23, “fowl of the heaven.” The word “sky” and “heaven” are used interchangeably from the same Hebrew word (Psalm 8:8). So the first heaven is synonymous with “heights” or “elevations.”

The second heaven is outer space where the planets and stars exist (Genesis 1:14-17; 15:5; 22:17; 26:4, Deuteronomy 1:10; 17:3; Psalm 8:3, Jeremiah 8:2; Matthew 24:29).

The third heaven is literally called “the third heaven” in 2 Corinthians 12:2. This third heaven is what Jesus calls his “Father’s house” (John 14:2) and both Jesus and the Apostle Paul call “paradise” (Luke 23:43, 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, Revelation 2:7). This third heaven is where God and the heavenly sanctuary exist (1 Peter 3:22).

Since Elijah could not have gone to God’s heavenly throne, which “heaven” did he go to—the first or second? We believe that he was taken into the earth’s atmosphere, the first heaven, because there could be no whirlwind in any other place but in the atmosphere surrounding the earth.

Did Elijah die when God took him up into the atmosphere? We believe he did not. Almost ten years after Elijah was taken from his people, the wicked king of Judah, Jehoram, received a letter from Elijah (2 Chronicles 21:12-15). From the wording of the letter, it is clear that it was written after the events of the last decade had occurred. Elijah speaks of the events as past events and of the diseases as future. Two years after receiving the letter, the king became diseased and died. This letter proves that Elijah was alive and living someplace else. The Bible does not reveal how much longer Elijah lived after writing the letter, but we do know that when he did die, he did not go to heaven.

A similar incident to Elijah’s took place in Acts 8:39-40 where Phillip was caught up into the first heaven and was transported to another location approximately 20-30 miles away. Ezekiel also experienced God’s power of transportation when the spirit lifted him up (Ezekiel 3:12) “between the earth and heaven” and brought him “to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate” (Ezekiel 8:3). Afterwards, the spirit took him up to Chaldea (Ezekiel 11:24).

We hope we have answered your concerns regarding the fact that neither Enoch nor Elijah could have entered the third heaven when they died, as the time for a heavenly reward had not yet been offered. Be sure to sign up for CQ Rewind at www.christianquestions.net. The service is free without obligation and will provide you with scriptural perspective on many questions and topics.

Sincerely,

Christian Questions Radio