

Elijah

2 Kings 2:1, 11 [New King James] *“And it came to pass, when the LORD was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.” ... “Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.”*

You may have been told that this is part proof that we go to heaven when we die.

Is this what scripture states, and is this a Bible contradiction, for Jesus Christ tells us that no man has ascended into heaven, [**John 3:13**]?

Which heaven did Elijah go into? –

There are three heavens mentioned in God’s Word, the Christian Bible.

The first heaven –

Is the blanketed of life-sustaining gases that encircles our globe.

The heaven where birds fly, [**Genesis 1:20**] and from where the dew and rain fall, [**Deuteronomy 33:28**].

The second heaven –

This represents the expanse of the great universe, the outer space where we find the sun, moon, stars, comets and planets. This is the heaven God spoke of in **Genesis 1:15-17**.

The third heaven –

Represents God’s Holy throne and seat of the ruling authority of all physical and spiritual reality.

This does have some of the qualities that traditional Christianity assigns to it.

2 Corinthians 12:2-4 [NIV] *“I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man, whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows, was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.”*

Paul briefly describes this third heaven as “paradise.”

Matthew 5:34 [NIV] *“But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne;”*

Referred to by Jesus Christ as God’s throne.

The Creator God reveals in a physical form, for human benefit, more about His throne in **Revelation chapter 4**, where in a few verses the apostle John tantalises us with panoramic glimpses of the celestial, breathtaking pageantry and power of God’s heavenly throne.

Of the specific layout and furnishing of God’s throne we know but little. However, in addition to the items mentioned in **Revelation chapter 4**, we are told the physical counterparts of the earthly tabernacle, built by Moses to God’s specifications, was merely a physical counterpart of heavenly things, [**Hebrews 9:1-5, 23**], although the exact explanation of what this means is **not** given.

Elijah went up into the first heaven, the word “whirlwind” limits his ascent to the earth’s atmosphere.

Why was Elijah taken up by God in this way?

Was it to give Elijah immortality?

No! The scriptures say nothing about that.

Hebrews 11:32, 39 [NIV] *“And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets,” ... “These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.”*

The ancient prophets, including Elijah did not receive any promise of immortality prior to or apart from Christians. This will happen at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, [verse 40].

The scriptures do reveal the reason for Elijah’s removal.

2 Kings 2:3-5 [NIV] *“The company of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and asked, ‘Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?’ ‘Yes, I know,’ Elisha replied, ‘but do not speak of it.’ Then Elijah said to him, ‘Stay here, Elisha; the LORD has sent me to Jericho.’ And he replied, ‘As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you.’ So they went to Jericho. The company of the prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha and asked him, ‘Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?’ ‘Yes, I know,’ he replied, ‘but do not speak of it.’”*

Elijah was head or leader of the disciples of the prophets at that time.

God had sent Elijah as his prophet to wicked King Ahab [**1 Kings 17:1**] and his son Ahaziah. Now that Ahaziah the king had died, [**2 Kings 1:17-18**], God wanted Elisha to direct His work, so what did God do?

God could **not** allow Elijah to be among the people with Elisha directing His work now, that would have been the same as disqualifying him.

Since God never takes an office from a person when that person has been performing their duties well as Elijah had.

The only thing God could do would be to remove Elijah so that another could fulfil the office.

2 Kings 2:12-15 [NIV] *“Elisha saw this and cried out, ‘My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!’ And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them apart. He picked up the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. Then he took the cloak that had fallen from him and struck the water with it. ‘Where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah?’ he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over. The company of the prophets from Jericho, who were watching, said, ‘The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha.’ And they went to meet him and bowed to the ground before him.”*

When God removed Elijah his mantle, the insignia of his office, dropped from him and Elisha picked it up.

The purpose of God removing Elijah was to replace him with another man who would occupy Elijah’s office in Israel for another generation, starting with a new king as Ahaziah had just died, and Elijah was already aging.

The exchange of the insignia of office from Elijah to Elisha, preserved the name of Elijah and confirmed the transfer of the office to Elisha.

Where did Elijah go? –

God did not say that Elijah was to die at that time, if he were Elisha could have assumed the office without the removal of Elijah, for we know that Elisha died in office after fulfilling his duty, [**2 Kings 13:14**].

2 Kings 2:16-18 [NIV] *“‘Look,’ they said, ‘we your servants have fifty able men. Let them go and look for your master. Perhaps the Spirit of the LORD has picked him up and set him down on some mountain or in some valley.’ ‘No,’ Elisha replied, ‘do not send them.’ But they persisted until he was too ashamed to refuse. So he said, ‘Send them.’ And they sent fifty men, who searched for three days but did not find him. When they returned to Elisha, who was staying in Jericho, he said to them, ‘Didn’t I tell you not to go?’”*

The sons [disciples] of the prophets who knew that Elijah was to be removed also knew that Elijah was not to die then.

2 Chronicles 21:12-15 [NIV] *“Jehoram received a letter from Elijah the prophet, which said: ‘This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: “You have not walked in the ways of your father Jehoshaphat or of Asa king of Judah. But you have walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and you have led Judah and the people of Jerusalem to prostitute themselves, just as the house of Ahab did. You have also murdered your own brothers, members of your father’s house, men who were better than you. So now the LORD is about to strike your people, your sons, your wives and everything that is yours, with a heavy blow. You yourself will be very ill with a lingering disease of the bowels, until the disease causes your bowels to come out.””*

Elijah had been “translated” by God in the reign of Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram. This letter could have been a prediction of Jehoram’s impiety and miserable death, given by God to Elijah but **not** delivered to him until his lifestyle had proved the prediction. Or God could have preserved Elijah’s life some ten additional years after his being taken to another location by the whirlwind. Both of these explanations are possible.

What about Elijah on the mount of transfiguration?

Matthew 17:1-8 [NIV] *“After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.’ While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!’ When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. ‘Get up,’ he said. ‘Don’t be afraid.’ When they looked up, they saw no-one except Jesus.”*

When we read this account we have to also read **Matthew 17:9** where Jesus told His disciples that it was a **vision** of the future they had seen.

A vision is **not** a physical reality but a supernatural picture observed by our eyes.

Peter wanted to build three shelters [temporary accommodations] for the three great men to stay to show how the Feast of Tabernacles was fulfilled in the coming Kingdom of God, [**Zechariah 14:16-19**].

Peter had the right idea, but his timing was wrong.

This vision was granted the disciples after Jesus had spoken of the glory of immortality in the coming Kingdom of God, [**Matthew 16:27**].

Moses and Elijah were two of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament.

Moses represents the law and statutes, and predicted the coming of a great prophet [**Deuteronomy 18:15-19**] referring to Jesus Christ.

Elijah represents the prophets who foretold the coming of the Messiah, [**Malachi 4:5-6**].

Moses and Elijah's presence in this vision with Jesus Christ confirmed Jesus' messianic mission to fulfil God's law and the words of God's prophets, added to this God's voice in the cloud over Mount Sinai, gave authority to His law [**Exodus 19:9**], God's voice at the transfiguration gave authority to Jesus Christ's words.

An Elijah to come –

Malachi 4:5-6 [NIV] *“See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.”*

With Malachi's death the voice of God's prophets would be silent for 400 years.

Then a prophet would come, like Elijah, to herald Christ's coming, [**Matthew 17:10-13**].

This prophet was John the Baptist. John prepared people's hearts for Jesus Christ by urging people to repent of their sins, [**Luke 1:17**].

This prophecy in Malachi in many ways is dual for although John the Baptist fulfilled it, coming in the *“spirit of Elijah,”* it also refers to a time immediately before God's direct intervention in human affairs, Jesus Christ's Second Coming, prophetically called *“the Day of the Lord.”*

Matthew 17:10-13 [NIV] *“The disciples asked him, ‘Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?’ Jesus replied, ‘To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognise him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.’ Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.”*

Jesus showed that the work of John the Baptist was a preliminary fulfilment of Malachi's prophecy, an Elijah is yet to come after John the Baptist had died, [**Matthew 14:1-12**].

So a person will come in the *“spirit of Elijah”* just before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

The world of Christ's day did **not** recognise John the Baptist as coming in the *“spirit of Elijah.”*

Will the world just before Christ's Second Coming recognise the person whom God sends in the *“spirit of Elijah”* preaching the message of repentance, forgiveness and judgement?