What Really Happened to Enoch, Moses and Elijah?

Deuteronomy 34:5–6: *5 So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. 6 And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day.*

Reading the Bible can be confusing. After all, it is an ancient book, a collection of writings by about 40 people over a 1500-year span, that details the plan of God through history, prophecy, parables, laws, observations and life-guidance teachings. Some of the accounts of specific individuals featured in the Bible can come across as shrouded in mystery. Such is the case with the ending of the lives of Enoch, Moses and Elijah. The accounts of the deaths of these three faithful men can raise more questions than answers. What really happened to them? Was Enoch taken up to be with God? Why was the body of Moses hidden, and why did Satan seem to want it? Did Elijah really go to heaven in a fiery chariot?

Let's begin with Moses, which at first glance seems to be the easiest of the three to explain.

Here is the account of the end of Moses' life and God burying him in an unknown location:

Deuteronomy 34:4–8: *4 Then the LORD said to him, This is the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, I will give it to your descendants; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there. 5 So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. 6 And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day. 7 Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated. 8 So the sons of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses came to an end.*

Beth-peor, meaning "House of Peor," was the center of worship for the Canaanite god Baal of Peor.

So, if Moses simply died, then what's the big deal?

A scripture in Jude brings us a very unusual perspective regarding Moses' body:

Jude 1:8–9: *8 Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. 9 But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke you!*

This is an odd peek into the spirit world—why are Michael and Satan arguing over Moses' body?

Michael the archangel did not even consider casting a vilifying judgment over Satan; he instead left the censuring or forbidding up to God Himself. This is an important principle which comes up in a few other scriptures as well.

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Why did this argument take place in the spirit realm? The Bible doesn't tell us directly, but we can consider some ideas based on other scriptures. We know for sure Moses was dead, meaning he had ceased to exist.

Let's verify what being dead means:
Genesis 2:16–17: *16 The LORD God commanded the man, saying, From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.*

This is a clear command from God: *In the day that you eat of it*, the literal Hebrew says, *dying thou shalt die*. This is our starting point.

Ecclesiastes 9:10: *Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in sheol* (the grave) *where you are going.*

This is straightforward—death means lack of life.

Romans 6:23: *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Note, *the wages of sin* are not eternal torment or somehow being more alive than ever. *The wages of sin is death.* We are establishing a scriptural pattern so we can understand what happened when Moses was dead and buried.

1 Corinthians 15:20–22: *20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. 21 For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.*

Death is the absence of life. So, we understand Moses was dead—not alive in any way—and was buried.

What did Satan want with the dead body of Moses?

Perhaps Satan wanted to reveal Moses' body so the Hebrews could carry it with them into the Promised Land as a remembrance of their great leader. If this were the case, what a sly maneuver it would have been to get the people to subtly lean into idolatry by worshipping Moses' body.

This thought makes sense; after all, Moses was the bridge between slavery and freedom for millions of people—a hero of heroes. And we know the peoples' propensity for idol worship from the golden calf experience.

There was an idolatrous background in Jewish history for generations. They were surrounded by pagans down through the years, and lived enslaved in Egypt for hundreds of years surrounded by Egyptian culture.

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Also, respect for the dead and their remains was a very important part of ancient Hebrew culture, and proper burial held a high priority. When they did not know where the body of Moses was, it was difficult for them because they could not do the things they normally would have done to show respect for this venerated leader.

Remember what happened many years earlier when Joseph died:
Genesis 50:24–26: *24 Joseph said to his brothers, I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. 25 Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here. 26 So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.*

The sons of Israel took Joseph's bones with them to bury them in the Promised Land:
Joshua 24:32: *Now they buried the bones of Joseph, which the sons of Israel brought up from Egypt, at Shechem, in the piece of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of money; and they became the inheritance of Joseph's sons.*

Joseph's bones were taken with respect to the Promised Land, and the importance of that burial may have been vivid in their minds.

We could only assume Moses' body would have been treated just as respectfully. Why would God prevent this from happening? Was it a national trial for them?

Perhaps, but we also recall how God said to Moses, *I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there*. Because of disobedience, Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land, apparently even after death.

If the people had been given Moses' body, the temptation to use it some form of idolatry would have really grown.

Living and Dying by the Grace of God:
With the evidence we have seen thus far, it is clear Moses died and was buried in a secret location of God's own choosing. Let us reverence what God did in this experience and recognize how His decision was for the ultimate good of His people.

But what about how Moses later appears in the Mount of Transfiguration account in Matthew, Mark and Luke? Was God preserving the body of Moses so He could raise it up later with Jesus and Elijah? Some Bible commentaries say Moses and Elijah were "in the body," meaning literally and physically present.

(Source: Biblical Commentary by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown) That Moses' body was raised, appears from his presence with Elijah and Jesus (who were in the body) at the Transfiguration: the sample and earnest of the coming resurrection kingdom, to be ushered in by Michael's standing up for God's people.

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Just when it looked like this would be easy, let's remember, all Bible details are harmonious, and we just need to uncover that harmony!

Let's move to the account of Elijah.
What REALLY happened to him at the end of his ministry with the chariot of fire?

Establishing what happened to Elijah when he turned his work over to Elisha is a really important starting point. When we look at the scriptures that define this particular experience, two things become evident: First, whatever happened was miraculous. Second, it's very easy to draw conclusions based on that miracle that may not be supported by sound biblical principles.

Did Elijah go to heaven to be with God?

No! Why would we say that? Don't we all remember the account of him being taken up to heaven in a chariot?

Let's carefully examine the account to avoid potential misconceptions.

Where did Elijah go?
2 Kings 2:1: *And it came about when the LORD was about to take up Elijah by a whirlwind to heaven <8064>, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.*

Heaven: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #8064; *shamayim*; dual of an unused singular shameh; from an unused root meaning to be lofty; the sky (as aloft; the dual perhaps alluding to the visible arch in which the clouds move, as well as to the higher ether where the celestial bodies revolve)

Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: 1) heaven, heavens, sky 1a) visible heavens, sky 1a1) as abode of the stars 1a2) as the visible universe, the sky, atmosphere, etc.
1b) heaven (as the abode of God)

Scripturally this Hebrew word for *heaven* often just means the physical sky—our atmosphere that produces weather. Context can broaden it to mean our visible universe of stars, or it can be a theological description of where God resides.

Here are a few other uses of this word to demonstrate this variance in understanding:
Genesis 1:9: *Then God said, Let the waters below the heavens <8064> be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so.*

Below the heavens is translated from this same Hebrew word, used here to mean the sky, the air above us.

Genesis 1:26: *Then God said, Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky <8064> and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.*

Of the sky is translated from the same Hebrew word, here meaning the same atmospheric realm, the space of birds.

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One more example:
Genesis 22:17: *Indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens <8064> and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.*

Stars of the heavens here refers to our visible universe of stars from our perspective from earth, the wider cosmos. It can also be used metaphorically to indicate eternity and divine order (**Ecclesiastes 3:1:** *…And there is a time for every event under heaven,* for example)

God is called *the God of heaven* (see **Nehemiah 1:5**, **Daniel 2:44**, **Jonah 1:9** and others), meaning further than our atmosphere or the visible sky.

Psalm 11:4: *The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD's throne is in heaven <8064>…*

In spite of God's home being in heaven, we firmly believe that Elijah was taken up into the air—the sky—but NOT to God's heavenly home. Why?

Because Jesus told us so!
John 3:12–13: *12 If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended into heaven <3772>, but he who descended from heaven <3772>: the Son of Man.*

The Greek term in the New Testament is essentially the direct continuation of the Hebrew idea: heaven can mean the physical sky where birds are, the starry heavens or the spiritual dwelling place of God.

Heaven: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3772 *ouranos*; perhaps from the same as #3735 (through the idea of elevation); the sky; by extension, heaven (as the abode of God); by implication, happiness, power, eternity; specially, the Gospel (Christianity):—air, heaven(-ly), sky

Why doesn't the Greek Strong's #3772 indicate the "three layers" of heaven the way the Hebrew Strong's #8064 does? See the Bonus Material for the explanation.

Jesus was the firstborn of all creation:
Colossians 1:16: *For by him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through him and for him.*

Jesus was also the first person to be resurrected from the dead,
Colossians 1:18: *He is also head of the body, the church; and he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he himself will come to have first place in everything.*

This provides clear proof that no human was resurrected before him, including Elijah.

If he didn't go to be with God in heaven, where did he go? And what about the chariot?

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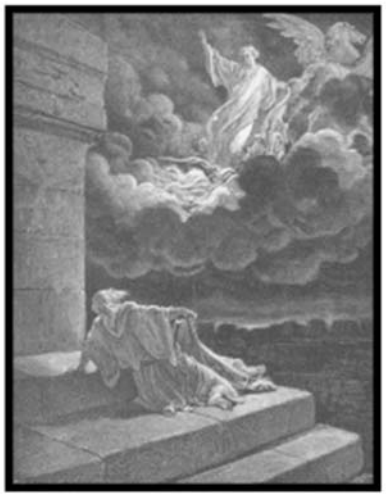
Let's go back to the account:
2 Kings 2:11–12: *11 As they were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven. 12 Elisha saw it and cried out, My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen! And he saw Elijah no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.*

For dramatic visual impact, some of the more famous art pieces show Elijah being carried away in a fiery chariot with horses.



Gustave Doré 1832 – 1883
Elijah's Ascension
engraving c. 1865

Giuseppe Angeli, 1712 – 1798
Elijah Taken Up in a Chariot of Fire
oil on canvas
c. 1740/1755

But the chariot was in between them. The whirlwind is what carried Elijah away, not the fiery chariot and horses.

Why a chariot? This whole thing is a miracle. Perhaps the chariot of fire comes between Elijah and Elisha to protect Elisha from the powerful whirlwind. Perhaps it was a physical indication to Elisha that he was protected, and that he would now have the authority of Elijah. Elijah was going away, and this was a separation that could not be breached.

If Elijah didn't go to the heaven of God's abode, where did he go and how do we know?

There are only two options:

1. He died. This was the end of his life. His work was done, and God removed him, similar to what we saw with Moses.
2. He lived. He was removed from public service as the mighty prophet he had been. His time working as God's spokesperson was over.

The Scriptures aren't clear as to which of the two options is correct. All we know for sure is he was not taken to the heaven of God's abode because Jesus was the first to ascend into heaven.

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Curiously, years later in 2 Chronicles, we are told King Jehoram of Judah received a letter from Elijah.

It indicted the king for his sins and predicted severe punishment:
2 Chronicles 21:11–14: *11 Moreover, he* (King Jehoram) *made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot and led Judah astray. 12 Then a letter came to him from Elijah the prophet saying, Thus says the LORD God of your father David, Because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father and the ways of Asa king of Judah, 13 but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and have caused Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot as the house of Ahab played the harlot, and you have also killed your brothers, your own family, who were better than you, 14 behold, the LORD is going to strike your people, your sons, your wives and all your possessions with a great calamity;*

As usual, what Elijah said was what happened:
2 Chronicles 21:20: *He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years; and he departed with no one's regret, and they buried him in the city of David, but not in the tombs of the kings.*

Here's the controversy:

- In **2 Kings 2**, Elijah is taken up in a whirlwind.
- In **2 Chronicles 21**, years later, King Jehoram of Judah receives a letter from Elijah.

How could Elijah send a letter if he was already dead?

There are several possible explanations. Please see the Bonus Material.

In summary, we don't know if Elijah was just taken off the scene or if his actual life was taken. What we DO know is where he did NOT go (with God in heaven) and how he did NOT get there (in a chariot)!

Living and Dying by the Grace of God:
Whether Elijah died when he was taken by the whirlwind or he was simply removed from his responsibility as a major prophet is really immaterial. No matter which details are accurate, we again see how a faithful man of God was treated by God with honor and respect after his mission was ended.

We want to be careful not to read too much into what is not in Scripture.

The similarities between Moses and Elijah are marked with a certain level of mystery. The bottom line is, God's got it all in His control!

So, what about the Mount of Transfiguration? Doesn't that event change our conclusions about both of these godly men?

The Mount of Transfiguration event was one of great significance. It was so unique and important that, as we shall see, Jesus told Peter, James and John NOT to speak about it until after he himself had risen from the dead. Clearly, the importance of this vision was to be received by Jesus' followers after they were given God's holy spirit to help them comprehend it.

For all the interesting details about the account, please see Episode #1369: "What Really Happened on the Mount of Transfiguration?"

The three accounts of the Transfiguration:
Matthew 17:1–13 (NASB77) Mark 9:2–13 (NASB77) Luke 9:28–36 (NASB77)
We have combined the three accounts to get a comprehensive view of what occured.

> *And some eight days after these sayings, it came about that he took along Peter and John and James, and went up to the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, he was transfigured before them; the appearance of his face became different, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them.*

Transfigured: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3339; *metamorphoo*; to transform (literally or figuratively, "metamorphose")—change, transfigure, transform

Meta (change) *morpho* (form, shape). This Greek root is where we get our English word "metamorphosis," meaning to change or transform. In the Transfiguration scene, Jesus was still Jesus, but he transformed into a glorious representation of himself.

This word is only used in two other places, referring to a transformation from earthly to spiritual: **2 Corinthians 3:18** and **Romans 12:2.**

Romans 12:2: (KJV) *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed <3339> by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

Our own transformation in **Romans 12** is the transforming of a human being into the likeness of Christ as a result of God's spirit working within us. It changes us from conforming to earthly desires to wanting to be like Jesus, a metamorphosis.

We will note an important detail as we read through the account—while it specifically says Jesus was transformed, it does not say the same about Elijah and Moses.

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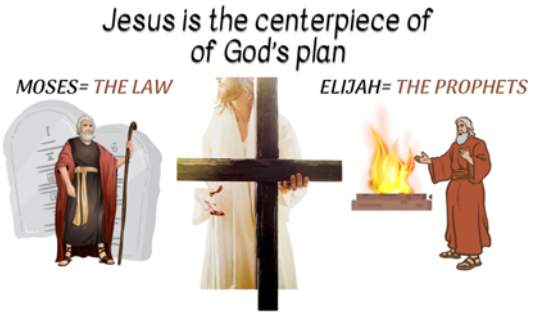
> *And Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus who, appearing in glory, were speaking of his departure which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. And it came about, as these were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.*

This is a vivid vision! Moses and Elijah appear as representations of God's plan working through Jesus as the centerpiece.

> *For he (Peter) did not know what to answer; for they became terrified. And while he was saying this, a cloud formed and began to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My son, My Chosen One; listen to him! And when the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were much afraid.*

It's interesting that both Moses and Elijah died having mysteries surrounding the end of their lives and both appear in this vision. They were two revered people in Jewish history, legendary in their importance to the Jewish nation. But here all the focus is on Jesus.

The heavenly proclamation (*This is My son…*) seems to have been the only audible part of this vision. It focused all the attention on Jesus as THE centerpiece of God's glorious plan! It would now move from the Law and the prophets to the gospel of Christ as the fulfillment of God's plan to redeem all mankind.



Witnessing such glory and hearing such a powerful proclamation can be too much for mere humans to handle. It was scary and overwhelming.

> *And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, Arise, and do not be afraid. And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, except Jesus himself alone. And as they were coming down from the mountain, he gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man should rise from the dead. And they seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead might mean.*

Were the literal Moses and Elijah really there like some of the Bible commentaries allude to? Were they either raised from the dead or pulled out of heaven?

We have already discussed they were not pulled out of heaven—no one was in heaven before Jesus. So, were they raised from the dead?

No! This was a vision.

How do we know? Jesus said so:
Matthew 17:9: *9 As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.*

This word for *vision* is used 12 times in the New Testament. In every instance, it describes something supernatural from God to relay a message.

A vision is like a dream and can seem so real. You can dream of someone who died, but in the dream, it feels like they are right there.

Rick's Experience

When my wife and I were in the early years of our 45-year marriage, I was still working on building our house. Her closet in our bedroom didn't have closet doors yet, but it had three shelves. She had a recurring dream where she saw little men on each shelf running tiny sawmills sawing wood!

One night the dream was so vivid, she grabbed my arm, sat up and said, "Look, there they are! Do you see them? Do you see them?" She was squeezing my arm, "There they are, and they don't look very friendly!"

I just started to laugh, and she finally woke up. The dream seemed so true that she was determined to prove to me it was real.

Experiencing a vision from God must have been overwhelming beyond even the most vivid dream.

The Mount of Transfiguration was a vision with Elijah and Moses who had already died. This is not the only biblical vision to give a representation of someone who had died:
Zechariah 3:1–3: *1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. 2 The LORD said to Satan, The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire? 3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel.*

The word *rebuke* is used again like we saw in the Jude text we quoted about the argument over Moses' body. Here in this vision, God is rebuking Satan over Joshua.

We don't hear of people saying Joshua had been raised from the dead, as this clearly was a vision given to Zechariah:
Joshua 24:29–30: *29 It came about after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being one hundred and ten years old. 30 And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance…*

Joshua had been dead for generations before Zechariah. Again, this was a vision; the literal Joshua was not raised from the dead (or pulled out of heaven) to appear. Having another text showing a vision with someone who died helps put the Mount of Transfiguration in its appropriate perspective.

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The Mount of Transfiguration vision was to show the disciples a snapshot of the glory of God's kingdom and in no way supported the idea that Moses and Elijah were risen beings:

- Moses representing the design of deliverance by God and His Law—Moses delivered the people. Jesus later fulfilled the Law to pay the ransom sacrifice for Adam.
- Elijah representing the support of deliverance—those who stood for and spoke for God's way, meaning the prophets of old (Elijah himself) and those who paved the way for the Messiah (John the Baptist and the true church, both of whom Elijah represented).
- Jesus as the deliverance—the centerpiece of God's plan, the ransom for all.

Living and Dying by the Grace of God:
It is revealing that both Moses and Elijah had secrecy surrounding the end of their lives of service and yet these two men of faith were incredible representations of what their lives meant in the Mount of Transfiguration vision. It is as if God is saying that their personal lives were reverential, direct links to the Messiah who would deliver ALL mankind.

Moses represented the Law (which Jesus would fulfill perfectly). Elijah represented the prophets (with the prophecies of Jesus as the Messiah.) It was about their connection to Messiah the Deliverer.

The Mount of Transfiguration fits very well into the overall account of living and dying and the mysteries God allows us to see in Scripture.

Moses and Elijah were truly great servants of God whose lives, right down to the ending of their contributions, showed us what faith and obedience look like!

So, we've examined the reality of the deaths of Moses and Elijah and have learned some powerful lessons. What about Enoch?

The most dramatic difference with Enoch is how little we know about him. Moses' life is reflected in several Old Testament books and Elijah's life covers many chapters. When it comes to Enoch, we have very few scriptures to rely upon. However, examining these reveals his amazing life. We now need to determine what happened when *God took him*.

Please listen to Episode #1410: "Why is the Book of Enoch Not in the Bible?" We examined the Book of Enoch in relation to the canon of Scripture.

There are only three references to Enoch in the entire Bible.

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We know his genealogy. Enoch was the seventh generation from Adam:
Genesis 5:21–24: *21 Enoch lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Methuselah. 22 Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had other sons and daughters. 23 So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. 24 Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took <3947> him.*

Took: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3947; *laqach*; a primitive root; to take (in the widest variety of applications)

God took him—this is an unusual description. Where did he go?

The Old Testament word for *took* is used over 900 times in the Old Testament. It has a very general meaning, so we can't use that to authentically build a dramatic meaning into such a common word. We would need more scriptural support.

Let's look at two other scriptures to show how broadly *took* is used:
Genesis 2:23: (KJV) *And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken <3947> out of Man.*

She was taken from Adam to become her own person.

Job 1:21: (KJV) *And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away<3947>; blessed be the name of the LORD.*

The Lord gives life. The Lord takes life.

We can see from these two examples that the word is broadly used. We can't draw any specific conclusions from examining the word itself.

The New Testament reveals that Enoch pleased God by faith:
Hebrews 11:5: *By faith Enoch was taken ~~up~~ so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM ~~UP~~* (quoted from **Genesis 5:24**)*; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken ~~up~~ he was pleasing to God.*

The King James Version says he was *translated,* meaning moved from one place to another. The New American Standard Version (1995) says *taken up*. However, the word "up" is not in the original Greek; rather, it was supplied by the translator. This is a little deceptive. We have to be careful of words supplied to fit a preconceived idea.

God *took* him. His body was not found. We know he could not have gone to heaven:
John 3:13: *No one has ascended into heaven, but he who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.*

Again, this is how we know Enoch, Moses and Elijah and anyone else who died before Jesus were not taken up to heaven, meaning the abode of God.

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Another text to describe death:
2 Peter 3:4: *And saying, where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.*

Moses, Elijah and Enoch are still asleep in death, and we need to leave them there until the resurrection! They are *the fathers*.

Enoch warned of judgment. His warnings are quoted by Jude in Jude 1:14–15.
This doesn't relate to our topic today, but we discussed this in detail in Episode #1410.

What does Enoch being *taken* (not "taken up") by God really mean?
Hebrews 11:5: (KJV) *By faith Enoch was translated <3346> that he should not see <1492> death; and was not found, because God had translated <3346> him: for before his translation <3331> he had this testimony, that he pleased God.*

The word for *translated* or *taken* means to transfer, change or remove; to cause a change of place or condition; to transfer from one state to another.

Translated (verb): Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3346; *metatithemi*; to transfer, i.e. (literally) transport, (by implication) exchange (reflexively) change sides, or (figuratively) pervert

Thayer's Greek Lexicon: 1) to transpose (two things, one of which is put in place of the other) 1a) to transfer 1b) to change

This word is used six times in the New Testament. *Translated* seems to give this basic word an unwarranted, mysterious slant.

Removed (noun): Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3331; *metathesis*; from #3346; transposition, i.e. transferal (to heaven), disestablishment (of a law)

Same word, but one is a verb and one is a noun.

Here is another use:
Galatians 1:6: (KJV) *I marvel that ye are <3346> so soon removed <3346> from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:*

Ye are removed—you have been *taken* from being in the gospel of Christ through Paul's teaching, to some other place or state of being where you are now in danger. (Those Paul is talking to were being influenced by Jewish Christians who led them to believe salvation was through Jesus Christ, but only if they kept the Law. This was *another gospel*, not the one he taught them.) There is nothing mysterious about this.

One more example of how the word is used:
Hebrews 12:27: (KJV) *And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing <3331> of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.*

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Interestingly, when we look at the root words, part of the root means "to place in the widest application, literally and figuratively, properly in a passive or horizontal posture… different from… an upright and active position." Perhaps this alludes to Enoch being taken by God in death passively, horizontally, like in his sleep.

#5087 is the root verb behind "taken/translated" in #3346 when combined with the prefix #3326:

Taken: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3326; *meta*; a primary preposition (often used adverbially); properly, denoting accompaniment; "amid"

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #5087; *tithemi*; a prolonged form of a primary *theo* (which is used only as alternate in certain tenses); to place (in the widest application, literally and figuratively; properly, in a passive or horizontal posture, and thus different from 2476, which properly denotes an upright and active position, while 2749 is properly reflexive and utterly prostrate)

Enoch was *taken* by God— not "taken up," but we believe taken passively in death:
Hebrews 11:5: (KJV) *By faith Enoch was translated <3346> that he should not see <1492> death.*

See/Perceive: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1492 *horáō*; (*eido* in King James Version) properly, to stare at (compare 3700), i.e. (by implication) to discern clearly (physically or mentally); by extension, to attend to; by Hebraism, to experience; passively, to appear:—behold, perceive, see, take heed

The word *see <1492>* in this verse means to perceive, to clearly discern; not physically using our eyeballs. "See" in our English translations can have different meanings as they are from different Greek words.

How did Enoch not "see"—perceive, discern—death? Perhaps it was unexpected. God took Enoch's life at a "young" age (365 years) compared to his peers. Compared to Adam (930 years) and Methuselah (969 years), for example, he was very young. Perhaps he didn't anticipate dying so young.

After speaking the Parable of the Sower, Jesus' disciples asked him why he taught in parables. His answer was based on **Isaiah 6:9–10**.

Jesus uses this prophecy to teach us about seeing and perceiving—two separate words:
Matthew 13:14: *14 In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING <991>, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE <1492>;*

Seeing: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #991 *blepō*; a primary verb; to look at (literally or figuratively):—behold, beware, lie, look (on, to), perceive, regard, see, sight, take heed

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You will keep on seeing (with your eyes), *but will not perceive* (understand, comprehend what is happening). Jesus was teaching the basic lessons of seeing and then of elevating ourselves to perceiving.

Hebrews 11:5 says *he* (Enoch) *should not see* (perceive, understand) *death*. Perhaps he died in his sleep or was otherwise not expected to die, by not being injured or sick, etc.

Similarly, we know Moses was seemingly healthy when he died—*his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated* (**Deuteronomy 34:7**).

Living and Dying by the Grace of God:
Moses, Elijah and Enoch all had powerful faith and obedience when it came to following God's will. These three men shared a unique mystery in the ending of their service to God. Not exactly knowing the details of their singular experiences helps us remember that God is sovereign. What He does and how He does it is always for the purpose of the eternal good of His plan. Let us rejoice in what we do know, as God's plan goes grandly forward!

Human nature likes to create drama where it shouldn't be. We want to respect and reverence how the Scriptures are written to show us the lives of these faithful individuals. We appreciate who they were, how they served God, and how God treated them in the context of His plan. Life is life, death is death. Jesus died so that all who died can be raised to life. Enoch, Moses and Elijah were not exceptions to that rule.

So, what really happened to Enoch, Moses and Elijah?
For Rick, Jonathan, Julie and Christian Questions...
...Think about it!

All scriptures cited are from the NASB1995 translation unless otherwise noted.

Next episode

Episode 1414:
Did Jesus Die for Every Single Human Being?

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Bonus Material and Study Questions

Recommended additional study:

Ep.1368: Was Philip Miraculously Transported by the Spirit?
Examining the details of Philips quick exit from the eunuch's company
https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1368-philip/

Ep.1410: Why Is the Book of Enoch NOT in the Bible?
Examining the book of Enoch in relation to the canon of Scripture
https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1410-book-of-enoch/

Ep.1369: What Really Happened on the Mount of Transfiguration?
Discussing the spectacular details of this vision and their meaning
https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1369-mount-of-transfiguration/

For children, parents and Bible class teachers, continue your studies on this topic with these short, animated videos for kids at ChristianQuestions.com/YouTube:

- **What Happened on the Mount of Transfiguration?**
  https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/mount-of-trasfiguration/
- **Why is the Bible so hard to read?**
  https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/video-cq-kids-why-is-the-bible-so-hard-to-read/
- **What happened with Elijah and the priests of Baal?**
  https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/elijah-and-priests-of-baal/

Why doesn't the Greek Strong's #3772 indicate the "three layers" of heaven the way the Hebrew Strong's #8064 does?

Hebrew (#8064 – *shamayim*)

- Notice the "-im" ending. In Hebrew that's a plural ending (like "-s" in English). The word itself is grammatically plural, even when it refers to a single "heaven." It naturally carries the idea of multiple layers or realms of heaven.
- Hebrew cosmology often speaks of "heavens of heavens" (for example, **Nehemiah 9:6**), so the lexicon reflects that layered concept: atmosphere, starry heavens and God's dwelling.

Greek (#3772 – *ouranos*)

- The word is singular and rooted in the idea of "height" or "elevation."
- Greek thought doesn't build the same grammatical layering into the word. Instead, the New Testament context supplies the distinctions (such as Paul's "third heaven" in **2 Corinthians 12:2**).

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- The Strong's definition focuses on "sky, heaven, air" and then extends by implication to "eternity, power, happiness the Gospel." It doesn't list three layers because the Greek term itself doesn't grammatically demand them.

Summary:

- *Shamayim* (#8064): The word is plural with multiple layers implied.
- *Ouranos* (#3772): The word is singular. Layers must be inferred from contextual usage (like "third heaven"), not from the lexicon entry.

How could Elijah send a letter if he was already gone?

Explanation #1:
The whirlwind transported him to another location, like being moved by a tornado, and didn't die. It signaled the end of his public ministry, and he wrote the letter to the king. Similar to what happened to Philip in **Acts 8:39**.

Explanation #2:
Being a prophet of God, Elijah foretold these events of Jehoran's specific sins and had the letter sent years after his own death. God could have directed him what to write in the letter, before those events actually happened.

Explanation #3:
Another possible explanation scholars consider is, whoever wrote Chronicles used Elijah's name to emphasize authority. Elijah's name functions symbolically as the prophetic voice confronting Jehoram's sins. Even though Elijah was gone, his prophetic authority still speaks against idolatry and injustice. Just as Moses represents the Law, Elijah represents the Prophets, and together they symbolize God's unbroken word confronting human rebellion.

Explanation #4: (which we at CQ find reasonable and natural)
Elijah wrote the letter while King Jehoram of Judah reigned, before the whirlwind. The biblical timeline is complex, as the narrative of 2 Kings chapters 1,2 and 3 does not give us the precise sequence. At one point, both Israel in the north and Judah in the south had kings named Jehoram/Joram ruling at the same time (**2 Kings 8:16**). The whirlwind happened during Jehoram of Israel's reign. But Elijah was still alive when Jehoram of Judah came to power.

Elijah could have written the letter to Judah's king before the whirlwind because he was alive during the overlap of both kings. The letter could then have been delivered later (perhaps by Elisha or another prophet), explaining why it appears in the narrative of 2 Chronicles after Elijah's departure. The Bible doesn't say exactly when Jehoram of Judah received Elijah's letter.

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We focus on three kings of the northern kingdom of Israel—namely Ahab, Ahaziah and Jehoram—and the narrative in 2 Kings chapters 1, 2 and 3.

Before 2 Kings, Ahab died and Ahaziah replaced him. Ahaziah then reigned for parts of two years. Ahaziah's reign then ended at the close of 2 Kings 1. Because his reign ended there, then his successor Jehoram necessarily began then, even though the narrative does not yet mention Jehoram.

So, Jehoram was king of Israel by the end of chapter 1. In chapter 2, Jehoram would have been king during the time when Elijah was taken up in a whirlwind.

In what year of Jehoram's reign would this have occurred? The narrative does not specify, but it could have been at any time during the time Jehoram of Israel was ruler.

Later, in **2 Chronicles 21:12**, "There came a writing… from Elijah the prophet," this letter came to the other Jehoram, the king of Judah. Jehoram of Israel came to the throne first. Jehoram of Judah came to the throne during year five of Jehoram of Israel's 12-year reign.

Evidently, Elijah had not yet been taken up in the whirlwind by that time. He was taken up sometime in the reign of Jehoram of Israel (because it was after the passing of his predecessor Ahaziah), but no text specifies when exactly during Jehoram of Judah's reign Elijah was taken up.

It may have been after Jehoram of Israel's fifth year, when Jehoram of Judah reigned as well. In summary, Elijah could have written and sent the letter to the king of Judah before the whirlwind, or it could have been delivered later. This would explain why it appears in Chronicles after Elijah's departure without requiring him to reappear. – *Thank you to CQ volunteer David Rice for this explanation.*

The three gospel accounts of the Mount of Transfiguration from Matthew 17 1–13, Mark 9:1–13, Luke 9:28–37, combined and showing citations:
Matthew 16:28: *Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.* **Matthew 17:1:** *Six days later Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves.* ***Luke 9:28–29*** *28 …to pray. 29 And while he was praying…* **Matthew 17:2:** *…he was transfigured before them…* **Luke 9:29:** *…the appearance of his face became different…* **Matthew 17:2:** *…and his face shone like the sun…* **Mark 9:3:** *and his garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them.* **Luke 9:30–33:** *30 And behold, two men were talking with him; and they were Moses and Elijah, 31 who, appearing in glory, were speaking of his departure which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. 33 And as these were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here;…* **Matthew 17:4:** *…if you wish…* **Luke 9:33:** *…let us make three tabernacles: one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah…* **Mark 9:6:** *For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified.* **Luke 9:34:**

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While he was saying this, a **Matthew 17:5:** *bright* **Luke 9:34:** *cloud formed and began to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.* **Matthew 17:5–9:** *5 …and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, This is My beloved son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to him! 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified. 7 And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, Get up, and do not be afraid. 8 And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. 9 As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.* **Mark 9:10:** *They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant***. Matthew 17:10:** *And his disciples asked him, Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?* **Mark 9:12–13:** *12 And he said to them, Elijah does first come and restore all things. And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that he will suffer many things and be treated with contempt? 13 But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him.* **Matthew 17:13:** *Then the disciples understood that he had spoken to them about John the Baptist.* **Luke 9:36–37:** *36 …And they kept silent, and reported to no one in those days any of the things which they had seen. 37 On the next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him.*

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Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1413: What Really Happened to Enoch, Moses and Elijah? **See:** CQRewind SHOW NOTES
https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1413-enoch-moses-elijah/

1. Moses:
   a. Why might God have chosen to bury Moses in an unknown location? (Deuteronomy 34:4-8)
   b. For what reason might Satan have wanted Moses' body? (Jude 1:8-9)
   c. What would the Israelites have done with Moses' bones? What had God told Moses in Deuteronomy 34:4 that may have led to His hiding of Moses' body? (Genesis 50:24-26, Joshua 24:32)

2. What is the biblical definition of death? (Genesis 2:16-17, Ecclesiastes 9:10, Romans 6:23, 1 Corinthians 15:20-22)

3. What idols or sources of misplaced devotion do you personally need to be wary of in your life? Are you careful to strictly follow Christ rather than a spiritual leader or a tradition?

4. Elijah:
   a. How was Elijah taken and where was he taken? State the two options discussed. (2 Kings 2:1,11-12)
   b. Describe the range of meanings of the words translated "heaven," "the heavens," and "of the sky." (Genesis 1:9, 26, 22:7, Psalm 11:4, 2 Kings 2:1)
   c. How do we know Elijah is not in heaven? (John 3:13, Colossians 1:16,18)
   d. How can we explain Elijah writing a letter to King Jehoram of Judah after Elijah was supposedly dead? (2 Chronicles 21:11-14, Bonus Material)

5. Mount of Transfiguration: Matthew 17:1-13, Mark 9:2-13, Luke 9:28-36
   a. What does "transfigured" or transformed mean? Who was transfigured in this vision?
   b. How did Moses (representing the Law) and Elijah (representing the messages given by the prophets of God) point to Jesus as the fulfillment and centerpiece of God's plan? (Romans 10:4, Acts 3:21, Colossians 1:16-18)
   c. How do we know this was a vision? (Matthew 17:9)

6. Enoch:
   a. What happened to Enoch? (Genesis 5:23,24)
   b. Why was Enoch special? (Hebrews 11:5)

7. Describe a time in your life when God's plan for you seemed mysterious but later revealed His wisdom?