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Reflections

*****This article is written for those who claim heaven is the eternal place and the reward of the saved*****

Opening

A number of “*Ministers*” have confronted me and heavily criticized me because I do not believe any one ***has or will*** go to heaven while millions of *christians* today believe they will go there. But what does Scripture say? Is heaven really the “reward of the saved”?

My friend Ugo was a teenager when his father died. He was devastated because he loved his dad. He remembered the times when he walked beside his dad with his little fingers clutching his father's much larger hand. He couldn't help but wonder why a loving “*God*” would allow his father to die prematurely, before his time. It just didn't make sense. His anger turned him away from the “*God*” that he had learned about in Sunday school. “*If God works this way, I want nothing to do with him*”, he lamented. He sought answers from his *pastor*, but the man said he didn't understand it either, “*that God worked in mysterious ways*”. This didn't help Ugo get over his anger. After a few years, he simply gave up in frustration with the thought that there was no answer as to why or where “*God*” took his father. Sometimes, thinking his father was up in heaven and could somehow hear him, Ugo would try to talk to his dad—but, as always, there was no response. Little did he know that what the Scriptures reveal about where his father went and his father's future were quite different from what he had been taught.

Brothers and sisters, we are commended just like the Bereans to check out what we are taught by searching the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). This article is for those who wish to search dilligently to learn whether this commonly held idea is true. Join me to take a look at this subject using textual, contextual and historical evidence.

Textual and Contextual Evidence

HARV- ACTS 2:29,34 "...Dauid ... is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. "For Dauid did not ascend into the heavens"

Was King Dauid among the righteous? Consider Acts 13:22; II Chronicles 7:17; 28:1; 29:2; 34:2. Where is Dauid? Is he in heaven?

HARV- YOCHANAN 3:13 "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven."

Who has gone to heaven? No one, but the Son of Man, according to this verse.

HARV- ECCLESIASTES 9:5-6,10 ...But the dead know nothing ... Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished... there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.

Are the dead conscious? Do they have emotional awareness? Obviously not!

HARV- MATITHYAHU 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven." LUKE 6:20 ... "Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of Elahym."

Is there a difference between the "kingdom of heaven" and the "kingdom of Elahym"? Obviously they are the same!

HARV- MATITHYAHU 5:12 "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven. Revelation 22:12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

What is in heaven? Does this verse say we go to heaven to receive the reward? Our reward is the Mashiaich Him self! He is coming back, specifically; He will descend on the Mount of Olives.

HARV- MATITHYAHU 25:31-34 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those of His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world....'"

When do the righteous receive their inheritance? Consider Revelation 11:15-18 and 22:12 as well. What is the inheritance? Where is the inheritance? Is it in heaven?

HARV- I CORINTHIANS 15:50-52 ...flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of Elahym ... we shall all be changed -- in a moment ... at the last shofar. For the shofar will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

What must first occur before anyone inherits the kingdom? Has the resurrection taken place yet? Has anyone inherited the kingdom? Where are the dead waiting for the resurrection?

REVELATION 21:2-3 Then I, Yochanon, saw the set apart city, New Yerushalaim, coming down out of heaven from Elahym.... And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold the tabernacle of Elahym is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and Yahuah Himself will be with them and be their Elahym."

Historical evidence. Did Eliyahu go to Heaven?

A Scriptural event often cited to support the belief that the righteous go to heaven when they die involves the prophet Eliyahu. He was a prophet of Elahym in the ninth century B.D. Scripture states that Eliyahu went up by a whirlwind into heaven *2 Kings 2:11 2 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 Eliyahu went up by a whirlwind into heaven.* But does this contradict the words of Yahusha, which stated some 900 years after Eliyahu's time: *HARV- Yahuchanon 3:13. "NO MAN has ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, the Son of Man who is from heaven.*

If the saved go to heaven when they die, why did Kefa (Peter) say that King Daud (David), a man after Yahuah's own heart *Acts 13:22 "is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. . . . For Daud is NOT ascended into the heavens"*? Also read Acts 2:29-34.

How can we explain this seemingly discrepancy? A closer look shows that the two passages can be reconciled easily. Careful study shows that three "heavens" are actually discussed in Scripture. One is the Father's dwelling place—the place of His throne—and the heaven where the resurrected Mashiach is today. Speaking of Mashiach, who is our High Priest, the Scripture says, "We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" *Hebrews 8:1 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;*

Heaven is specifically called Yahuah's dwelling place *Deuteronomy 26:15 Look down from thy set apart habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Yashrael, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou promised unto our fathers, a land that flows with milk and honey.*

Shaul (Paul) calls this heaven the "third heaven" *2 Corinthians 12:2 I knew a man in Mashiach above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: Elahym knows; such an one caught up to the third heaven.* showing, as noted, that there are two others. It's described as the "third" because, being in the spirit realm, it is beyond the other two, which are in the physical realm.

Another heaven discussed in Scripture, second in proximity to us, is what we call outer space. It is the domain of the moon, planets, comets, asteroids, sun and stars. Daud spoke of this when he reflected on the awesomeness of Elahym creative handiwork, which he described as "Your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have ordained" *Psalms 8:3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained.* Many scriptures mention "the stars of heaven" (Genesis 26:4; Deuteronomy 1:10; 28:62; Isaiah 13:10).

Yet another heaven, closest to us in proximity, is the envelope of air that surrounds our planet, consisting of oxygen and other gases. This heaven—earth's atmosphere—is mentioned in passages such as *Berishit (Genesis) 7:11-12, In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. ¹²And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.* This describes the great flood of Noah's day: "The windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was on the earth forty nights and forty days." The Scripture also speaks of "the birds of heaven," those that fly overhead: *Job 35:11 Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth, and makes us wiser than the fowls of heaven; Jeremiah 16:4 They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth..*

To determine which heaven is meant in a Scripture passage, we must carefully consider the entire context. It was into the lower reaches of this first, closest heaven—the earth's atmosphere—that Eliyahu was taken. Let's look at the proof. Elahym had earlier told Eliyahu he was to anoint a man named Elisha as a prophet to succeed him *1 Kings 19:16 And Yehu the son*

of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Yashrael: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. Later, as the two men walked together, Eliyahu said to Elisha, "What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?" **2 Kings 2:9** *And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Eliyahu 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.* This led to a discussion of Elahym's gifts to Elisha that would allow him to fill Eliyahu's role. "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 Eliyahu went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (verse 11). Eliyahu was now gone. The former followers and students of Eliyahu were now to look to Elisha as their new leader. "Now when the sons of the prophets who were from Yericho saw him, they said, 'The spirit of Eliyahu rests on Elisha'" **2 Kings 2:15** *And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Yericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Eliyahu doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him.* Many readers assume that Eliyahu at that point was made immortal and taken to the heaven where Elahym resides. This was not the case. The sons of the prophets knew otherwise. They knew the whirlwind had simply removed Eliyahu to another location on earth. They exclaimed to Elisha: "Look now, there are fifty strong men with your servants. Please let them go and search for your master, lest perhaps the Spirit of the Yahuah has taken him up and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley" (**2 Kings 2:16**). The disciples were concerned for Eliyahu's safety, so they sent out a party of 50 men to search for him. The 50 searched for three days but did not find him (**2 Kings 2:17**).

Another passage proves conclusively that Eliyahu was not taken up to live in heaven. Scripture records that Eliyahu wrote a letter to Yehoram, the king of Yahudah, several years after he was removed in the whirlwind. Notice the sequence of events recorded for us in the Scripture. Eliyahu's last recorded and dated act occurred during the reign of King Ahaziah when Eliyahu told the King he would die for his sins (**2 Kings 1:3, 17**). Ahaziah's reign lasted only about a year, ca. 850 B.C. Eliyahu's removal and replacement by Elisha is then recorded in the next chapter, **2 Kings 2**. The story continues with incidents from Elisha's life, including an encounter with Yehoshaphat, king of Yahudah (**2 Kings 3:11-14**). Several years later Yehoram, son of Yehoshaphat, succeeded his father as king of Yahudah, ca. 845 B.C. (**2 Kings 8:16**).

Yehoram proved to be a wicked King, leading the nation of Yahudah in rebellion against Yahuah's commandments. A few years into Yehoram's reign, and several years after Eliyahu's removal, Yehoram received a letter from Eliyahu warning the king of dire consequences because of his sins. This letter is recorded in **2 Chronicles 21:12-15** *12 And there came a writing to him from Eliyahu the prophet, saying, Thus saith Yahuah Elahym of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Yehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Yahudah, 13But hast walked in the way of the kings of Yashrael, and hast made Yahudah and the inhabitants of Yerushalaim to go a whoring, like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house, which were better than thyself: 14 Behold, with a great plague will Yahuah smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods: 15And thou shalt have great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day.*

This letter proves that the prophet was still alive and on earth some years after he was removed by the whirlwind and replaced by Elisha. Elahym had chosen Elisha to succeed Eliyahu as His

prophet, so He bodily removed Eliyahu to another place, where he continued to live for at least several more years—as his letter to Yehoram demonstrates.

The Scripture tells us nothing more about Eliyahu's life following his writing of the letter. But he eventually died, just like the other prophets and righteous men of the Tanach, who all died in faith, not yet receiving the eternal life Elahym had promised (Hebrews 11:39).

Again, a careful reading of the Scriptures shows that Eliyahu's miraculous removal by a fiery chariot involved transporting him to another location on earth, not to eternal life in heaven.

Historical evidence. Did Hanok (Enoch) go to Heaven?

Some people believe Genesis 5:24 and Hebrews 11:5 declare that Elahym took Enoch to heaven. But is that what these verses say? Genesis 5:24 tells us that "Enoch walked with Elahym; and he was not, for Elahym took him." Hebrews 11:5 adds: "By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, 'and was not found, because Elahym had taken him; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased Elahym."

Some erroneously jump to the conclusion that Enoch was taken up into heaven, but notice the Scripture nowhere says this. It simply says that Elahym "took him." It does not specify *where* he was taken. Yahusha later states in the Besorah of Yochanan that "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). One of the points He makes is that one passage of Scripture cannot contradict another passage. This same Besorah of Yochanan reveals a startling fact very pertinent to this matter: "*No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven*" (John 3:13). Clearly, the Mashiach was the only one who had ascended into heaven. The phrase "who is in heaven" lets us know that this was written by Yochanan after Mashiach's return to heaven. So even as late as this statement, no human being—and that includes Enoch—had ascended into heaven. We later read about Enoch's fate in ***Hebrews 11:5*** ***By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, 'and was not found, because Elahym had taken him'; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased Elahym.*** The word rendered "taken" can also mean "transferred elsewhere." Some modern translations say: this was done "***so that he would not see death***"—a better translation than "***did not***," as we know from the same chapter of Hebrews that he died. Notice in verse 13 the summary given of all of the men and women of faith listed here, including Enoch: ***Hebrews 11:13 "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*** So Enoch definitely died as well as all the rest. How, then, can it be that Enoch was transferred elsewhere so he wouldn't see death? Elahym doesn't give us all the details of what happened, but a few scenarios have been proposed that do not conflict with the fact that Enoch died as Scripture says. It may be that Elahym transported Enoch elsewhere to keep him from being killed at a certain time—perhaps protecting him from martyrdom at the hands of angry persecutors who didn't like his announcement of coming judgment (see Jude 14-16). Elahym likewise supernaturally transported Eliyahu and Philip to other places on earth (see 2 Kings 2:11; Acts 8:39). On the other hand, we should observe that Enoch died young for his time—at age 365 while those before and after him lived into their 800s and 900s. Because of this, some speculate that Elahym "took him" from life prematurely so that he would not have to live out his remaining centuries in a miserable world (compare Yashayahu 57:1-2). His next moment of consciousness will be the resurrection. In this case, "so that he would not see death" would refer

to his not having to experience the process of dying—his life ending instantly. Still others, putting the likelihood of Enoch experiencing persecution together with his early death, have concluded that Enoch was murdered—martyred for his preaching. Enoch being taken and not found would then refer to Elahym removing his body and burying it—as happened with Mosheh (Deuteronomy 34:5-6). In this case, Enoch being taken or transferred so that he would not see death is taken as separate matter—that of him being spiritually converted, transferred from the world's ways to Elahym's way of living, so that he would not see ultimate death, (compare Colossians 1:13; John 8:51). Again, we don't have enough details to know exactly what is intended. But we do know that Enoch did not skip death and go to heaven. He died, and no human being has ascended to heaven except Yahusha Ha Mashiach.

Historical evidence. Did Philip go to Heaven?

Acts 8:39-40 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of Yahuah caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

Obviously Phillip was translated to another place without having to go to heaven, just like the compelling evidence we have shown with the case of Eliyahu and Enoch.

Do Christians go to Heaven?

Christian practices are a blend of some good ideas attached to old pagan observances in order to camouflage them from their origins. *Christian* practices are a hybrid blending of a diverse number of pagan religions. History records that many of the ideas concerning heaven have come from the ancient religions.

*****The Egyptian Book of the Dead, prescribed spells, incantations, prayers, charms and amulets to help the dead man overcome the dangers of the That and to reach Sekhet Aaru and Sekhet Hetep - other names for the Egyptian heaven - to take his place among the subjects of Osiris in the "Land of Everlasting Life" (E. A. Wallis Budge, The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians, pp. 40-41)*****

The original Congregation clearly did not teach the concept of "going to heaven." Such teachings did not become popular until after the death of the Emissaries! History shows that the teachings of the "Catholic Church" fathers, Clement of Alexandria and others gradually turned away most believers from the literal 1000 year reign on earth. Notice what happened: Hellenistic philosophy, which had borrowed heavily from ancient Egyptian mythology, began to be taught instead of the teachings of Scripture as the source of doctrine! Prevailing concepts such as the immortality of the soul, an ever-burning hell, purgatory and heaven all came directly out of ancient mythology! The church, to become more acceptable to potential converts, adopted and taught these pagan philosophies rather than the plain and pure teachings! Today, the idea of heaven being the "reward of the saved" is nearly universal among mainstream *Christianity*. The fact is, *christianity* has not yet realized they are not in Covenant with Yahuah, having never "engrafted" into true Yashrael by faithfully living according to the Covenant. Until they stop and realize this basic fact, they will keep teaching false doctrines, putting up christmas trees, hunting

for bloody red easter eggs, etc. This faith is entirely intellectual, and not practiced according to what pleases Yahuah, but instead they follow pagan practices, concealed in new meanings. The Kingdom of Heaven is coming to earth in the Person of Yahusha ha Mashiach, and for those not in His Covenant, it will be a very scary and catastrophic day. *I do have to ask the question...what does christianity has to do with this subject? ABSOLUTLEY NOTHING!*

Will anybody go to Heaven?

2 Corinthians 5:6-8 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Yahuah: 7(For we walk by faith, not by sight:) 8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Yahuah.

For many people what the phrase "to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Yahuah", means is that when one dies is immediately with the Him. However, a careful reading shows that this is not what the passage says. Really, what it says is that "WE ARE WILLING to be absent from the body, AND PRESENT WITH HIM". The phrase "we are willing" shows that the passage states a will, a wish, which is not a wish to die but a wish "to be absent from the body and present with Yahuah". Though a full and clear picture of what this phrase means will be possible only after the examination of its context, we can from the outset preclude that it could never mean that when one dies he is immediately in heaven for in a case like this, there would be a stark contradiction with *I Thessalonians 4:15-17 For this we say to you by the word of the Yahuah, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of Yahuah will by no means precede those which are asleep. For Yahuah himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the shophar of Elahym: and the dead Mashiach will rise first: Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Master in the air: AND THUS i.e. by this way, the resurrection of the dead and the changing of the body of the alive ones we SHALL always be with the Master."*

If in II Corinthians 5:6-8 Yahuah said that when one dies he is immediately with the Him, then how could in I Thessalonians 4:17 the same Yahuah say that "AND THUS (i.e. by the resurrection, and the changing of the bodies) we SHALL always be with the Yahuah?" Obviously either the Scripture is wrong, which is impossible, or the interpretation that is usually given to II Corinthians 5:6-8 is wrong. As we can see by studying the context, the latter is the case. Thus starting from II Corinthians 4:13 - about fifteen verses earlier - we read: *II Corinthians 4:13-14----- We having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, I believed, and therefore I spoke; we also believe, and therefore speak; Knowing that he who raised up the Master shall raise up us also by Mashiach, and shall present us with you."*

Conclusion

It does not matter how many preachers are able to hypnotize their audiences with fairy tails, what matters is the unadulterated, compelling evidence found in Scripture, using a textual, contextual and historical analysis, and most important the words our Savior uttered him self!

HARV-Yahuchanon 3:13. "NO MAN has ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, the Son of Man which is from heaven.

For those who love the truth, this verse should be more than enough, for the skeptic, a whole article such as this has to be written.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this topic further, contact us at:
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We welcome edifying teachings and corrections based on Scripture.

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