

The Saints Do Not Spend the Millennium in Heaven

By Raymond C. Faircloth

One unusual teaching is that the saints are raptured to heaven and that they remain there for the duration of the thousand years. As proof Revelation 21:9, 10 is quoted where John is told to:

- ❖ “Come hither, I will shew thee **the bride**, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great **city**, the holy Jerusalem, **descending out of heaven** from God...” (Rev. 21:9, 10).

However, this cannot be a literal descent from heaven because the saints are shown in Revelation to be on earth acting as priests during the thousand years.

The Saints Will Be on Earth for the Millennium

- ❖ “And hast made us unto our God kings and **priests**: and we shall **reign on the earth**” (Rev. 5:10).
- ❖ “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be **priests** of God and of Christ, and shall **reign with him a thousand years**” (Rev. 20:6).

Descending From Heaven Is Often Figurative Language

JESUS' FLESH AS BREAD FROM HEAVEN

- ❖ “For the bread of God is the one who comes (*present tense*) down from heaven” (John 6:33).
- ❖ “I have come down from heaven” (John 6:38, 42).
- ❖ “I am the bread that came down from heaven” (John 6:41, 58).
- ❖ “I am the living **bread** that **came down from heaven**; if anyone eats of this bread he will live forever; and for a fact, the **bread** that I shall give is **my flesh** in behalf of the world” (John 6:51).

However, it is the human Jesus (*my flesh*) who metaphorically “comes down from heaven” in the sense of his being God’s provision for salvation. Certainly a **flesh body** did not literally descend from heaven because Jesus came into existence only in Mary. See Matthew 1:1, 18 and Luke 1:32, 35.

THE CONTEXT: Concerning God’s miraculously feeding their ancestors with the manna at verse 31 Jesus says: “He gave them *bread from heaven* to eat.” Yet the manna was not literally sent from God’s throne in heaven. At Exodus 16:4 God speaks **figuratively** of “*raining down bread for you from the heavens*” but what happens in reality is:

- ❖ “...the layer of dew evaporated and here upon the surface of the wilderness there was a fine flaky thing upon the earth” (Ex. 16:14).

Similarly, Jesus’ “*coming down from heaven*” means **his being God’s provision for everlasting (*permanent*) life**, in contrast to the bread that came through Moses (verse 32) the eating of which did not give them permanent life (verse 49). There is a past and present aspect to it. Here Jesus is also stating that he is now the only channel through which life may be had—he supersedes Moses. Similar statements of things that figuratively “come down from heaven” are found in the following texts:

GIFTS FROM HEAVEN

- ❖ “Every good gift and every perfect present is **from above**, for it *comes down from* the Father ... the wisdom **from above** is...” (Jas. 1:16, 3:17).

BAPTISM FROM HEAVEN

- ❖ “Was the baptism of John **from heaven** or from men?” (Luke 20: 4).
This really asks the question: Did this baptism originate with God? Of course, there were no baptisms literally in heaven that could come down to earth.

The Bride Descending Out of Heaven Is Figurative Language

- ❖ “Come hither, I will shew thee **the bride**, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great **city**, the holy Jerusalem, **descending out of heaven** from God...” (Rev. 21:9, 10).

As with the above examples this, too, as with much of Revelation, is a case of figurative language to show that, as a New Creation, the body of Christians is “born from above” (John 3:3) so that it has a divine origin rather than there being any literal descending.

The Rapture Does Not Mean Going to Heaven

“...and to wait for His Son **from** heaven” (1 **Thess.** 1:10).

- ❖ “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we **which are alive** and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall **descend from heaven** with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up (*Gk. Harpagmon = **snatched up***) together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord **in the air**: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 *Thess.* 4:15-17).

This is in a narrative of prophetic statements which are of literal events. Also the Greek verb *harpagmon* was translated in the early Latin bibles as *rapere* from which we get the English noun ‘rapture.’ This *being caught up* is **in the air** (Greek *aira*) that is: **the atmosphere immediately above earth’s surface**. Bauer’s Greek/English lexicon. These verses mainly concern the resurrection, yet Paul adds an extra aspect in speaking of the rapture. Yet there is no thought of going to heaven in this verse. So the phrase “*thus we shall always be with the Lord*” is because they accompany Jesus as he continues his descent to earth. Hence, Jesus speaks of his own return when he says in John 14:3 “*I will come again.*”

So the literal sequence at the Last Day is:

- 1) The descent of Jesus.
- 2) The resurrection to immortality of dead Christians.
- 3) The change to immortality of living Christians: “*We shall be changed*”(1Cor. 15:52, 53).
- 4) The being “*snatched up*” into **earth’s atmosphere** of both the resurrected and the *changed* living Christians so as to meet the descending Lord.

Summary

For three reasons Revelation 21:9, 10: cannot be a literal descent of Christians from heaven:

1. The saints act as priests on earth during the millennium according to Revelation 5 and 20.
2. The phrase “out of heaven” in this context is of figurative language.
3. The rapture is a lifting up only into earth’s atmosphere.