

V. — The Prolonged Life of the Ancients, the Translation of Elijah and of Enoch in Their Own Bodies, as Well as the Preservation of Jonah, of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the Midst of Extreme Peril, Are Clear Demonstrations That God Can Raise up Our Bodies to Life Eternal.

1. [In order to learn] that bodies did continue in existence for a lengthened period, as long as it was God's good pleasure that they should flourish, let [these heretics] read the Scriptures, and they will find that our predecessors advanced beyond seven hundred, eight hundred, and nine hundred years of age; and that their bodies kept pace with the protracted length of their days, and participated in life as long as God willed that they should live. But why do I refer to these men? **For Enoch, when he pleased God, was translated in the same body in which he did please Him, thus pointing out by anticipation the translation of the just. Elijah, too, was caught up [when he was yet] in the substance of the [natural] form; thus exhibiting in prophecy the assumption of those who are spiritual, and that nothing stood in the way of their body being translated and caught up.** For by means of the very same hands through which they were moulded at the beginning, did they receive this translation and assumption. For in Adam the hands of God had become accustomed to set in order, to rule, and to sustain His own workmanship, and to bring it and place it where they pleased. Where, then, was the first man placed? In paradise certainly, **as the Scripture declares "And God planted a garden [paradisum] eastward in Eden, and there He placed the man whom He had formed." (Gen 2:8) And then afterwards when [man] proved disobedient, he was cast out thence into this world. Wherefore also the elders who were disciples of the apostles tell us that those who were translated were transferred to that place (for paradise has been prepared for righteous men, such as have the Spirit;** in which place also Paul the apostle, when he was caught up, heard words which are unspeakable as regards us in our present condition [2Co_12:4]), and that there shall they who have been translated remain until the consummation [of all things], as a prelude to immortality.

2. If, however, any one imagine it impossible that men should survive for such a length of time, and **that Elijah was not caught up in the flesh, but that his flesh was consumed in the fiery chariot, let him consider that Jonah, when he had been cast into the deep, and swallowed down into the whale's belly, was by the command of God again thrown out safe upon the land. (Jon 2:10) And then, again, when Ananias, Azarias, and Misael were cast into the furnace of fire sevenfold heated, they sustained no harm whatever, neither was the smell of fire perceived upon them.** As, therefore, the hand of God was present with them, working out marvelous things in their case — [things] impossible [to be accomplished] by man's nature — what wonder was it, if also in the case of those who were translated it performed something wonderful, **working in obedience to the will of God,** even the Father? Now this is the Son of God, as the Scripture represents Nebuchadnezzar the king as having said, "Did not we cast three men bound into the furnace? And, lo, I do see four walking in the midst of the fire, and the fourth is like the Son of God." (Dan_3:19-25) **Neither the nature of any created thing, therefore, nor the weakness of the flesh, can prevail against the will of God. For God is not subject to created things but created things to God; and all things yield obedience to His will.** Wherefore also the Lord declares, "The things which are impossible with men, are possible with God." (Luk_18:27) As, therefore, it might seem to the men of the present day, **who are ignorant of God's appointment,** to be a thing incredible and impossible that any man could live for such a number of years, yet those who were before us did live [to such an age], and those who were

translated do live as an earnest of the future length of days; and [as it might also appear impossible] that from the whale's belly and from the fiery furnace men issued forth unhurt, yet they nevertheless did so, **led forth as it were by the hand of God, for the purpose of declaring His power: so also now, although some, not knowing the power and promise of God, may oppose their own salvation, deeming it impossible for God, who raises up the dead; to have power to confer upon them eternal duration, yet the scepticism of men of this stamp shall not render the faithfulness of God of none effect.**

~Irenaeus- Against Heresies BookV Vol. 1