

## THE THIRD HEAVEN OF WHICH PAUL SPEAKS IN SECOND CORINTHIANS

Remember: Scripture first... Experience, feelings, and speculation a distant 2nd.



**2 Corinthians 12:1-10**, *"I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> And I know that this man-whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows - <sup>4</sup> was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell. <sup>5</sup> I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. <sup>6</sup> Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, <sup>7</sup> or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. <sup>8</sup> Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. <sup>9</sup> But he said to me, "My*

*grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. <sup>10</sup> That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."*

I think the man that Paul speaks about who was caught up to the 3rd heaven was Paul himself (remember that he is trying to show the Corinthians his credentials as a servant of the most High God... a follower, yet an authorized speaker for Jesus Christ in his time).

For the person that tries to understand beyond what man can comprehend, it is more than one can imagine. For a person like this, the great aim of all religious experience is the vision of God and union with him.

**For this type of person he/she always aims at that moment of wonder when "the seer and the Seen are one."**

**Traditionally, the Jews stated in historical documents that there were four (4) rabbis that had this vision of God:**

- 1. Ben Azai... had seen the glory and died**
- 2. Ben Soma... beheld it and went mad**
- 3. Acher... saw it and went on a rampage to tear up the Garden of God... Paradise. He became a heretic.**
- 4. Akiba... alone ascended in peace and in peace came back.**

**Note: Understand, the above documents are not mentioned in the Word of God. It is just found in the historical documents of the Jews.**

**We can't even guess what happened to Paul... We can only speculate: How many heavens... Paul mentions the 3rd heaven...**

He simply means that his spirit rose to an unsurpassable ecstasy in being near the Most High God.

**However, it's important to make a distinction between the eternal state and the current heaven. When a believer dies, he or she goes to heaven (spirit and soul), but that is not our final destination. The Bible speaks of "a new heaven and a new earth" (Revelation 21) as**

**our eternal, permanent home (each of us with a new immortal body).**

**My interpretation: Paul speaks of the 3rd heaven.**

**1st heaven = The heaven created by God called "heaven" (Genesis 1, KJV)... "firmament called heaven."**

**2nd heaven = where we will go until the end of the 7 year tribulation**

**3rd heaven = the new heaven and new earth spoken of in**

### **Revelation 21**

Note: In the Scripture, Paul speaks about Paradise.

Paradise comes from a Persian word meaning "walled-garden." When a Persian King wished to confer a very special honor on someone, he made him a companion of the garden... and gave him a right to walk in the royal gardens with him in conversation and companionship as a friend.

**I speculate that in this experience, as never before, Paul had been the companion of God.**

**There is another verse of which Paul speaks of "heavens" (plural).**

Ephesians 4:10, *"He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe."*

So... again, we can speculate... but, we must stay within the inside borders of Scripture. All other documents and man's guesses have, in many cases, shown a lack of authenticity.

I have on many occasions had to say to myself, "Gerald, does Scripture go along with what you believe?"

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