



SEEKERS of TRUTH

By Edward H. Goit, Sr.

Question:

Would you please explain 2 Corinthians 12:2? What, or where, is paradise, as in Luke 23:43 and 2 Corinthians 12:4?

Answer:

Second Corinthians 12:1-4 is often presented as a positive proof that men can receive visions and revelations while in a disembodied state. This is contrary to Scripture. Man does not exist, or have thoughts, in a disembodied state. God's Word declares: "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" (Psa. 146:4). The phrase "out of the body" (v. 2) suggests, upon a casual reading, a disembodied state. However, when we thoroughly examine this statement in its context (2 Cor. 10-13), we arrive at a different understanding.

In reviewing the foregoing chapters, I note that Paul is answering some critics who were questioning his apostleship. They had accused him of being a fool, an impostor, and a reprobate who was outside the body of Christ. (See 1 Cor. 4:3; 9:1-3; 2 Cor. 10:7; 11:6, 12-16, 23; 12:11, 12; 13:3, 6.) No doubt the man to whom Paul refers in verse 2 is himself, as verses 4 and 7 indicate.

Consider the following paraphrasing of Paul's defense: "You have belittled me and called me a fool. I am no fool. It is not expedient for me to glory, but I will show you one who has reason to glory, because he has received visions and revelations from the Lord. I knew a man fourteen years ago, whether in Christ's body or not, I cannot tell. *God knows*. You have said that I am beside myself, and not in the body of Christ. This I will leave to God (2 Cor. 5:13). However, I will glory in this. I was favored and caught up in a vision to the third heaven, or paradise. There God revealed to me his grand purpose to restore paradise and its glory. You seek proof that Christ is speaking through me. You should be examining yourselves, not me, to see if you are truly in the faith" (2 Cor. 13:5).

Paradise existed when God created the earth, before Adam's sin. Paradise will be restored when the earth is made new. The earth has been cursed because of sin, and awaits "the times of restitution" (Rom. 8:22; Acts 3:21). The third heaven of 2 Corinthians 12 is not the third of three heavens which is stacked upon two lower heavens, like the top layer of a three-layer cake. *It refers to time, not to place*. It is the new heavens and new earth of 2 Peter 3:5-7, 13- that *future paradise* of God.

John, on the Isle of Patmos, saw a vision of "things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. 1:1). Likewise, Paul saw his visions and revelations, as he was "conveyed away" (2 Cor. 12:4, Diag.) to the paradise which will exist when Jesus comes into his kingdom at his second coming. He saw glories of the age to come, to which he found it impossible to give expression. Those glories were unspeakable and beyond the comprehension of mortal men.

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