



BIBLE TALK

Mike King

Question: Was Paul speaking of himself in 2 Cor. 12:2-4?

Answer: The passage in question says, *“I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows-- such a one caught up to the third heaven...how that he was caught up to the third heaven...and heard inexpressible words...not lawful for man to utter”* (2 Cor. 12:2-4).

Though Paul would not glory, yet he spoke of visions and revelations others could not have known. It was therefore his personal experience. *“Whether in the body, or out of the body,”* must have referred to whether or not he was then alive or dead! Paul knew he was in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), but this referred to an event over fourteen years prior. This would put the event about the time when Paul was stoned and left for dead outside Lystra (Acts 14:19-20). My judgment is that Paul referred to this time when he had the vision and did not know if the spirit remained in or out of his body,

Paul in this vision was caught up to the third heaven. This was above the air where clouds are; and beyond the realm of the sun, moon, and stars; and into the realm of the home of God. This was the concept of the Jews, regarding the first, second, and third heaven. In the third heaven, there were said to him things that he could not reveal to others, for he heard unspeakable words. We could go afield speculating on the nature of this revelation; and Paul was not allowed to reveal it! Paul had other visions in times of stress and trial, when the Lord spoke to Him (Acts. 22:17-27; 27:23-25; etc.). It too, is interesting to note that in the context of this statement, Paul said, *“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in my flesh was given to me”* (2 Cor. 12:6-7). Paul wanted to glory about the vision, but God prevented his doing so.

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