

“THE RAPTURE OF PAUL”
2 Corinthians 12:1-6

INTRODUCTION

The difficulties that Paul had experienced seemed to be only things he could have survived supernaturally. They were circumstances even worse than Job's! The next event that Paul shared was *not* suffering. It was his trip to heaven and back! Unfortunately today there are many false teachers and bad books about Christian topics, such as *The Shack*, *Jesus Calling*, *The Prayer of Jabez*. Some questionable books are even about going to heaven. While some may have had a supernatural experience, they may not have been a real visit to heaven. (One book that was written about heaven was later admitted to be fake by the author). It is always important to compare these writings with scripture.

VISIONS AND REVELATIONS

As a part of his letter to the Corinthians, Paul shares his visions (things he saw with his eyes) and revelations (things he saw, heard or had clarified). Paul had many: **Acts 9** – of Jesus; **Galatians 1** – he was in Arabia; **Acts 16**, **Acts 18** – encouragement; **Acts 22** – a trance in the temple; **Acts 23** – Be of good cheer; **Acts 27** – an angel encourages him. To remain “anonymous” Paul refers to himself as “a man”. Rabbis often did this so they wouldn't talk about themselves. Some try to sensationalize their experience, but not Paul. He is not boasting, but sharing the truth. Judge him by his life. So that the revelations of God didn't puff Paul up, the Lord allowed a demonic spirit to buffet him and keep him humble.

Some feel that the time of Paul's rapture was at Lystra in **Acts 14** when he was stoned to death. However the writing of **2 Corinthians** was before this event in Lystra. The event may well have taken place in his hometown of Tarsus. Paul wasn't allowed to share this information before this letter. He said he was “caught up” *harpazo*, seized or taken away. This is the same as **1 Thes. 4:16-17**. There are 8 raptures in scripture: Enoch, Elijah, Isaiah, Jesus (**Rev. 12:5**), Philip, the 2 Witness and Paul. One day it will happen to the Church! Because Paul can't tell if he is in the body or not, his self-consciousness is completely eclipsed! His focus was totally on the Lord!

DESTINATION HEAVEN

Where did Paul go? To Heaven! The first heaven is the atmosphere, second is outer space and the third is where God dwells, heaven or paradise! Paul was not able to describe it. Experiencing this may have been a great motivation considering all that he went through. Paul realized that being with Jesus was the best place of all, but he knew he still had things to do in his earthly ministry. Cf. **Phil. 1:23-24**, **Romans 8:18**, **2 Cor. 4:17**.

CONSIDER

It is important to be discerning of the books that we read concerning Biblical topics such as heaven. Heaven is real! (Jesus went to heaven when he died, not hades). We may all experience the rapture. It could be at any moment! The great question is, “Are you in Christ and will you go in the rapture?” It is the blessed hope of the believer! Are you living with the expectancy that this could be your *last day* on earth?

PRAY.....

- * That the Lord would unite us in prayer for a spiritual awakening in New York State!
- * That our Christmas Cantata would affect the hearts of all who see and hear the message of the Savior.