

## **Doctrine of Paul's Visit to Heaven**

1. This doctrine will record a strange event – Paul visited Heaven where he was sworn to secrecy.

2. The event and the reason for Paul's recounting can be found in Acts 14:19-21 and 2Co 12:2-6.

Acts 14:19 Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.

Acts 14:20 But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

Acts 14:21 They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch,

2Co 12:1 I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord.

2Co 12:2 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.

2Co 12:3 And I know that this man -- whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows --

2Co 12:4 was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.

2Co 12:5 I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses.

2Co 12:6 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.

*Unedited Lecture Notes on the Book of Acts* by H.A. Ironsides

1. "And they dragged that seemingly lifeless body outside the city and threw it on the refuse heap. Let the jackals devour it. They were done with Paul. But God was not done with him.

2. I like to think this is the very time Paul had the experience of which he speaks in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians (12:2-4): 'I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whither in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth); such an one caught up in the heaven ... caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.'

3. "I believe that at the very moment they thrust Paul's body away, the real Paul--the man who lived inside of that body--was in the third heaven. God said, as it were, 'I want to show you what I have in store for you.'

4. “Up there Paul did not know whether he was in the body or not. If in his body, he did not know it; if out of his body, he did not miss it. He was in paradise and heard unspeakable things which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

5. “How long he was there we do not know. We do read that as the body lay there the disciples stood round about, evidently making plans for a funeral, probably with tears streaming down saying "what shall we do? We shall have to lay his poor broken body away." But he suddenly rose up! I should like to have seen that.

6. “It is such a graphic picture. Here gathered about the body of Paul were Barnabas and the other believers, saying, doubtless, “Is it not a pity that he had to die right in the midst of his wonderful ministry? If only he could have lived longer.” Then suddenly, I think, Paul opened his eyes, rose to his feet, brushed off his clothes and said, “It is all right. You dear brothers will have to put off the funeral a little longer!”

“He was ready to start again. Persecution thwarted him none. He must continue preaching the gospel of the grace of God. “He rose up, and came into the city, and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.”

## 7. Conclusions

7.1 Paul died from the traumatic event of stoning, only to be awakened.

7.2 He then records for his disciples for the many a record of going to heaven and meeting a fellow believer who earlier had died having taken up residency in the Third Heaven.

7.3 It would seem the man died fourteen years earlier.

7.4 Interestingly, Paul could not tell if the real but “invisible” Paul was on earth or in heaven. It would seem his trip from earth to heaven was like stepping across some invisible line. Whatever the case Paul gives us little information—perhaps this was part of his orders “not to tell.”

7.5 There was much which was said between Paul and his former friend. What else went on there we do not know.

7.6 The purpose of Paul’s recounting can be found in 2Co 11:1-33 where he defends his apostleship. The Corinthians, not so unusually have attacked Paul comparing him to other “visiting fireman” who arrived in Corinth where the naïve Corinthians are unfortunately misled “buying the false teachings hook line and sinker.”

NIV

2Co 11:1 I hope you will put up with a little of my foolishness; but you are already doing that.

2Co 11:2 I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.

2Co 11:3 But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

2Co 11:4 For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

2Co 11:5 But I do not think I am in the least inferior to those "super-apostles."

2Co 11:6 I may not be a trained speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way.

2Co 11:7 Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the gospel of God to you free of charge?

2Co 11:8 I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you.

2Co 11:9 And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so.

2Co 11:10 As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, nobody in the regions of Achaia will stop this boasting of mine.

2Co 11:11 Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!

2Co 11:12 And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about.

2Co 11:13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ.

2Co 11:14 And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.

2Co 11:15 It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

2Co 11:16 I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then receive me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting.

2Co 11:17 In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool.

2Co 11:18 Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast.

2Co 11:19 You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise!

2Co 11:20 In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or pushes himself forward or slaps you in the face.

2Co 11:21 To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that! What anyone else dares to boast about -- I am speaking as a fool -- I also dare to boast about.

2Co 11:22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I.

2Co 11:23 Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again.

2Co 11:24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.

2Co 11:25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea,

2Co 11:26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers.

2Co 11:27 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.

2Co 11:28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

2Co 11:29 Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

2Co 11:30 If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

2Co 11:31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying.

2Co 11:32 In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me.

2Co 11:33 But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.

8. Paul then begins in his description of his unique trip to heaven.

9. In conclusion I want to give credit to Col. R. B. Thieme from whom I first heard explanation of this most unusual event.

