

## Third Heaven and Earth

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To rightly divide the Word of God, it's essential to understand how Scripture interprets itself. One key to this understanding is knowing *to whom* each part of Scripture is addressed—whether to Jews, Gentiles, or the Church of God, as outlined in 1 Corinthians 10:32. Another important aspect is recognizing the seven distinct administrations within the Bible. Each administration has its own context and target audience, helping us understand the overall timeline of God's Word. These administrations are:

1. Original (Paradise),
2. Patriarchal,
3. Law,
4. Christ,
5. Grace,
6. Revelation or Appearing, and
7. The final Paradise or Glory Administration, which complements Paradise on earth in Genesis 1.

Many believers overlook this distinction, leading to confusion about the timing and meaning of events in the Bible. Without a proper understanding of these administrations, it becomes difficult to rightly divide the Word of Truth. Today, let's examine this framework, beginning with 2 Corinthians 12:2, where Paul discusses the “third heaven.”

**2 Corinthians 12:1-4, It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth) who was caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth); how he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful [permitted] for a man to utter.**

To better understand Paul's experience, let's first clarify the term “caught up” in verse 2. In English, “caught up” often implies being lifted or taken to a higher place. However, the original Greek word used here, **harpazō**, means “caught away.” It's a unique occurrence in the Greek aorist tense, meaning a “one-time event.” Paul was “caught away” to the TIME of third heaven and to paradise, an extraordinary revelation given to him once and only once.

**The Three Heavens: Sequential, Not Spatial:** The Bible refers to three heavens, but these aren't layers in the sky; rather, they represent three sequential periods in God's timeline. II Peter, chapter 3 discusses these periods which we will look at in a moment. But before we do, let's consider what “heaven” is. Technically and Biblically, “heaven” refers to any place above the hard ground of the earth. So before we begin looking at II Peter, let's look at Genesis 1:1.

**Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven(s) [meaning: expanse] and the earth. 2 And the earth was [became] without form, and void; [Heb: *tahu bahu*] and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.**

Most people have erred when considering verses 1 and 2 here. There is a vast amount of TIME separation between these two verses, as we shall see. When God created the heavens and the earth, He didn't create it “without form, and void,” as verse two states. It BECAME that way. This truth is specifically stated in **Isaiah 45:18: “... God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain [*tahu bahu*], he formed it to be inhabited.”** It became without form, and void (empty). The amount of time between verse 1 and verse 2 of Genesis 1 is not

currently fathomable. It could be millions if not billions of years between the first heaven and earth when God created it, and then verse 2 comes along. The heavens and the earth were created perfectly in verse 1. Then, verse 2 describes the result of something which ended it all becoming without form, and void. So the following verses of Genesis 1 are not God creating the various things listed, but simply a matter of Him putting them all back together again. The following verses of Genesis 1 do not tell us what happened, but we do know that something happened in that time period to cause the first heaven and earth to become “without form, and void.” We will see More on that a little later.

Let's go to **II Peter 3.** II Peter clearly explains the sequence of these 3 periods of heaven and earth.

**2 Peter 3:3: Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation. 5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: 6 Whereby the world that then was [1st heaven & earth], being overflowed with water, perished: 7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.**

Verse 6's states that the 1<sup>st</sup> heaven and earth were “being overflowed with water, perished.” This does not refer to Noah's flood, but rather to the “destruction” seen in Genesis 1:2. And as we saw previously, the word “was” in Genesis 1:2 can and should be translated as “became,” indicating that God's perfect creation became “without form, and void” (Hebrew *tohu bohu*). How did this happen? There are several places in the Word that describe what happened, Revelation 12:7-9 sheds some light this subject.

**Revelation 12:7-9: And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, 8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.**

This account describes a battle in heaven between Lucifer and his angels, and Michael and his angels. This led to a catastrophic effect on earth, causing it to become “without form, and void” from the chaos. The second heaven and earth, as noted in 2 Peter 3:7, came after this destruction:

**2 Peter 3:7: But the heavens and the earth, which are now...are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment.**

The present heaven and earth, “which are now,” came into being after the first created heavens and earth fell into ruin. Yet, according to verse 13, there is a third heaven and earth yet to come.

**2 Peter 3:13: Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.**

Before all of this happening, there are a number of events that must take place. First of all, we who are now living in the 5<sup>th</sup> administration, which is the Grace Administration, must be gathered together first. This event is described in the Church Epistles addressed to us. Let's begin by looking at 1 Thessalonians. This epistle was written to the Church of God. No one else.

**I Thessalonians 4:13: But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a \*shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.**

*keleusma* = a summons, or shout that assembles. The word was used by Greeks to refer to the call or summons of a hunter assembling his dogs. It was also used of the shout to the rowers in a ship so they rowed in unison. It is used here to refer to the shout or summons for the assembling of believers at the return of Christ.

The “gathering together” is the first portion of Christ’s second coming. As we will see, Christ will come back TO the earth to rule and judge the earth a little later on. This event of the “gathering together” was not known prior to the Grace Administration. It wasn’t known until it was revealed to Paul. This event was a secret, it was a mystery, it was unknown until God revealed it to the Apostle Paul. I Corinthians was also written to the Church of God. No one else. It also describes this event.

**I Corinthians 15:51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.**

**Philippians 3:20 For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. WT \**who will transform our humiliated body that it may have the same form as his glorious body*** We who have physical issues, will be rid of them all!

Once this event of the gathering together happens, then the 6<sup>th</sup> Administration begins. It is during this time that many of the events in the book of Revelation will occur. It will be a time of great trouble, and of great wrath.

**Revelation 19:15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.**

God has saved those who confess Jesus as lord and believe that God raised him from the dead. He has saved them from the wrath of this time period.

**Romans 5:9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from [the] wrath through him. [1Thessalonians 5:9 says the same thing]**

So the time of wrath is coming, it is still future. Once we are gathered together, all the light that is in the world will be taken out of the world. Darkness will rule for a period. But then Jesus Christ comes back TO the earth to rule on the earth for 1000 years. The first and second resurrections will occur. After all that is complete, Jesus Christ hands the reigns back to God his Father, as stated in I Corinthians 15.

**I Corinthians 15:24 Then cometh the end [Gr. *telos*], when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.**

**Revelation 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first [former] heaven and the first [former] earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. 2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God. 4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.**

This “new heaven and new earth” will be the third and final heaven and earth. Following Genesis 1:1-2, the Bible shows that the first heaven and earth were devastated, the second heaven and earth was established afterward, which is the one in which we are now living, and a new heaven and earth are yet to come, as described in Revelation 21. What opens as a perfect heaven and earth, concludes with the perfect 3<sup>rd</sup> heaven and earth. Revelation compliments Genesis.

With the establishment of the New heavens and the New earth, then the seventh and final administration is established which is the Paradise / Glory Administration.

### **The Revelation of the Third Heaven**

Paul’s vision in 2 Corinthians 12 of being “caught away” to the third heaven is significant. This third heaven refers to the time of the new heaven and new earth, where righteousness will dwell. This insight was given to Paul by divine revelation, offering a future perspective on God’s kingdom. Paul humbly mentions this experience, acknowledging in

**2 Corinthians 12:5-6: Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in my infirmities... lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.**

Paul knew the significance of the revelation yet refrained from boasting, crediting God’s wisdom and insight rather than any personal merit.

Paul’s experience of being “caught away” to the third heaven is a profound example of God revealing His plans to us in part through time, through administrations, and through the sequence of His Word. When we understand the administrations and the sequence of heavens and earth, we gain a clearer perspective on God’s promises and how they unfold through time. This clarifies and brings hope to us

God bless you,  
Jack Northart