

Hebrews and Second Corinthians

Commentary for December 1, 2024 – Paul Allowed to Communicate His Visions

“The Book of Hebrews,” by Dr. Ernest L. Martin, is the title of the December 2024 Doctrinal article. Read first the “[December 2024 Newsletter](#).” This Commentary discusses the topic — how did the apostle Paul or other author¹ write with sure knowledge about the tasks Christ performed in heaven. Christ’s actions are only described in Hebrews with surprising detail.

Dr. Martin presents a strong case that the apostle Paul wrote about Christ’s actions, but when after His resurrection. But when did he learn them? What was the source of his information?

Here are two answers; either may be correct. Hebrews gives vivid descriptions because

- (1) Christ gave Paul detailed information when He taught Paul in Arabia (Galatians 1:17).
- (2) because Paul viewed the described events in a vision or a revelation.

Paul Was Taught by Christ in Arabia

For (1) read a portion of Paul’s brief biography in Galatians chapter 1. Here are two excerpts:

“For I am making known to you, brethren, as to the evangel which is being brought by me, that it is not in accord with man. For neither did I accept it from a man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a REVELATION of Jesus Christ.

... when it delights God, [Who] ... calls me through His grace, to unveil His Son in me that I may be evangelizing Him among the nations, I did not immediately submit it to flesh and blood, NEITHER came I up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but ... AFTER THREE YEARS, I came up to Jerusalem to relate my story to Cephas, and I stay with him fifteen days.”

• *Galatians 1:11–12, 15–18 CLV*

Back to the Book of Hebrews

For (2) above, go to the Book of Hebrews in your Bible. After a brief introduction of Hebrews, the rest of chapter one and chapter two correct errors of Paul’s audience, who mistakenly thought angels could help God and Christ as intermediaries between children of Adam and God, suppressing a potential heresy among Christians in the 1st century AD.²

The sin offering rituals of Leviticus chapters 16 and 19 are types of the reality performed by Christ by His death and resurrection. Because He is the Chief Priest, He Himself can sprinkle His own blood on the altar before God.

“Now Christ, coming along a Chief Priest of the impending good things through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is, not of this

¹ I agree with Dr. Martin that Paul dictated the “sermon” that was Hebrews.

² See Dr. Martin’s book, [The People That History Forgot](#).

creation; not even through the blood of he-goats and calves, but through His own blood, entered once for all time into the holy places, finding eonian redemption.

... how much rather shall the blood of Christ, Who, through the eonian spirit offers Himself flawless to God, be cleansing your conscience from dead works to be offering divine service to the living and true God?"

• Hebrews 9:11–12, 14

Hebrews 9:24 explains the ritual:

... For Christ entered not into holy places made by hands, representations of the true, but into heaven itself, NOW to be disclosed to the face of God for our sakes.

• Hebrews 9:24

The Book of Hebrews mentions several momentous events that occurred in Heaven after Christ's resurrection. How were these events presented? They could only be known by someone showing or telling them to Paul. For example, the Gospels were written from the memory of witnesses and participants to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ (Matthew, Mark, and John) or by compiling evidence of those who were witnesses, as Luke the physician did. (See my 2019 updated article, "[Memory in Luke](#)").

HOW did Paul learn about these events? They are not self-evident. They cannot be deduced from the Laws given to Moses. They are not in any of the prophecies of the Old Testament. How did Paul know? Here are some options, in decreasing probability:

1. Paul learned some from Christ in Arabia (Galatians chapter 1).
2. Paul learned more from the vision given to him (2 Corinthians 12:2–4).
3. Paul spoke with the apostles in his meetings with them.
4. Paul applied all his scholarly resources of the Old Testament to deduce what the Messiah would do before he died, after he was raised from the dead.

WHEN did Paul identify so many symbolic and prophetic fulfillments to write in Hebrews? Christ fulfilled His role as the self-sacrificed, tortured, dead, and resurrected Son of God. That information was not self-evident. After His resurrection He sprinkled His own blood on the altar of God in heaven. In Himself, Christ completed the "type" or ritual significance of every category of Mosaic animal sacrifices designated by God to identify the sins of the people of Israel, individually and as a people.

And Christ fulfilled every requirement (all of them throughout time) that God required. And He completed every requirement of righteousness that His Father demanded. He did that for all Israel, and for all the nations, for every individual, for all time. The risen Christ was the Chief Priest of His own self-sacrifice for both the Old and New Covenants (Hebrews 4:14–5:10).³ Jesus, after His resurrection, passed through the heavens to the throne of God

³ Those who are part of the Body of Christ in the Mystery have no relationship to the Old or New Covenant except for education. We are not bound by the Old or New Covenants, but we are directly connected to God through Christ.

(Hebrews 4:14). Christ's sacrifice is one time for all, to the end of the eons (and whatever is beyond).

Paul's Apparitions and Revelations Taught by Christ in Arabia

The apostle Paul tells of his experiences that occurred 14 years before Hebrews was written. Paul told of them in 2 Corinthians 12:1–4 CLV:

"If boasting must be, though it is not expedient, indeed, yet I shall also be coming to APPARITIONS ["visions," KJV] and REVELATIONS of the Lord."

Note the comparison of these side-by-side passages. Paul was unsure how his *apparitions* (or *visions*) and the *revelations* were given to him:

2 Corinthians 12:2 CLV	2 Corinthians 12:3–4 CLV
<p>² I am acquainted with a man in Christ, fourteen years before this, (whether in a body <u>I am not aware</u>, or outside of the body, <u>I am not aware</u> — God is aware) <u>such a one was snatched away to the THIRD HEAVEN</u>.</p>	<p>³ And I am acquainted with <u>such</u> a man (whether in a body or outside of the body <u>I am not aware</u> — God is aware) <u>that</u> ⁴ he was snatched away into PARADISE and hears ineffable declarations, which IT IS NOT ALLOWED a man to speak.</p>

What Did Paul See in His Vision of Paradise?

"Paradise" exists in the third heaven and Paul was taken in vision to "paradise," in the "the third heaven." This place exists and resurrected believers will visit it in the future. We will not live there, but we will have a residence in the New Jerusalem which was being "prepared" as Jesus said (John 14:2–6).

Paul wrote earlier to the *ekklesia* in 2 Corinthians 4:17–5:2 that the suffering and affliction they were enduring, they would receive reward far beyond their imagination. He told them about 2 Corinthians 12:3–4 to encourage them. He saw even more wonders he could not tell them at that time. Paul was told that the glorious things he saw were less significant than the work he was doing. The infirmities he suffered were from God as examples of endurance to his spiritual brothers and sisters, and for Paul to be personally strengthened by his suffering.

What Did Paul See in Paradise?

Most scholars believe the apostle Paul is talking about himself in 2 Corinthians 12:2–4. Paul saw events in the past that no one had seen before. He was given a vision of events taking place after Christ's resurrection — events after Christ's body, soul, and spirit were raised from the dead by God's order, that Jesus agreed to before the "foundation of the world."

The Greek term *paradeiso* (derived from a Persian word for "garden" or "park") is the garden of God in 2 Corinthians 12:4. "Paradise" is also a place with the "tree of life" in the center (Revelation 2:7, the message to the *ekklesia* in Ephesus). Why was Paul not allowed to tell

what he saw? "Paradise" is in the center of New Jerusalem in heaven, and God's throne is located in God's palace which is in the center of "paradise." Remember, in Genesis 2:9 God was **"in the midst"** of the Garden when He walked on earth. The Holy Place in the tabernacle and temples had a **"tree of life"** in the Holy Place. The original **"tree of life"** (from Eden perhaps?), is said to be in God's **"paradise"** in heaven (Revelation 22:2, 14). Whatever the case, Paul was not allowed at that moment to give more details.

However, Paul in the Book of Hebrews, gives details of the activities of Christ Jesus, after His resurrection from the dead, He comes before God to have His slain blood received and placed on the altar before God His Father. Christ performed His duties and received increased authority over all of God's creation until He returns that authority to God.

"Now, whenever all may be subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also shall be subjected to Him Who subjects all to Him, [Why?] that God may be All in all."

• 1 Corinthians 15:28 CLV

Paul's descriptions in Hebrews of the events after Christ's ascension into heaven, were presented to the audience of Hebrews AFTER Second Corinthians was written. Hebrews shows a fulfillment of many Old Testament laws and prophecies that answered all provisions of God's covenant with Israel.

My Conclusion

I believe Paul's vision in 2 Corinthians 12:1–3 was allowed to be presented in several of the teachings in Hebrews. Here is a sequence of events:

- Christ died, was resurrected, and ascended to His Father. He performs services and is rewarded. This is signified when God fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm 110, that the greater Son of David will sit in glory at the right hand of God His Father, to rule with him. You, me, and the *ekklesia* of God will sit with Christ in a similar position, in God's presence (Ephesians 1:20). Paul was not yet a Christian.
— **30 AD**
- Paul is given the vision and revelations that he briefly tells about in 2 Corinthians 12:2–3. He is not allowed to give details — until later. God told Paul not to give details.
— **45 AD**
- Paul gives details to his readers in his "epistle" or "sermon" of Hebrews. He gives evidence of Christ's activities immediately after His resurrection, His presentation to His Father in Heaven, His rewards, His authority expanded.
— **61 AD**
- Paul receives the revelation of "The Mystery." It is the center message of the epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians.
— **63 AD**