

Word Study Paradise

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The Persian Empire was one of the greatest of the modern world. The name Persia is first encountered as Parsua in Assyrian texts of the 9th century BC. "It later came to designate especially the area around Persepolis north of the Persian Gulf, known as Pars (Fars). The name persists in the designation of the modern Persian language as Farsiu. Iran, which has been the official name of the country since 1935 is cognate with the name Aryan. The Iranians are Indo-European speaking and not Arabic speaking like their Muslim neighbours in Iraq (ancient Mesopotamia) to the west. Modern Persian, though it is written in Arabic characters, is an Indo-European language related to Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and English." (*Edwin M. Yamauchi, Persia and the Bible*)

Paradise is a Persian word (Old Persian, *pairidaeza*, akin to Gr. *peri*, around, and *teichos*, a wall). The Greek word in the New Testament is *paradeisos*. *Paradeisos* is an Oriental word, first used by the historian Xenophon, denoting the parks of Persian kings and nobles", (W E Vine). It's interesting to note that the Septuagint translators used it of the Garden of Eden. The Greek word is only found 3 times in the New Testament. These passages are as follows:

- **"And Jesus said unto him (the thief on the Cross), Verily I say unto you, Today you shall be with me in Paradise"** Luke 23:43.
- **"And I (Paul) knew such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knows) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter"** 2 Cor: 12: 3,4.
- **"He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says unto the Churches; To him who overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God"** Rev. 2:7

Like most words, the word paradise grew and developed in meaning. Once it meant 'a garden with a wall'. But Jesus for example used it for the place or state righteous souls go to immediately after death.

The account of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) is important here. Both, on death, ended up in Hades (v23). But there was "a great gulf fixed" (v26) between them. Lazarus is "in torments" (v23) and the beggar is in "Abraham's bosom". (v22) I suggest that "Abraham's bosom" and "paradise" speak of the same place or state. Certain Jews perhaps preferred the former phrase. Jesus used the term "paradise" on the cross because He spoke to a non-Jew. Peter quoted a Psalm of David on the day of Pentecost: **"...because thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One**

to see corruption.” (Acts 2:27 c.f. Psalm 16:10). On death, the souls of Jesus and the thief went to Hades (or, more precisely, the paradise of Hades). Their bodies were entombed. I believe the words, “...neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption,” refer exclusively to the physical body of the Christ. This body did not see corruption. The Lord’s resurrection fulfilled David’s prophecy. Jesus and the thief would be comforted in paradise, just as Lazarus is comforted (Luke 16:25b). He is still there!

What then do some commentator’s say on all this?

- “Paradise was, in the beginning, the habitation of man in his state of innocence, in which he enjoyed that presence of his Maker, which constituted his supreme happiness. Our Lord’s words intimate that this penitent (thief) should immediately be taken to the abode of the spirits of the just, where he should enjoy the presence and approbation of the Most High.” (Adam Clarke)
- “Paradise is the resting place of the redeemed before the final judgement, and is opened to those who trust in Jesus.” (I. Howard Marshall).
- “About two centuries before Christ was born, the Hebrews rose to the great belief in immortality – to the faith that the friends of God do not perish but are in His holy keeping for ever. But where? Not, as they had once believed, in a dim and dreary underworld, called ‘Sheol’, beyond the jurisdiction of the Almighty, but in a hidden paradise prepared by God for the righteous. So “paradise” became another name for the abode of the blessed after death.” (AM Hunter)
- “In Luke 23:43 the word “paradise” is used by Jesus for the place where souls go immediately after death of the concealed paradise in later Jewish thought. The same idea is also present in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.” (FC Fensham)

Do 2 Cor. 12:3,4 and Revelation 2:7 speak of heaven itself? I think so. I agree with C.K. Barrett that “paradise came to be used of the abode of the blessed after death or after the final judgement.” Paul equates paradise with “the third heaven” (2 Cor. 12:2) or the dwelling place of God. The quote in Revelation brings Eden to mind because the tree of life is mentioned. After the fall, God prevented Adam and Eve from eating the fruit of this tree. But, in heaven or paradise, the saved are entitled to eat of it. What a contrast! It reminds me of the poems by John Milton: Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. What we lost in Adam we regain, with fuller measure, in the second Adam.

When I think of the Garden of Eden words like idyllic, beautiful, delightful and perfect spring to mind. There has been no greater place on earth. Eden was probably destroyed at the time of the Flood. But this first paradise cannot compare with the paradise of Hades or the paradise also known as heaven. These speak of unique comfort and joy.