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Conducted by  
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**“Why did Christ visit Hades (paradise, Luke 23:43) and why is paradise mentioned as being in two places in 2 Cor. 12:4 and Revelation 2:7?”**

The word “paradise” in the Old and New Testament scriptures denotes, it would appear, *the same kind* of place but it does not necessarily follow that the word refers each time to the same *location*: for example the paradise (or garden) of Eden (Gen. 2:8) does not refer to *the same place* as Rev. 2:7—“the paradise of God.”

#### Paradise in the Old Testament

The word “paradise” itself is of Persian origin and means “a garden” and particularly a garden of pleasure, filled with trees and shrubs and fountains and flowers. In hot climates such gardens were especially pleasant and hence they were attached to the mansions of the rich and palaces of princes. They came gradually to denote a place of happiness, and particularly had reference to the abode of the blessed in the other world beyond the grave. The garden of Eden was intended to be a garden of pleasure and bliss and in the Septuagint (Gen. 2:8) is rendered “the paradise of Eden”: “And the Lord God planted a garden (paradise) eastward in Eden . . .” Solomon says in Ecc. 2:5, “I made me gardens and orchards (paradesim) and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruit.” In Neh. 2:8 we read, “And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the King’s forest (pardes-paradise).”

“Paradise” then was a term which amongst the Jews became an appellation for the state of bliss which awaits the righteous after death—and which they understood meant that joys and delights like those of Eden are to be enjoyed by those departed this life. It is with reference to this use of the term, but with a deeper insight into the spiritual implications involved, that the word is employed in the New Testament scriptures when indicating the experience and destiny of the redeemed.

#### New Testament Usage

The term “paradise” is used but three times in the New Testament—Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 12:4 and Rev. 2:7.

In the first instance Jesus, on the cross, said to the thief who was also on a cross, “Verily, I say unto thee, Today thou shalt be with me in paradise,” and I suppose that if we can decide *where* Jesus went *that day* we have, at the same time, discovered the location of the “paradise” Jesus meant. Paul in 1 Cor. 15:3 & 4 reminds us of some of the basic elements of the gospel and points out how, according to the scriptures, Jesus must die, be buried and rise again the third day. Where was Jesus during the three days? His *body* was most certainly in the tomb, a tomb guarded by soldiers, but His *soul* was in a place called Hades (translated hell)—the “unseen state,” or “the

place of disembodied spirits," or "the unseen world." This is borne out by Peter in Acts 2:31; and here again we notice that this also was *according to the scriptures* and in fact was the fulfilment of a prophecy of king David himself that, "His [Jesus] soul was not left in hell neither His flesh did see corruption." The fact that Jesus' soul was not *left* in hell denotes that his soul did go there. He was *not left there*, for indeed His body, soul and spirit were reunited the third day and He was raised again from the dead. I suggest therefore that when Jesus said to the thief on the cross that He and the thief would that very day be "in paradise" he was referring to Hades. He was certainly not referring to the tomb as paradise, although His body went there, and I am persuaded he was not referring to the paradise of 2 Cor. 12:4 which seems to be located in the third heaven (or "dwelling place of God") for *much later on* and *after* His resurrection Jesus was able to say (John 20:17) "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: . . . ." This is an important point.

It will be thought that Jesus had given the thief no special comfort in His promise to him regarding paradise if He was merely referring to Hades, the place of the souls of the dead, since doubtless the souls of *all the dead* are destined to go there. This of course is true, but the promise will not appear so pointless when we read the account of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16 and recognise from this statement of Jesus that there are two regions in Hades, separated by a wide gulf—the one a state of peace and bliss and the other a place of pain and torment. The beggar was *carried by angels* to Abraham's bosom (v. 22) and *comforted* (v. 25). This would appear to be the "paradise" to which Jesus and the thief came that day. Jesus did not remain, as we know, but ascended to God's right hand and began preparing mansions in heaven for all His faithful—which place or "paradise" Paul probably mentions in 2 Cor. 12:4.

The paradise Paul writes of was the one revealed to him fourteen years before the writing of this second epistle to the Corinthians, and assuming that this epistle was written in the year A.D. 57 a deduction of fourteen years would bring us to A.D. 43, which would coincide with the time when Paul was in Antioch. Paul is *reticent* about what he *saw* and says (v. 4) that it would be unlawful, if not impossible, to relate what he *heard*. This reticence is very different from Luke 16, where Jesus gives us some very detailed information about Hades, and seems to be strong evidence that two quite different locations are involved, and that one is a reality and the other a promise and a future joy.

#### The Paradise of God

No one imagines surely that Hades, the place of the departed dead, (even though there are two compartments to it) is the place of our eternal dwelling and the mansions Jesus said He was going to prepare. The paradise which Paul saw in the third heaven is eminently a more suitable and probable abiding place for those whom Jesus will take to be His own, and to abide with Him forever, and is exactly synonymous with the "paradise of God" mentioned in Rev. 2:7.

John in Rev. 2:7 says, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." The description of this paradise is reminiscent of Gen. 2:8 and the garden of Eden, and so the idea of "Paradise Lost — Paradise Regained" is not the figment of a poet's imagination but a bible truth and the promise of God through the merits of Christ. What Adam lost for us Christ has regained, only more so and with a spiritual bonus of blessings.

#### Summing Up

My understanding of the matter then is that the "paradise" of Luke 23:43 refers to the blissful sector of Hades, as described in Luke 16, and the "paradise" Paul saw in 2 Cor. 12:4 refers to the eternal dwelling place in heaven for the faithful followers of Christ, and is the same place as that mentioned in Rev. 2:7 and described by John as the "paradise of God."

The first "paradise" in the bible (Gen. 2:8) was an earthly one in Eden; the second

**“paradise” (Luke 23:43) being the congenial part of Hades and the intermediate state of the dead; and the third and future “paradise” being “the paradise of God” in the third heaven and in the immediate presence of God (2 Cor. 12:4 and Rev. 2:7).**

**“ . . . To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”**