The “Third Heaven”

2 Corinthians 12:2-5

Jim MacGregor
http://psalmstudy.org/
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

Table of Contents

Preface ........................................................................................................................................ ii

“Caught up in the Third Heaven” ................................................................................................. 1
  Jewish Thought ........................................................................................................................... 1
  Greek Thought ............................................................................................................................ 2
  The Heavens in the Gospels ........................................................................................................ 2
Commentators’ Speculations on Paul’s Meaning in 2 Corinthians 12:2-5 .................................... 3
What Does the Bible Suggest Regarding the Term “Third Heaven”? ......................................... 4
  Old Testament Scripture Verses .................................................................................................. 4
  New Testament Scripture Verses ................................................................................................. 4
  Intertestamental Verses ............................................................................................................. 5
Discussion of the Three Heavens with Scripture References ...................................................... 5
  The First Heaven in Scripture: Earth’s Atmosphere ................................................................. 5
  The Second Heaven in Scripture: Outer Space .......................................................................... 8
  Mention of the First and Second Heavens in Scripture .......................................................... 10
  The Third Heaven in Scripture: God’s Dwelling Place ............................................................ 10
  Mention of the Second and Third Heavens in Scripture ....................................................... 14
  Mention of the All the Heavens in Scripture ............................................................................ 14
What Do the Apocrypha Suggest Regarding the Term “Third Heaven”? ................................. 19
  Apocrypha References for the Three Heavens ...................................................................... 19
  Mention of the First Heaven in the Apocrypha ..................................................................... 19
  Mention of the Second Heaven in the Apocrypha ................................................................. 20
  Apocrypha - The Third Heaven ............................................................................................... 23

What Are “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”? ............................................ 27

Date and Circumstances of Paul’s Conversion Vision ................................................................ 31
  The Date ....................................................................................................................................... 31
  The Story ...................................................................................................................................... 31
  Divine Visions Relating to Paul’s Ministry ............................................................................... 31
Biographies of Persons Mentioned in the Paper and in the Bibliography ............................... 33
Bibliography .................................................................................................................................... 35
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

Preface

This paper, “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”, was prepared for adult Bible study. It is based on the Bible, the Apocrypha, theological commentaries, and textual analysis of the use of the words “heaven”, “heavens”, and “Paradise” as they are explained in concordances and as they appear in context. The sources cited in the bibliography at the end of this paper aided me in understanding Paul’s mention of the “third heaven”.

This paper addresses the statement made by Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:2-5.

2 Corinthians 12:2-5: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven — whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into paradise — whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows — and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. (ESV)

This paper presents speculative content on this topic which is not a topic of Christian doctrine. Although it presents ideas based on Scriptural references, it does not represent Scripturally based doctrine. We do not know, but can only speculate on, what the Apostle Paul may have been referring to, and consequently, we cannot lightly accept this as doctrinal theology for Lutheran Christians.

This paper is intended for discussion of 2 Corinthians and may be incorporated into other topics. We should have some interactive sharing of knowledge, sharing whatever insights or difficulties we have with this topic. The study leader views this paper as a vehicle for mutual sharing.

Sharing what the leader learned (like a “book report”).

Sharing what participants have learned in their study of the Bible, Apocrypha, and commentaries.

The table of contents shows the planned outline for our discussions. There are also a bibliography of material used and brief biographies and descriptions of sources mentioned in the bibliography.

All Scripture verses are from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted. Some Scripture references and verses - the “tools” necessary to know Jesus - are repeated in their entirety under each heading to which they pertain to minimize the need for the reader to stop and look up references. Each instance is identified with “(ESV)” in accordance with the publisher’s rules for use in non-saleable media.

[Note: The ESV is the Bible translation of choice of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod.]

Verses from the Apocrypha are from the New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha and are identified with “(NRSA with Apocrypha)”.

There are citations of sources that are of various theological persuasions (e.g., Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Evangelical, and Roman Catholic). Every attempt has been made to avoid any distinctively sectarian beliefs and to draw upon only material that focuses on the particular topic in a manner that is consistent with a fundamental Christian understanding of the Bible and the doctrines to be found there when comparing Scripture with Scripture.

Jim MacGregor
Living Savior Lutheran Church
September 2013
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

“Caught up in the Third Heaven”

What did the Apostle Paul mean when he wrote about the man who was caught up in the Third Heaven?

2 Corinthians 12:2-5: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven - whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into paradise - whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows - and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. (ESV)

[Note: King James Version with Strong’s: Greek “ouranos” is a primary word for air, heaven, heavenly, heavens, sky. Bible Study Tools relates this to Psalm 148:4: Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! (ESV) This context suggests a place above the sky and heavenly bodies - God’s dwelling place.]

This paper attempts to inform the reader about Paul’s statement about the “third heaven”. Here you will find speculations by theologians about Paul’s meaning, canonical Bible verses that seem to indicate a belief in “three heavens”, a view of the “New Heaven and New Earth” found in Revelation, and intertestamental literature (i.e. the Apocrypha) that seem to indicate a belief in multiple heavens. The “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth” are addressed by Scripture quotes and extracts from commentaries. Related information is also provided about the date and circumstances of Paul’s conversion vision (which he may have been referring to in 2 Corinthians 12:2-5) and divine visions relating to Paul’s ministry.

The brief reference in 2 Corinthians to a third heaven makes no special connection to a contemporary physical cosmology of the universe. It could be dismissed as lacking in scientific interest. On the other hand, the cosmology of the universe arouses philosophical and metaphysical interest. Reference to the third heaven alludes to ideas prevalent in New Testament times that parallel the three-tiered universe of the ancient Middle East and that can be gleaned from the Old Testament Scriptures and the Apocrypha. The reference from 2 Corinthians represents a melding of both Jewish and Greek thought. In this paper, that melding is drawn from canonical Scripture and from those intertestamental, noncanonical books, the Apocrypha, that Martin Luther recommended as useful and good reading.

Jewish Thought

Late Second Temple Judaism (BC 530-AD 70) had an elaboration of the heavens during the period of exile immediately afterward. Many scholars agree that “the heavens and the earth” in Genesis 1–2 are depicted as the “cosmic mountain”, first the site of the Garden of Eden and later the Temple Mount where heaven and earth meet. The Hebrew use of the plural (‘the heavens’) and the tendency in Hebrew to amplify a thought by doubling it (‘the heaven of heavens’) led to the idea of a heaven with seven levels. Scripture does not suggest seven heavens. Some Jewish writings (not recommended for any spiritual value by Martin Luther - the Apocalypse of Moses and the Book of the Secrets of Enoch) were published several centuries later but had roots in the first century after Christ. They make reference to a third heaven. Mention of Paradise in 2 Corinthians 12:3 indicates a Jewish background. Both the Apocalypse of Moses and the Book of the Secrets of Enoch (not recommended for any spiritual value by Martin Luther) connect the third heaven with a place referred to as Paradise, one associated with the resting places of significant figures from Genesis, just as in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 16:22 “The poor man died
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side.”) Paradise is associated with the resting place of Abraham.

Greek Thought
Greek cosmology provided a spherical structure to the universe with three or four heavenly spheres.

The Heavens in the Gospels
Paul mentions the third heaven by associating it with a revelation of God. Despite mention of multiple heavens in both Jewish and Christian literature, and despite Paul’s mentioning it in New Testament Scripture as a revelation, the idea that there is a specific number of heavens is not something that the Church teaches. Instead, we teach an understanding of heaven in terms that the parables of Jesus metaphorically refer to such as in the Parables of the Kingdom (of Heaven) recorded in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

- The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23; Mark 4:1-9; Luke 8:4-8)
- The Parable of the Wheat and Tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43)
- The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-33; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19)
- The Parable of the Hidden Treasure (Matthew 13:44)
- The Parable of the Pearl of Great Value (Matthew 13:45-46)
- The Parable of the Net (Matthew 13:47-50)
- The Parable of the New and Old Treasures (Matthew 13:51-52)
- The Parable of the Lost Sheep (Matthew 18:10-14; Luke 15:1-7)
- The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21-34)
- The Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)
- The Parable of the Lesson of the Budding Fig Tree (Matthew 24:32-35; Mark 13:28-32; Luke 21:29-33)
- The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)
- The Parable of a Lamp Under a Basket (or Jar) (Mark 4:21-25; Luke 8:16-18)
- The Parable of the Seed Growing (Mark 4:26-29)
- The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Mark 4:30-34)
- The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)
- The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree (Luke 13:6-9)
- The Parable of the Wedding Feast (Luke 14:7-11)
- The Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10)
- The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-320
- The Parable of the Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8)
- The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14)
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

The Parable of the Ten Minas (Luke 19:11-27)

Commentators’ Speculations on Paul’s Meaning in 2 Corinthians 12:2-5

Several commentators have speculated that Paul may have been referring to himself in 2 Corinthians 12:2-5. They thought that the fourteen years pertain to the time of Paul’s conversion and that the “third heaven” may have been an ecstasy experience associated with his being knocked from his mount and blinded.

John Chrysostom (347-407), in his “Homily 26 on Second Corinthians” (as quoted by The Catholic Encyclopedia), suggests that Paul was being humble and not wanting to boast of his experiences with the Divine. John Chrysostom observed “But wherefore was he also caught up? As I think, that he might not seem to be inferior to the rest of the Apostles. For since they had companied with Christ, but Paul had not: He therefore caught up unto glory him also.”

Thomas Aquinas (1225 - 1274), in his Commentary on 2 Corinthians 12:2-5 (as quoted by The Catholic Encyclopedia), wrote that Paul showed “the pre-eminence of his dignity in regard to good things received from God,” and that his blessings were divinely bestowed. Aquinas noted that there is a difference between a vision and a revelation; that a revelation includes a vision, but not vice versa, and that Paul had a revelation - not simply a vision like Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar. Paul is said to have been rapt to the third heaven; to see things in the highest reaches of heaven but not to exist there, because then he would have known whether he was in the body or out of the body.

Thomas Aquinas indicated in the Summa Theologica (as quoted by The Catholic Encyclopedia): “the name heaven is applied to a body that participates in any property of the heavenly body, as sublimity and luminosity, actual or potential. Thus Damascene holds as one heaven all the space between the waters and the moon's orb, calling it the aerial. According to him, then, there are three heavens, the aerial, the starry, and one higher than both these, of which the Apostle is understood to speak when he says of himself that he was 'rapt to the third heaven.'”

[Note: Damascene appears to refer to John Damascene, John of Damascus (AD 676-circa. AD 787.)]

No commentary on 2 Corinthians by Martin Luther (1483-1546) was discoverable. It is not found either on the Internet or in the complete Luther’s Works, American Edition.

John Calvin (1509 - 1564), in his commentary on 2 Corinthians 12:2-5, commented that Paul did not describe the heavens “in the manner of the philosophers, so as to assign to each planet its own heaven. … The term heaven, taken by itself, denotes here the blessed and glorious kingdom of God, which is above all the spheres, and the firmament itself, and even the entire frame-work of the world. Paul, however … adds, that he had reached even the greatest height, and the innermost recesses.

Matthew Henry (1662 - 1714), in his Commentary on the Whole Bible (Concise), expressed no doubt that the apostle spoke of himself in 2 Corinthians 12:2-5. “Whether heavenly things were brought down to him, while his body was in a trance, as in the case of ancient prophets; or whether his soul was dislodged from the body for a time, and taken up into heaven, or whether he was taken up, body and soul together, he knew not. We are not capable, nor is it fit we should yet know, the particulars of that glorious place and state. … And while this teaches us to enlarge our expectations of the glory that shall be revealed, it should render us contented with the usual methods of learning the truth and will of God.”

John Wesley (1703 – 1791), in his Wesley's Explanatory Notes, states that in 2 Corinthians 12:2-5 Paul means himself, but speaks of himself in the third person in modesty. “Whether in the body or out of the body I know not - It is equally possible with God to present distant things to the imagination in the body, as if the soul were absent from it, and present with them; or to transport both soul and body for what time he pleases to heaven; or to transport the soul only thither for a season, and in the mean time to preserve the body fit for its re-entrance. … The third heaven - Where God is; far above the aerial
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

and the starry heaven. Some suppose it was here the apostle was let into the mystery of the future state of the church; and received his orders to turn from the Jews and go to the gentiles.”

*The Lutheran Study Bible* indicates that Paul was speaking of himself but does not indicate the specific meaning other than that he had an experience with Jesus. According to this source, Paul was using “terminology typical of intertestamental Judaism” but showed no interest in its details.

*The Abingdon Bible Commentary* indicates that in 2 Corinthians 12:2-5 Paul was describing the ecstatic experience in the language of his Jewish contemporaries and states: “According to post-exilic ideas, the Jews spoke sometimes of a series of seven heavens, at other times of three. Here Paul seems to identify the ‘third heaven’ with Paradise, the dwelling place of God.” The “things that cannot be told, which man may not utter” were not the Holy Spirit’s “groanings too deep for words” mentioned in Romans 8:26. Rather, they were revelations which reassured Paul in his mission. The intertestamental period yielded writings, the Apocrypha, that contribute to our understanding of “the heavens”.

Romans 8:26: *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.* (ESV)

[Note: In Judaism being in the presence of God is thought of as being in a place or condition equivalent to paradise. Remember that at the cross, Jesus told a thief that the thief would be with Him in paradise. When speaking of paradise, Jesus may have done, as other rabbis and ordinary people did, in equating paradise and the third heaven. Paul was expressing himself not only as other Jewish writers did, but also as other early Jewish Christians did in equating paradise and the third heaven.]

What Does the Bible Suggest Regarding the Term “Third Heaven”?  
The Bible does not use the term “third heaven” other than in 2 Corinthians 12:2-5. However, verses in Scripture suggest the existence of three different heavens. The original Hebrew and Greek words denote either the earth’s atmosphere (e.g., the atmosphere with its weather phenomena) or outer space (e.g., the sun, moon, stars, and planets). The context of the Hebrew and Greek words for “heaven” and the Greek word for “paradise” clearly indicate a “place” (i.e., as expressed from a human perspective) that is beyond the earth’s atmosphere and beyond outer space. That “place” is the abode of God. The words for heaven” must be interpreted in their context as to the “place” that is meant. The interpretation given in this paper relies on a concordance to aid in understanding the English translations - *English Standard Version* (ESV) for Scripture and the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRS) for the Apocrypha. Here are some language notes:

**Old Testament Scripture Verses**

According to *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Hebrew Bible; with their Renderings in the Authorized English Version*, the Hebrew word “shamayim” means “heaven”, “the highest heaven”, “heaven of heavens”. “Shamayim” is the dual of an unused singular “shameh” from an unused root meaning to be lofty; the sky (e.g., aloft; the visible arch in which the clouds move, the higher ether where the celestial bodies revolve. However, the word has to be understood in its context.

**New Testament Scripture Verses**

According to the *King James Version with Strong’s Concordance*, the Greek word “ouranothen” means “heaven”, “sky”. This word must also be understood in its context.
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

Intertestamental Verses

_A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Hebrew Bible; with their Renderings in the Authorized English Version_ and the _King James Version with Strong’s Concordance_ were also used for the intertestamental literature that is cited in this paper - the books of the Apocrypha that were translated into German by Martin Luther and recommended by him for useful reading.

Discussion of the Three Heavens with Scripture References

The following is a discussion of the three heavens as either indicated by Scripture or implied by the context of the words “heaven”, “heavens” and “paradise”.

The First Heaven in Scripture: Earth’s Atmosphere

Genesis 1:1 says that God created “the heavens”. “The heavens” is a plural form that could have been nothing more than a manner of expression and not necessarily suggesting multiple heavens. If we think of multiple heavens, then the first heaven could be seen as the atmosphere around the earth. In describing the rain that brought on the Flood of Noah’s time, Genesis 7:11 says “the windows of the heavens were opened”, and verse 19 says “all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered”. In Scripture terms are used that either clearly indicate the earth’s atmosphere or imply it in their context. Some examples of clear indications are these: the “windows of the heavens” indicating earth’s atmosphere opening to a higher source of water; the “the birds of the heavens” clearly indicating the sky; “mountains under the whole heaven” (self-explanatory); “opened the doors of heaven, and he rained down on them manna” describing a singular phenomenon that must have appeared to come from the sky; and, weather phenomena (i.e., rain, hail, wind). The references listed below appear to indicate what this paper calls the “first heaven”.

**Genesis 1:1:** _In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth._ (ESV)

[Note: The reference in Genesis 1:1 pertains to all creation: first and second heaven.]

**Genesis 1:26:** _Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”_ (ESV)

**Genesis 2:19-20:** _Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and _every bird of the heavens_ and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to _the birds of the heavens_ and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for _him._ (ESV)

**Genesis 7:11:** _In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and _the windows of the heavens were opened._ (ESV)

**Genesis 7:19:** _And the waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered._ (ESV)

**Deuteronomy 11:17:** _… then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and _he will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain, and the land will yield no fruit, and you will perish quickly off the good land that the Lord is giving you._ (ESV)

**Deuteronomy 28:12:** _The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands._ (ESV)
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

Judges 5:4: O Lord, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the land of Edom, the earth shook, the heavens poured, the clouds poured down water. (ESV)

2 Samuel 22:14: The Lord thundered from heaven, and the Most High uttered his voice. (ESV)

1 Kings 8:35: [Solomon prayed at the dedication of the Temple.] “When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, if they pray toward this place and acknowledge your name and turn from their sin, when you afflict them,” (ESV)

1 Kings 18:45: And in a little while the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. (ESV)

2 Chronicles 6:26: [Solomon prayed at the dedication of the Temple.] When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, if they pray toward this place and acknowledge your name and turn from their sin, when you afflict them, (ESV)

2 Chronicles 7:13: When he utters his voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and he makes the mist rise from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain, and he brings forth the wind from his storehouses. (ESV)

Jeremiah 14:22: Are there any among the false gods of the nations that can bring rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Are you not he, O Lord our God? We set our hope on you, for you do all these things. (ESV)

Some Old Testament verses refer obliquely to the first heaven as when God speaks to and visits His people.

Exodus 19:16-20: On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. The Lord came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. (ESV)

Job 26:14: [Job spoke.] “Behold, these are but the outskirts of his ways, and how small a whisper do we hear of him! But the thunder of his power who can understand?” (ESV)

Job 37:2-5: [Elihu proclaimed God's majesty.] “Keep listening to the thunder of his voice and the rumbling that comes from his mouth. Under the whole heaven he lets it go, and his lightning to the corners of the earth. After it his voice roars; he thunders with his majestic voice, and he does not restrain the lightnings when his voice is heard. God thunders wondrously with his voice; he does great things that we cannot comprehend.” (ESV)
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

Job 40:9: [God spoke to Job.] “Have you an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like his?” (ESV)

Some New Testament verses refer to the first heaven.

Luke 18:13: But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’” (ESV)

Acts 14:17: Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons ... (ESV)

James 5:18: [James wrote about the prophet Elijah.] Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. (ESV)

The gospel descriptions of the baptism and transfiguration of Jesus appear, in their context, to pertain to the first heaven, because they describe phenomena - not visions or dreams - that people could observe in the sky although their source was certainly in God’s heavenly kingdom (the third heaven).

At Jesus’ baptism the phenomena from God’s abode broke through the second heaven and were seen and heard in the first heaven, immediately audible and visible to those present.

Matthew 3:16-17: And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (ESV)

Mark 1:10-11: And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” (ESV)

Luke 3:21-22: Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” (ESV)

At Jesus’ transfiguration the phenomena from God’s abode broke through the second heaven and were seen and heard in the first heaven, immediately audible and visible to Peter, James, and John.

Matthew 17:5: He [Peter] was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” (ESV)

Mark 9:6-7: For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.” (ESV)

Luke 9:34-36: As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!” And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen. (ESV)

The following references in the book of Revelation appear, in their context, to pertain to the first heaven.

Revelation 13:13: It [the second beast] performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people. (ESV)

Revelation 16:21: And great hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, fell from heaven on people; and they cursed God for the plague of the hail, because the plague was so severe. (ESV)
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

The Second Heaven in Scripture: Outer Space

Pursuing the idea of multiple heavens, the second heaven could be understood as “outer space”. Exodus 32:13 is one of many references to “the stars of heaven”. Stars are not in the skies from which the rain falls, but in the space beyond our atmosphere. Nehemiah 9:6 also refers to space as heaven: “you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host”. In Scripture terms are used that either clearly indicate outer space or imply it in their context. Some examples of clear indications are these: “lights in the expanse of the heavens” referring to the sun and moon; “the heavens and the earth were finished” indicating not only the earth’s atmosphere, but also all visible creation above (i.e., sun, moon, stars); Jesus’ statement that “the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken” clearly refers to outer space. The expressions “Stretch out your hand toward heaven”, “Moses stretched out his staff toward heaven”, and [Solomon] “spread out his hands toward heaven” all indicate looking toward the sky and the bodies above in outer space (i.e., sun, moon, stars). Some verses contain the expression “heaven and the heaven of heavens” which clearly pertains to both the second (outer space) and third (the abode of God) heavens. The expression “heaven and earth” suggests the entire creation as described in Genesis - earth, sky, and cosmos. The references listed below appear to indicate what this paper calls the “second heaven”.

Genesis 1:1: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (ESV)
[Note: The reference in Genesis 1:1 pertains to all creation: first and second heaven.]

Genesis 1:14: And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years,” (ESV)

Genesis 2:1, 4: Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. … These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. (ESV)

Exodus 9:22-24: Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, so that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, on man and beast and every plant of the field, in the land of Egypt.” Then Moses stretched out his staff toward heaven, and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. (ESV)

Exodus 32:13: [Moses said] “Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.’” (ESV)

Deuteronomy 17:3: … and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have forbidden, (ESV)

Joshua 10:12-14: At that time Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord gave the Amorites over to the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, “Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.” And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day. There has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord heeded the voice of a man, for the Lord fought for Israel. (ESV)

[Note: This appears to be the only instance where a person commanded changes in creation without invoking the name of the Lord or asking the Lord to do it for him. However, Joshua appears to have done this with the Lord’s permission (“At that time Joshua spoke to the Lord”) unlike Moses who sinned by commanding the water to come forth at Meribah with a form of showmanship that the Lord had not commanded.]

1 Kings 8:1, 54: [Solomon prayed at the dedication of the Temple.] Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven,” … Now as Solomon finished offering all this prayer and plea to the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, where he had knelt with hands outstretched toward heaven. (ESV)
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

2 Chronicles 6:13: [Solomon prayed at the dedication of the Temple.] Solomon had made a bronze platform five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high, and had set it in the court, and he stood on it. Then he knelt on his knees in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven. (ESV)

Job 9:7-10: [Job speaks of God’s activity.] “... who commands the sun, and it does not rise; who seals up the stars; who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea; who made the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the chambers of the south;” (ESV)

Job 38:31-33: [God questions Job in a chastising manner.] “Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades or loose the cords of Orion? Can you lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season, or can you guide the Bear with its children? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you establish their rule on the earth?” (ESV)

[Note: “Mazzaroth” is believed to have been the name given to a constellation. A similar word “mazalot” in 2 Kings 23:3-5 may be related. The word's precise meaning is uncertain but its context is that of astronomical constellations, and it is often interpreted as a term for the zodiac, or the zodiacal constellations as a group.]

Psalm 8:3-4: When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? (ESV)

Psalm 19:4-6: Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat. (ESV)

Psalm 104:1-2: Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering yourself with light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a tent. (ESV)

Psalm 115:3, 15-16: Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases. ... May you be blessed by the Lord, who made heaven and earth! The heavens are the Lord’s heavens, but the earth he has given to the children of man. (ESV)

Psalm 121:2: My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. (ESV)

Psalm 136:5: to him who by understanding made the heavens, for his steadfast love endures forever; (ESV)

Psalm 144:5: Bow your heavens, O Lord, and come down! Touch the mountains so that they smoke! (ESV)

Isaiah 1:2: Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord has spoken: “Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. ...” (ESV)

Isaiah 13:10: The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. (ESV)

Isaiah 40:22: It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in; (ESV)

Isaiah 49:13: Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted. (ESV)

Jeremiah 8:2: And they shall be spread before the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven, which they have loved and served, which they have gone after, and which they have sought and worshiped. And they shall not be gathered or buried. They shall be as dung on the surface of the ground. (ESV)

Ezekiel 1:1: In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the Chebar canal, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. (ESV)

Some other statements by the gospel writers appear, in their context, to pertain to the second heaven.
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

Matthew 24:29: [Jesus said] “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” (ESV)

[Note: Strong’s indicates that the “powers of the heavens” could be interpreted in context to mean the Gospel, an eternity of happiness.]

John 17:1: When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,” (ESV)

Acts 4:24: And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, …” (ESV)

The following references in the book of Revelation appear, in their context, to pertain to the second heaven.

Revelation 8:10: The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. (ESV)

Revelation 9:1: And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. (ESV)

Revelation 10:1-8: Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded. And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down.” And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets. Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, “Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.” (ESV)

Revelation 12:4: His [the dragon’s] tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. (ESV)

Revelation 14:7: [An angel spoke to John.] And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.” (ESV)

Mention of the First and Second Heavens in Scripture

Some verses seem to pertain to both the First and Second Heavens

Matthew 24:31: [Jesus spoke of the end times.] “And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” (ESV)

Psalm 108:4-5: For your steadfast love is great above the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the clouds. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth! (ESV)

The Third Heaven in Scripture: God’s Dwelling Place

Last, if we research the idea of multiple heavens, we find references for the “third heaven” that is mentioned in 2 Corinthians 12:2-5. Paul also called it “Paradise” in verse 3. That word is from the Greek word for park or garden - not just any park or garden, but a magnificent one. It is the same word used in the standard Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, with a
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

meaning equivalent to the formerly existing earthly paradise of the Garden of Eden. The highest heaven, the third heaven is also indicated by the reference to the Throne of God being the highest heaven. In Scripture terms are used that either clearly indicate the abode of God or imply it in their context. Some verses contain the expression “heaven and the heaven of heavens” which clearly pertains to both the second (outer space) and third (the abode of God) heavens. Some examples of clear indications of the third heaven are these: “then hear from heaven, your dwelling place”, “The One enthroned in heaven”, “the King of heaven”, and “your Father who is in heaven”.

The Gospel of Mark refers frequently to the “Kingdom of God” rather than to “heaven” or “paradise”. In all instances the sense of that expression is equivalent to the third heaven as discussed in this paper. Also numerous parables of Jesus liken the “Kingdom of Heaven” and “Kingdom of God” metaphorically to everyday things and events. Those verses, cited earlier in this paper are not quoted below. The references listed below appear to indicate or imply what this paper calls the “third heaven”.

In Deuteronomy 10:14: “Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it.” the terms “heaven and the heaven of heavens” probably refer to both the second heaven (“heaven”) and the third heaven (“heaven of heavens”). (ESV) (See Note.)

[Note: Strong’s indicates that the “heaven of heavens” in Deuteronomy 10:14 could be interpreted in context to mean the Gospel, an eternity of happiness.]

1 Kings 8:22-61 and 2 Chronicles 6:12-42 record Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the Temple. The term “spread out his hands toward heaven” probably refers to looking up to the sky (i.e., a first heaven). The terms “heaven and the heaven of heavens” probably refer to both the second heaven (“heaven”) and the third heaven (“heaven of heavens”). The term “heaven, your dwelling place” probably refers to God’s residence (i.e., the third heaven). (See Note.)

1 Kings 8:22-53 (8:22, 23, 27, 30, 32, 34-36, 39, 43, 45, and 49 are quoted below): [Solomon prayed at the dedication of the Temple.] Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven [context is first heaven], and said, “O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart, ... But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built! ... And listen to the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen in heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive. ... then hear in heaven and act and judge your servants, condemning the guilty by bringing his conduct on his own head, and vindicating the righteous by rewarding him according to his righteousness. ... then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel and bring them again to the land that you gave to their fathers. When heaven is shut up and there is no rain [first heaven] because they have sinned against you, if they pray toward this place and acknowledge your name and turn from their sin, when you afflict them, then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel, when you teach them the good way in which they should walk, and grant rain upon your land, which you have given to your people as an inheritance. ... then hear in heaven your dwelling place and forgive and act and render to each whose heart you know, according to all his ways (for you, you only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind), ... hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name. ... then hear in heaven their prayer and their plea, and
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

maintain their cause. … then hear in heaven their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause. …” (ESV)

Many other verses in Scripture seem to refer to what we are calling the third heaven. The verses quoted below are from Psalms, Isaiah, Daniel, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Ephesians, Colossians, and Thessalonians.

Psalm 2:4: The One enthroned in heaven laughs; The Lord scoffs at them.

Psalm 113:4-6: The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens! Who is like the Lord our God, who is seated on high, who looks far down on the heavens and the earth? [looks down on the first and second heavens] (ESV)

Psalm 136:26: Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures forever. (ESV)

Psalm 148:4: Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! (ESV)

Psalm 150:1: Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! (ESV)

Isaiah 14:12-14: [This is a taunt against the King of Babylon.] “How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; [the third heaven] above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’” (ESV)

Daniel 2:44: And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, (ESV)

Daniel 4:37: “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.” (ESV)

Matthew 5:16: In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (ESV)

Matthew 5:45: [Jesus told us to love our enemies.] “… so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” (ESV)

[Note: The expression “your Father who is in heaven” seems to refer to God’s abode. The rest of the verse clearly pertains to the earth’s atmosphere as directed by God.]

Matthew 6:1: [Jesus taught us about prayer.] “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.” (ESV)

Matthew 6:9-10, 14: [Jesus taught us to pray] “Pray then like this: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven’ … For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,” (ESV)

Matthew 6:19-20, 26, 31-32: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. … Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? … Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.” (ESV)

Matthew 7:21: “Not everyone who says to me [Jesus], ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (ESV)
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

Matthew 18:18-19: “Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my [Jesus’] Father in heaven.” (ESV)

Mark 11:25: “And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.” (ESV)

Mark 11:29-31: Jesus said to them, “I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me.” And they discussed it with one another, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’” (ESV)

Mark 13:32: [Jesus spoke of the end times.] “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” (ESV)

Luke 11:13: “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (ESV)

Luke 15:7: “Just so, I [Jesus] tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.” (ESV)

Luke 18:22, 24-25: When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” ... Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, “How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” (ESV)

Luke 19:37-38: As he [Jesus] was drawing near - already on the way down the Mount of Olives - the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” (ESV)

[Note: It would appear that the phrase “Peace in heaven” together with “and glory in the highest” refers to God’s abode.]

Luke 23:43: And he [Jesus] said to him [the crucified thief], “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” (ESV)

John 6:38: “For I [Jesus] have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.” (ESV)

Ephesians 1:3: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. (ESV)

Colossians 1:16, 20, 23: since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. ... For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things were created through him and for him. ... and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. ... if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. (ESV)

1 Thessalonians 4:16: For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (ESV)
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

**Mention of the Second and Third Heavens in Scripture**

Nehemiah 9:6: [The leaders of Israel said] “You are the Lord, you alone. You have made heaven [possibly the second heaven], the heaven of heavens, with all their host [the third heaven], the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.” (ESV)

**Mention of the All the Heavens in Scripture**

Hebrews 4:14: [Paul alludes to Jesus’ Ascension into His dwelling place passing through all the heavens to the third heaven.] Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. (ESV)

Revelation 5:13: [John recorded his vision of all the heavenly places - here, all the heavens.] And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”. (ESV)

In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul mentioned our struggle against spiritual enemies and mentioned “the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places”. It is unclear whether “spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” suggest the earth’s atmosphere because of its proximity to us, to outer space (i.e., “cosmic powers”) as a base of operations, or to somewhere outside outer space that is not God’s abode.

Ephesians 6:12: For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (ESV)

Revelation 4:2 reveals that God’s throne is in heaven. Clearly, God’s throne is not in the sky where the clouds are and the birds fly - the first heaven. Nor is it in the visible confines of outer space - the second heaven. Putting this reference together with what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:2-5, we discern that the third heaven, then, must refer to the location of the throne of God - the third heaven. Also, Revelation presents a different problem of interpretation of the three heavens. In some instances (e.g., “another sign appeared in heaven”, “fire came down from heaven”) the context could be interpreted as earth’s atmosphere or outer space. However, because Revelation is a vision of the apostle John’s, all instances quoted below are interpreted as belonging to the third heaven - to God’s dwelling place.

The following references in the book of Revelation appear, in their context, to pertain to the third heaven.

Revelation 4:1-2: After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. (ESV)

Revelation 5:3, 13: And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. ... And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” (ESV)

Revelation 8:1: When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. (ESV)

Revelation 11:12-13, 15, 19: Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here!” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them. And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. ... Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” ... Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail. (ESV)

[Note: Clearly, the expression “they went up to heaven in a cloud” refers to being transported from the first heaven, through the second, to the third.]

Revelation 12:1-13: And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days. Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world - he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!” And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. (ESV)

Revelation 13:6: It [The First Beast] opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. (ESV)

Revelation 14:2: And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. (ESV)

[Note: The “sound of thunder” also reminds us of a “first heaven” context - earth’s atmosphere - like the thunderous sound of God’s voice (recorded in Exodus 19:16-20, 2 Samuel 22:14, Job 26:14, Job 37:2-5, Job 40:9, Psalm 18:13, and Jeremiah 10:13), the sound of God’s voice at Jesus’ baptism (recorded in Matthew 3:16-17, Mark 1:10-11, and Luke 3:21-22), the sound of God’s voice at the transfiguration (recorded in Matthew 17:5, Mark 9:6-8, and Luke 9:34-36), and when the angels appeared to the shepherds at Jesus’ birth (Luke 2:8-21), and when the Father spoke as Jesus explained that the Son of Man must be lifted up (in John 12:28-30).]

Revelation 14:13, 17: And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Blessed indeed’, says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!’” ... Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. (ESV)

Revelation 15:1, 5-6: Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished. ... After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. (ESV)

Revelation 16:10-11: The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds. (ESV)
Revelation 18:1, 4-5: [Revelation 18 describes the fall of Babylon.] After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. ... Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!" (ESV)

Revelation 19:1: [Revelation 19 describes the rejoicing in Heaven over the fall of Babylon.] After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,” (ESV)

Revelation 19:11, 14: [Revelation 19 describes the rider on the white horse.] Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ... And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. (ESV)

Revelation 20:1-2, 7-9: [Revelation 20 describes the thousand years and the defeat of Satan.] Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, ... And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them. (ESV)
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

What Do the Apocrypha Suggest Regarding the Term “Third Heaven”? Paul’s statement about the “third heaven” in 2 Corinthians 2 may have been influenced by his rabbinical studies which may have included the intertestamental books known as the Apocrypha. The Apocrypha are the noncanonical books that were written during the intertestamental period between the last Old Testament prophet, Malachi, and the New Testament Gospel of Matthew that Martin Luther recommended as useful and good reading. The early Christians had the Septuagint (i.e., Greek) version of Scriptures, and that version contained the Apocrypha. According to The Apocrypha, The Lutheran Edition with Notes:

“In Luther’s German translation of the Bible (1534) the Apocrypha stands between the Old Testament and the New Testament with the title ‘Apocrypha’, that is, books which are not held equal to the sacred Scriptures, and are nevertheless are useful and good to read.”

“Some books described as Apocrypha were not included in Luther’s German translation of the Bible. … Luther did not regard the following books as ‘good to read’ for edification or devotion’: 1 Esdras, 2 Esdras, 3 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees, and Psalm 151.”

References suggesting the existence of multiple heavens may be found in the following apocryphal books: Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, Tobit, Greek Additions to Esther, Letter of Jeremiah, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, the Prayer of Azariah, the Song of the Three Holy Children (included in the Prayer of Azariah), and the Prayer of Manassas. The citations are reproduced farther below.

Discussion of the canonicity of the Apocrypha is outside the scope of this paper. Scholars are divided as to the original language, date, and place of composition of some of the apocryphal books. Most of the apocryphal books were written originally in the Greek language and existed at the first in that language alone. Some books were however written in Hebrew. Therefore, the same meanings of the Hebrew and Greek words for heaven are used here as were used for the Scripture references above.

The book of the Apocrypha, Tobit, is represented as relating historical events after the deportation of the northern tribes of Israel to Assyria in BC 721. Greek Additions to Esther is represented as part of the Book of Esther. The apocryphal books Judith, 1 Maccabees, and 2 Maccabees are represented as recording the period of Israel’s struggle for independence from the Greeks. Susannah, Bel and the Dragon, The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Holy Children are represented as parts of the Book of Daniel. The Prayer of Manasseh is represented as a penitential prayer of King Manasseh of Judah, the only son of King Hezekiah. Prophetic books include Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah. There are also the Wisdom of Solomon which is similar to the canonical book of Proverbs and Ecclesiasticus which is a work of ethical teachings from the early 2nd century B.C.

Apocrypha References for the Three Heavens

*Mention of the First Heaven in the Apocrypha*

Wisdom of Solomon 16 and 19 seem to refer to the first heaven as quoted below.

Wisdom of Solomon 16:20: *Instead of these things you gave your people food of angels [i.e., manna], and without their toil you supplied them from heaven with bread ready to eat, providing every pleasure and suited to every taste.* (NRSA with Apocrypha)
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

Wisdom of Solomon 19:18: Flames, on the contrary, failed to consume the flesh of perishable creatures that walked among them, nor did they melt the crystalline, quick-melting kind of heavenly food [manna]. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Ecclesiasticus 48 seems to refer to the first heaven as quoted below.

Ecclesiasticus 48:3: By the word of the Lord he [Elijah] shut up the heavens, and also three times brought down fire. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Letter of Jeremiah 55 seems to refer only to the first heaven.

Letter of Jeremiah 55: They [false gods] cannot judge their own cause or deliver one who is wronged, for they have no power; they are like crows between heaven and earth.

2 Maccabees 2 seems to refer only to the first heaven.

2 Maccabees 2:10, 18, 21: Just as Moses prayed to the Lord, and fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifices, so also Solomon prayed, and the fire came down and consumed the whole burnt offerings. ... as he promised through the law. We have hope in God that he will soon have mercy on us and will gather us from everywhere under heaven into his holy place, for he has rescued us from great evils and has purified the place. ... and the appearances that came from heaven to those who fought bravely for Judaism, so that though few in number they seized the whole land and pursued the barbarian hordes, (NRSA with Apocrypha)

[Note: These verses seems to address all three heavens. The phrases “fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifices” and “the fire came down and consumed the whole burnt offerings”. In the phrase “gather us from everywhere under heaven into his holy place” the “gather us from everywhere under heaven” would appear to refer to the second heaven, and “into his holy place” would appear to refer to the third heaven.]

Mention of the Second Heaven in the Apocrypha

The Book of Judith seems to refer to the second heaven as quoted below.

Judith 5:8: [Achior, the leader of all the Ammonites, said to Holofernes, the general of the Assyrian army] “Since they [Canaanites] had abandoned the ways of their ancestors, and worshiped the God of heaven, the God they had come to know, their ancestors drove them out from the presence of their gods. So they fled to Mesopotamia, and lived there for a long time.” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Judith 6:19: “O Lord God of heaven, see their arrogance, and have pity on our people in their humiliation, and look kindly today on the faces of those who are consecrated to you.” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Judith 7:28: “We call to witness against you [Holofernes, general of Nebuchadnezzar] heaven and earth and our God, the Lord of our ancestors, who punishes us for our sins and the sins of our ancestors; do today the things that we have described!” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Judith 9:12: “Please, please, God of my father, God of the heritage of Israel, Lord of heaven and earth, Creator of the waters, King of all your creation, hear my prayer!” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Judith 11:17: [Judith spoke to Holofernes.] “Your servant is indeed God-fearing and serves the God of heaven night and day. So, my lord, I will remain with you; but every night your servant will go out into the valley and pray to God. He will tell me when they have committed their sins.” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Judith 13:18: Then Uzziah [chief magistrate of Judith’s town of Bethulia] said to her, “O daughter, you are blessed by the Most High God above all other women on earth; and blessed be the Lord God, who created the heavens and the earth, who has guided you to cut off the head of the leader of our enemies.” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

The Wisdom of Solomon 13 seems to refer to the second heaven as quoted below.
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

Wisdom of Solomon 13:1-2: For all people who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature; and they were unable from the good things that are seen to know the one who exists, nor did they recognize the artisan while paying heed to his works; but they supposed that either fire or wind or swift air, or the circle of the stars, or turbulent water, or the luminaries of heaven were the gods that rule the world.
(NRSA with Apocrypha)

The Letter of Jeremiah 67 seems to refer only to the second heaven.

Letter of Jeremiah 67: they [false gods] cannot show signs in the heavens and among the nations, or shine like the sun or give light like the moon.

The Book of Tobit seems to refer to the second heaven as quoted below.

Tobit 8:5: So she got up, and they began to pray and implore that they might be kept safe. Tobias began by saying, “Blessed are you, O God of our ancestors, and blessed is your name in all generations forever. The Abingdon Bible Commentary indicates.” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Ecclesiasticus 1, 45, 43, 46, and 51 seem to refer to the second heaven as quoted below.

Ecclesiasticus 1:3: The height of heaven, the breadth of the earth, the abyss, and wisdom - who can search them out? (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Ecclesiasticus 43:1-12: The pride of the higher realms is the clear vault of the sky, as glorious to behold as the sight of the heavens. The sun, when it appears, proclaims as it rises what a marvelous instrument it is, the work of the Most High. At noon it parches the land, and who can withstand its burning heat? A man tending a furnace works in burning heat, but three times as hot is the sun scorching the mountains; it breathes out fiery vapors, and its bright rays blind the eyes. Great is the Lord who made it; at his order it hurries on its course. It is the moon that marks the changing seasons, governing the times, their everlasting sign. From the moon comes the sign for festal days, a light that wanes when it completes its course. The new moon, as its name suggests, renews itself; how marvelous it is in this change, a beacon to the hosts on high, shining in the vault of the heavens! The glory of the stars is the beauty of heaven, a glittering array in the heights of the Lord. On the orders of the Holy One they stand in their appointed places; they never relax in their watches. Look at the rainbow, and praise him who made it; it is exceedingly beautiful in its brightness. It encircles the sky with its glorious arc; the hands of the Most High have stretched it out. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Ecclesiasticus 45:15: Moses ordained him [Aaron], and anointed him with holy oil; it was an everlasting covenant for him and for his descendants as long as the heavens endure, to minister to the Lord and serve as priest and bless his people in his name. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Ecclesiasticus 46:17: Then the Lord thundered from heaven, and made his voice heard with a mighty sound; (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Ecclesiasticus 51:19: My soul grappled with wisdom, and in my conduct I was strict; I spread out my hands to the heavens, and lamented my ignorance of her. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Baruch 2 and 3 seem to refer to the second heaven as quoted below.

Baruch 2:2: Under the whole heaven there has not been done the like of what he has done in Jerusalem, in accordance with the threats that were written in the law of Moses. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Baruch 3:29: Who has gone up into heaven, and taken her, and brought her down from the clouds? (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Baruch 5:2-3: Put on the robe of the righteousness that comes from God; put on your head the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting; for God will show your splendor everywhere under heaven. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Tobit 5 seems to refer to the second heaven as quoted below.
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

Tobit 5:10: Then Tobias went out and called him, and said, “Young man, my father is calling for you.” So he went in to him, and Tobit greeted him first. He replied, “Joyous greetings to you!” But Tobit retorted, “What joy is left for me any more? I am a man without eyesight; I cannot see the light of heaven, but I lie in darkness like the dead who no longer see the light. Although still alive, I am among the dead. I hear people but I cannot see them.” But the young man said, “Take courage; the time is near for God to heal you; take courage.” Then Tobit said to him, “My son Tobias wishes to go to Media. Can you accompany him and guide him? I will pay your wages, brother.” He answered, “I can go with him and I know all the roads, for I have often gone to Media and have crossed all its plains, and I am familiar with its mountains and all of its roads.” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

1 Maccabees 2 and 3 seem to refer to the second heaven as quoted below.

1 Maccabees 2:36-37: But they did not answer them or hurl a stone at them or block up their hiding places, for they said, “Let us all die in our innocence; heaven and earth testify for us that you are killing us unjustly.” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

2 Maccabees 3:15, 20: The priests prostrated themselves before the altar in their priestly vestments and called toward heaven upon him who had given the law about deposits, that he should keep them safe for those who had deposited them. ... And holding up their [the priests] hands to heaven, they all made supplication. There was something pitiable in the prostration of the whole populace and the anxiety of the high priest in his great anguish. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

2 Maccabees 14 seems to refer to the second heaven as quoted below.

2 Maccabees 14:34-35: Having said this, he went away. Then the priests stretched out their hands toward heaven and called upon the constant Defender of our nation, in these words: “O Lord of all, though you have need of nothing, you were pleased that there should be a temple for your habitation among us; ...” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

A Greek addition to Esther 4 seems to refer to the second heaven as quoted below.

Greek additions to Esther 4:20: [Mordecai prayed] “for you have made heaven and earth and every wonderful thing under heaven.” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Susanna 1 seems to refer to the second heaven as quoted below.

Susanna 1:9, 35: They [elders lusting after Susannah] suppressed their consciences and turned away their eyes from looking to Heaven or remembering their duty to administer justice. ... [after an attempt to rape her] Through her tears she looked up toward Heaven, for her heart trusted in the Lord. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Bel and the Dragon 5 seems to refer to the second heaven as quoted below.

Bel and the Dragon 5: He [Daniel] answered [to Cyrus the Persian], “Because I do not revere idols made with hands, but the living God, who created heaven and earth and has dominion over all living creatures.” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Prayer of Azariah 40-41 seems to refer to the second heaven as quoted below.

Prayer of Azariah 40-41: Bless the Lord, sun and moon; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. Bless the Lord, stars of heaven; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

[Note: Azariah was the Hebrew name of Abed-nego (i.e., of the third one of the youths identified in Daniel 1 - Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.)]

Prayer of Manasses 1-2 and 9 seem to refer to the second heaven as quoted below.

Prayer of Manasses 1-2, 9: “O Lord Almighty, God of our ancestors, of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and of their righteous offspring; you who made heaven and earth with all their order; ... For the sins I have committed are more in number than the sand of the sea; my transgressions are multiplied, O
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

Lord, they are multiplied! I am not worthy to look up and see the height of heaven because of the multitude of my iniquities.” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Apocrypha - The Third Heaven

Judith 5, 6, and 11 seem to refer to the third heaven as quoted below.

Judith 5:8: Since they [Canaanites] had abandoned the ways of their ancestors, and worshiped the God of heaven, the God they had come to know, their ancestors drove them out from the presence of their gods. So they fled to Mesopotamia, and lived there for a long time. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Judith 6:19: “O Lord God of heaven, “... see their [Assyrian leaders] arrogance, and have pity on our people in their humiliation, and look kindly today on the faces of those who are consecrated to you.” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Judith 11:17: “Your servant is indeed God-fearing and serves the God of heaven night and day. So, my lord, I will remain with you; but every night your servant will go out into the valley and pray to God. He will tell me when they have committed their sins.” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Wisdom 9 and 18 seem to refer to the third heaven as quoted below.

Wisdom 9:9-10, 16: With you is wisdom, she who knows your works and was present when you made the world; she understands what is pleasing in your sight and what is right according to your commandments. Send her forth from the holy heavens, and from the throne of your glory send her, that she may labor at my side, and that I may learn what is pleasing to you. ... We can hardly guess at what is on earth, and what is at hand we find with labor; but who has traced out what is in the heavens? (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Wisdom 18:14-16: For while gentle silence enveloped all things, and night in its swift course was now half gone, your all-powerful word leaped from heaven, from the royal throne, into the midst of the land that was doomed, a stern warrior carrying the sharp sword of your authentic command, and stood and filled all things with death, and touched heaven while standing on the earth. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Tobit 1, 5-10, and 13 seem to refer to the third heaven as quoted below.

Tobit 1:18: I also buried any whom King Sennacherib put to death when he came fleeing from Judea in those days of judgment that the king of heaven executed upon him because of his blasphemies. For in his anger he put to death many Israelites; but I would secretly remove the bodies and bury them. So when Sennacherib looked for them he could not find them. (ESV)

Tobit 5:17: So Tobit said to him, “Blessings be upon you, brother.” Then he called his son and said to him, “Son, prepare supplies for the journey and set out with your brother. May God in heaven bring you safely there and return you in good health to me; and may his angel, my son, accompany you both for your safety.” Before he went out to start his journey, he kissed his father and mother. Tobit then said to him, “Have a safe journey.” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Tobit 6:18: “... the demon will smell it and flee, and will never be seen near her any more. Now when you are about to go to bed with her, both of you must first stand up and pray, imploring the Lord of heaven that mercy and safety may be granted to you. Do not be afraid, for she was set apart for you before the world was made. You will save her, and she will go with you. I presume that you will have children by her, and they will be as brothers to you. Now say no more!” When Tobias heard the words of Raphael and learned that she was his kinswoman, related through his father's lineage, he loved her very much, and his heart was drawn to her. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Tobit 7:11-12, 16: “I have given her to seven men of our kinsmen, and all died on the night when they went in to her. But now, my child, eat and drink, and the Lord will act on behalf of you both.” But Tobias said, “I will neither eat nor drink anything until you settle the things that pertain to me.” So Raguel said, “I will do so. She is given to you in accordance with the decree of Moses, and
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

*it has been decreed from heaven* that she be given to you. Take your kinswoman; from now on you are her brother and she is your sister. She is given to you from today and forever. May the Lord of heaven, my child, guide and prosper you both this night and grant you mercy and peace.” Then Raguel summoned his daughter Sarah. When she came to him he took her by the hand and gave her to Tobias, saying, “Take her to be your wife in accordance with the law and decree written in the book of Moses. Take her and bring her safely to your father. And may the God of heaven prosper your journey with his peace.” ... So she went and made the bed in the room as he had told her, and brought Sarah there. She wept for her daughter. Then, wiping away the tears, she said to her, “Take courage, my daughter; the Lord of heaven grant you joy in place of your sorrow. Take courage, my daughter.” Then she went out. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Tobit 8:15: So they blessed the God of heaven, and Raguel said, “Blessed are you, O God, with every pure blessing; let all your chosen ones bless you. Let them bless you forever.” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Tobit 9:6: *In the morning they both got up early and went to the wedding celebration. When they came into Raguel's house they found Tobias reclining at table. He sprang up and greeted Gabael, who wept and blessed him with the words, “Good and noble son of a father good and noble, upright and generous! May the Lord grant the blessing of heaven to you and your wife, and to your wife’s father and mother. Blessed be God, for I see in Tobias the very image of my cousin Tobit.”* (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Tobit 10:11-13: Then he saw them safely off; he embraced Tobias and said, “Farewell, my child; have a safe journey. The Lord of heaven prosper you and your wife Sarah, and may I see children of yours before I die.” Then he kissed his daughter Sarah and said to her, “My daughter, honor your father-in-law and your mother-in-law, since from now on they are as much your parents as those who gave you birth. Go in peace, daughter, and may I hear a good report about you as long as I live.” Then he bade them farewell and let them go. Then Edna said to Tobias, “My child and dear brother, the Lord of heaven bring you back safely, and may I live long enough to see children of you and of my daughter Sarah before I die. In the sight of the Lord I entrust my daughter to you; do nothing to grieve her all the days of your life. Go in peace, my child. From now on I am your mother and Sarah is your beloved wife. May we all prosper together all the days of our lives.” Then she kissed them both and saw them safely off. Tobias parted from Raguel with happiness and joy, praising the Lord of heaven and earth, King over all, because he had made his journey a success. Finally, he blessed Raguel and his wife Edna, and said, “I have been commanded by the Lord to honor you all the days of my life.” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Tobit 13:7, 11, 16: *As for me, I exalt my God, and my soul rejoices in the King of heaven. ... A bright light will shine to all the ends of the earth; many nations will come to you from far away, the inhabitants of the remotest parts of the earth to your holy name, bearing gifts in their hands for the King of heaven. ... “Generation after generation will give joyful praise in you; the name of the chosen city will endure forever. ... For Jerusalem will be built as his house for all ages. How happy I will be if a remnant of my descendants should survive to see your glory and acknowledge the King of heaven. The gates of Jerusalem will be built with sapphire and emerald, and all your walls with precious stones. The towers of Jerusalem will be built with gold, and their battlements with pure gold. The streets of Jerusalem will be paved with ruby and with stones of Ophir.”* (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Ecclesiasticus (Ben Sira, Sirach) 16, 17, 24, and 48, seem to refer to the third heaven as quoted below.

Ecclesiasticus 16:18: *Lo, heaven and the highest heaven, the abyss and the earth, tremble at his visitation!* (NRSA with Apocrypha)

[Note: Perhaps “heaven and the highest heaven” refer to the second and third heaven respectively.]

Ecclesiasticus 17:32: *He marshals the host of the height of heaven; but all human beings are dust and ashes.* (NRSA with Apocrypha)
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

Ecclesiasticus 24:4-5: I [Wisdom personified] dwelt in the highest heavens, and my throne was in a pillar of cloud. Alone I compassed the vault of heaven and traversed the depths of the abyss. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Ecclesiasticus 48:20: But they [Judah when invaded by Sennacherib] called upon the Lord who is merciful, spreading out their hands toward him. The Holy One quickly heard them from heaven, and delivered them through Isaiah. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

Baruch 1 seems to refer to the third heaven as quoted below.

Baruch 1:11: and pray for the life of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and for the life of his son Belshazzar, so that their days on earth may be like the days of heaven. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

1 Maccabees 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 12, and 16 seem to refer to the third heaven as quoted below.

1 Maccabees 2:58: Elijah, because of great zeal for the law, was taken up into heaven. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

1 Maccabees 3:18-19, 49-50, 59-60: Judas [Maccabeus] replied, “It is easy for many to be hemmed in by few, for in the sight of Heaven there is no difference between saving by many or by few. It is not on the size of the army that victory in battle depends, but strength comes from Heaven.” ... They [followers of Judas Maccabeus] also brought the vestments of the priesthood and the first fruits and the tithes, and they stirred up the nazirites who had completed their days; and they cried aloud to Heaven, saying, “What shall we do with these? Where shall we take them?” ... “It is better for us to die in battle than to see the misfortunes of our nation and of the sanctuary. But as his will in heaven may be, so shall he do.” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

1 Maccabees 4:10, 24, 39-40, 55: [Judas Maccabeus addressed his army] “And now, let us cry to Heaven, to see whether he will favor us and remember his covenant with our ancestors and crush this army before us today.” ... On their return they sang hymns and praises to Heaven - “For he is good, for his mercy endures forever.” ... Then they tore their clothes and mourned with great lamentation; they sprinkled themselves with ashes and fell face down on the ground. And when the signal was given with the trumpets, they cried out to Heaven. ... All the people fell on their faces and worshiped and blessed Heaven, who had prospered them. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

1 Maccabees 5:31: So Judas saw that the battle had begun and that the cry of the town went up to Heaven, with trumpets and loud shouts. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

1 Maccabees 9:46: “Cry out now to Heaven that you may be delivered from the hands of our enemies.” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

1 Maccabees 12:15: “… for we have the help that comes from Heaven for our aid, and so we were delivered from our enemies, and our enemies were humbled.” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

1 Maccabees 16:3: [Simon Maccabeus, follower of his son, Judas, spoke to his sons.] “But now I have grown old, and you by Heaven’s mercy are mature in years. Take my place and my brother’s, and go out and fight for our nation, and may the help that comes from Heaven be with you.” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

2 Maccabees 3, 7, 8, 9-11, and 15 seem to refer to the third heaven as quoted below.

2 Maccabees 3:34: [Two mysterious young men appeared to the high priest.] “And see that you, who have been flogged by heaven [by the two young men], report to all people the majestic power of God.” Having said this they vanished. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

2 Maccabees 3:39: [Two mysterious young men re-appeared to the high priest.] “For he who has his dwelling in heaven watches over that place himself and brings it aid, and he strikes and destroys those who come to do it injury.” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

2 Maccabees 7:10-11, 28, 34: After him, the third was the victim of their minions of the Greek king sport. When it was demanded, he quickly put out his tongue and courageously stretched forth his hands,
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

and said nobly, “I got these from Heaven, and because of his laws I disdain them, and from him I hope to get them back again.” ... “I [mother of the third victim] beg you, my child, to look at the heaven and the earth and see everything that is in them, and recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed. And in the same way the human race came into being. ... But you, unholy wretch, you most defiled of all mortals, do not be elated in vain and puffed up by uncertain hopes, when you raise your hand against the children of heaven. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

[Note: This pertains to the third heaven except perhaps the phrase “look at the heaven and the earth” which seems to refer only to the second heaven.]

2 Maccabees 8:20: ... and the time of the battle against the Galatians that took place in Babylonia, when eight thousand Jews fought along with four thousand Macedonians; yet when the Macedonians were hard pressed, the eight thousand, by the help that came to them from heaven, destroyed one hundred twenty thousand Galatians and took a great amount of booty. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

2 Maccabees 9:4, 10 Transported with rage, he [King Antiochus] conceived the idea of turning upon the Jews the injury done by those who had put him to flight; so he ordered his charioteer to drive without stopping until he completed the journey. But the judgment of heaven rode with him! For in his arrogance he said, “When I get there I will make Jerusalem a cemetery of Jews.” ... Because of his [God-stricken King Antiochus’] intolerable stench no one was able to carry the man who a little while before had thought that he could touch the stars of heaven. ... [Antiochus petitioned the Jews for help.] “If you and your children are well and your affairs are as you wish, I am glad. As my hope is in heaven,” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

[Note: This pertains to the third heaven except perhaps the phrase “thought that he could touch the stars of heaven” which seems to refer only to the second heaven.]

2 Maccabees 10:29: When the battle became fierce, there appeared to the enemy from heaven five resplendent men on horses with golden briddles, and they were leading the Jews. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

2 Maccabees 11:10: They advanced in battle order, having their heavenly ally, for the Lord had mercy on them. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

2 Maccabees 15:3-4, 8, 21, 23, 34: the thrice-accursed wretch asked if there were a sovereign in heaven who had commanded the keeping of the sabbath day. When they declared, “It is the living Lord himself, the Sovereign in heaven, who ordered us to observe the seventh day,” ... He [Judas Maccabeus] exhorted his troops not to fear the attack of the Gentiles, but to keep in mind the former times when help had come to them from heaven, and so to look for the victory that the Almighty would give them. ... Maccabeus, observing the masses that were in front of him and the varied supply of arms and the savagery of the elephants, stretched out his hands toward heaven and called upon the Lord who works wonders; for he knew that it is not by arms, but as the Lord decides, that he gains the victory for those who deserve it. ... [Judas prayed] “So now, O Sovereign of the heavens, send a good angel to spread terror and trembling before us.” ... And they all, looking to heaven, blessed the Lord who had manifested himself, saying, “Blessed is he who has kept his own place undefiled!” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

[Note: This pertains to the third heaven except perhaps the phrases “stretched out his hands toward heaven” and “looking to heaven” which seem to refer only to the second heaven.]

The Song of the Three Holy Children

[Note: The Song of the Three Holy Children is part of the Prayer of Azriah and is not quoted separately.]

The Prayer of Azariah 31-39 seems to refer to the third heaven as quoted below.

Prayer of Azariah 31-39: “Blessed are you in the temple of your holy glory, and to be extolled and highly glorified forever. Blessed are you who look into the depths from your throne on the cherubim, and to be praised and highly exalted forever. Blessed are you on the throne of your kingdom, and to be extolled and highly exalted forever. Blessed are you in the firmament of heaven, and to be sung and
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

glorified forever. Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. Bless the Lord, you heavens; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. Bless the Lord, you angels of the Lord; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. Bless the Lord, all you waters above the heavens; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. Bless the Lord, all you powers of the Lord; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. (NRSA with Apocrypha)

[Note: Azariah is the Hebrew name of Abed-nego, the third youth identified in Daniel 1 - Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.)]

Prayer of Manassas 1 and 15 seems to refer to the third heaven as quoted below.

Prayer of Manassas 1, 15: “O Lord Almighty, God of our ancestors, of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and of their righteous offspring; … and I will praise you continually all the days of my life. For all the host of heaven sings your praise, and yours is the glory forever. Amen.” (NRSA with Apocrypha)

What Are “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”?

In Revelation and in other books of the Old and New Testaments we learn about a “New Heaven”, “New Earth”, and “New Jerusalem”. Although parts of Revelation clearly refer to the “Third Heaven” as understood in this paper, still other verses refer to something that will exist after the second coming of Jesus. Revelation 3:12 mentions the “new Jerusalem”. Revelation 11:15 seems to refer to the New Heaven. Also, Revelation 21:1-5 seems to suggest that there is a closeness between the new heaven and the new earth that does not now exist between the old heaven and the old earth.

Revelation 3:12: The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. (ESV)

Revelation 11:15: Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” (ESV)

Revelation 21:1-5: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” (ESV)

[Note: In Revelation 21:1-3, “the first heaven”, may refer to the earth’s atmosphere, because it is mentioned together with earth. In the second instance the context of “out of heaven from God” suggests a place higher than the earth’s atmosphere - God’s dwelling place.]

Revelation 21:9-10: Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. (ESV)

Other references to the “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth” are found here.

Isaiah 65:17: [God spoke to Isaiah.] “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.” (ESV)
**The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”**

Isaiah 66:22: “For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me”, says the Lord, “so shall your offspring and your name remain. ... Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (ESV)

2 Corinthians 5:1, 17: For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (ESV)

[Note: Paul said that we are a new creation if we are in Christ. When we were baptized and believed, scripture tells us that we entered into Christ’s death and resurrection. So anyone who is in Christ has entered into a new creation. We have entered into Christ’s triumph over death and the old order of things.]

2 Peter 3:11-13: Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (ESV)

From Jesus’ lesson of the budding fig tree we learn that His words transcend creation as it now exists. Regardless of what the “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth” may be like, Jesus’ words will continue to apply.

Matthew 24:32-35: “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” (ESV)

Several commentators have speculated on the meaning of the “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”. Some of their comments are shown below.

Jerome’s (circa AD 340-AD 420) “City of God - On the Beatific Vision”, indicates that we “shall in the future world see the material forms of the new heavens and the new earth in such a way that we shall most distinctly recognize God everywhere present and governing all things, material as well as spiritual, and shall see Him, not as now we understand the invisible things of God … God will be so known by us, and shall be so much before us, that we shall see Him by the spirit in ourselves, in one another, in Himself; in the new heavens and the new earth, in every created thing which shall then exist; and also by the body we shall see Him in every body which the keen vision of the eye of the spiritual body shall reach. Our thoughts also shall be visible to all, for then shall be fulfilled the words of the apostle … in 1 Corinthians 4:5. (See Note.)

1 Corinthians 4:5: Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God. (ESV)

[Note: From The Catholic Encyclopedia, Jerome - The City of God (Book XXII), “Chapter 29”]

Augustine of Hippo (354-430), in his book, Of True Religion, makes numerous references to the kingdom of heaven, the new heaven, and the “new and heavenly man”. Augustine states that: “There will be, as it is written, a New Heaven and a New Earth, and there souls will not have to do their part in toiling, but will reign over the universe.” Augustine comforted his readers with these observations about our Christian belief. “The Holy Incarnation, the birth from a virgin, the death of the Son of God for us, His resurrection from the dead, ascension into heaven, and sitting at the right hand of the Father, the forgiveness of sins, the day of judgment, and the resurrection of the body, are not merely believed, when the eternity of the Trinity and the mutability of created things are known. They are also judged to be part and parcel of the mercy of the most high God, which he has shown towards the human race.” (See Note.)

[Note: From Augustine - Earlier Writings, Of True Religion]
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

Martin Luther (1483-1546) - No writing on the “new heaven”, the “new earth”, or the “New Jerusalem” was discoverable. It is not found either on the Internet or in the complete Luther’s Works, American Edition. However, he did cite 2 Peter 3:13 on that topic in a letter to Philipp Melanchthon. He wrote: “If you are a preacher of mercy, do not preach an imaginary but the true mercy. If the mercy is true, you must therefore bear the true, not an imaginary sin. God does not save those who are only imaginary sinners. Be a sinner, and let your sins be strong, but let your trust in Christ be stronger, and rejoice in Christ who is the victor over sin, death, and the world. We will commit sins while we are here, for this life is not a place where justice resides. We, however, says Peter “But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” (2 Peter 3:13) (See Note.)

[Note: From Letter 99.13, To Philipp Melanchthon, 1 August 1521]

John Calvin (1509-1564) wrote: “By these metaphors [New Heaven, New Earth] he promises a remarkable change of affairs; as if God had said that he has both the inclination and the power not only to restore his Church, but to restore it in such a manner that it shall appear to gain new life and to dwell in a new world. These are exaggerated modes of expression; but the greatness of such a blessing, which was to be manifested at the coming of Christ, could not be described in any other way. Nor does he mean only the first coming, but the whole reign, which must be extended as far as to the last coming … Thus the world is (so to speak) renewed by Christ; and hence also the Apostle (Hebrews 2:5) calls it “a new age,” and undoubtedly alludes to this statement of the Prophet. Yet the Prophet speaks of the restoration of the Church after the return from Babylon. This is undoubtedly true; but that restoration is imperfect, if it be not extended as far as to Christ; and even now we are in the progress and accomplishment of it, and those things will not be fulfilled till the last resurrection, which has been prescribed to be our limit.” (See Note.)

[Note: From Calvin's Commentaries, “Vol. 40 Corinthians, Part II”]

Matthew Henry's (1662-1714) states in his Commentary on the Whole Bible (Concise): “The new heaven and the new earth will not be separate from each other; the earth of the saints, their glorified, bodies, will be heavenly. The old world, with all its troubles and tumults, will have passed away. There will be no sea; this aptly represents freedom from conflicting passions, temptations, troubles, changes, and alarms; from whatever can divide or interrupt the communion of saints. This new Jerusalem is the church of God in its new and perfect state, the church triumphant. Its blessedness came wholly from God, and depends on him. The presence of God with his people in heaven, will not be interrupt as it is on earth, he will dwell with them continually. All effects of former trouble shall be done away. They have often been in tears, by reason of sin, of affliction, of the calamities of the church; but no signs, no remembrance of former sorrows shall remain. Christ makes all things new.” (See Note.)

[Note: From Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible (Concise), “2 Corinthians 12”]

John Wesley (1703 – 1791), in his Wesley's Explanatory Notes states that “After the resurrection and general judgment. St. John is not now describing a flourishing state of the church, but a new and eternal state of all things. For the first heaven and the first earth - not only the lowest part of heaven, not only the solar system, but the whole ethereal heaven, with all its host, whether of planets or fixed stars … All the former things will be done away, that all may become new;” (See Note.)

[Note: From John Wesley, Wesley's Explanatory Notes, “2 Corinthians 12”]

The Lutheran Study Bible indicates that his is a Perfectly restored creation (i.e., without sin) fulfilling Jesus’ prophecy in Matthew 24:32-35 (cited above) and as explained by Paul in Romans 8:19-21 (quoted below). “Scripture repeatedly underscores that one of the greatest blessings of the new heavens and new earth is that restored mankind will again behold God face-to-face and live in His immediate presence. … The new creation has already begun to appear through the preaching of the gospel and the work of the Spirit. However, it will not be completed until the day of Christ’s return.” (See Note.)
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

Romans 8:19-21: *For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.* (ESV)

[Note: From The Lutheran Study Bible, “Introduction to 2 Corinthians” and notes on Chapter 12, “notes on Revelation 21:1-7”]

The Abingdon Bible Commentary indicates that: “… there is no more doubt about the future than about the past if God has determined it. The song of the elders celebrates the coming of the Kingdom, the Last Judgment, and the final reward of the servants of God. … a new universe appears, not new in the time sense of being young and not old, but new in quality, transformed, like but unlike the other. … This New Jerusalem signifies the manifestation of the divine presence; God is to dwell with men and the inhabitants of the city are to be His people.” (See Note.)

[Note: From “First and Second Corinthians” in The Abingdon Bible Commentary]
Date and Circumstances of Paul’s Conversion Vision

The Date
The date of Paul’s conversion may have been about fourteen years before his writing 2 Corinthians. All of the dates suggested (between AD 41-46) are after the martyrdom of Stephen (estimated at AD 35) at which Paul (then Saul) had presided.

The Lutheran Study Bible places the writing of 2 Corinthians at AD 55 (Introduction to 2 Corinthians). If 2 Corinthians was written about AD 55, then Paul’s conversion would have been about AD 41.

Bible Study Tools places the writing of 2 Corinthians at AD 55 (Introduction to 2 Corinthians). If 2 Corinthians was written about AD 55, then Paul’s conversion would have been about AD 41. The rationale given is as follows: “From 1 Corinthians 16:5-8 it may be concluded that 1 Corinthians was written from Ephesus before Pentecost (in the late spring) and that 2 Corinthians may have been written later that same year before the onset of winter. According to 1 Corinthians 16:5-8: I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia, and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey, wherever I go. For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost.” (ESV)

According to The Catholic Encyclopedia Paul wrote the First Epistle to the Corinthians and sent it by Titus about Easter AD 57. The Second Epistle was written a few months after the First, in which Paul had stated that he intended to go round by Macedonia. If 2 Corinthians was written about AD 57, then Paul’s conversion would have been about AD 43.

The Scofield Study Bible places the writing of 2 Corinthians at AD 60 (Introduction to 2 Corinthians). If 2 Corinthians was written about AD 60, then Paul’s conversion would have been about AD 46.

The Story
The Acts of the Apostles gives three accounts of Paul’s conversion. The differences in those accounts are slight and present no contradictions. It would appear, from the context of the word “heaven” in these verses, that heaven pertains to the first heaven. The light form heaven, brighter than the sun, seems to be a phenomenon in the earth’s atmosphere rather than one from outer space.

Acts 9:3-9: [Lukes tells of Paul’s conversion.] Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. (ESV)

Acts 22:6-11, 17-21: [Luke relates how Paul told the story of his conversion to the people in Jerusalem.] “As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ And I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’ Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me. And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.’ And since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus. … “When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

in the temple, I fell into a trance and saw him saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.’ And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.’ And he said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’” (ESV)


“In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles - to whom I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’” (ESV)

Divine Visions Relating to Paul’s Ministry


Acts 9:11-12: [Luke tells of Ananias going to Paul.] And the Lord said to him [Ananias], “Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.” (ESV)

Acts 18:9-10: [Luke tells of Paul’s decision to stay in Corinth and teach the Gentiles.] And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, or I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” (ESV)

Acts 16:7-10: [Luke relates Paul’s vision directing him to go to Macedonia.] And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. (ESV)
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

Biographies of Persons Mentioned in the Paper and in the Bibliography

John Chrysostom
John Chrysostom (c. 347–407), Archbishop of Constantinople, was an important Early Church Father. He is known for his eloquence in preaching and public speaking, his denunciation of abuse of authority by both ecclesiastical and political leaders, the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, and his ascetic sensibilities. After his death in 407 (or, according to some sources, during his life) he was given the Greek epithet chrysostomos, meaning “golden mouthed” in English, and Anglicized to Chrysostom. The Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Churches honor him as a saint and count him among the Three Holy Hierarchs, together with Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzus. He is recognized by the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church as a saint and as a Doctor of the Church. John is known in Christianity chiefly as a preacher, theologian and liturgist. Among his homilies, eight directed against Judaizing Christians remain controversial for their impact on the development of Christian antisemitism.

Augustine of Hippo
Augustine of Hippo (354-430) was born on 13 November, 354 at Tagaste, now Souk-Ahras, about 60 miles from Bona (ancient Hippo-Regius), which was at that time a small free city of proconsular Numidia which had recently been converted from Donatism. Although eminently respectable, his family was not rich, and his father, Patricius, one of the curiales of the city, was still a pagan. However, the admirable virtues that made Monica the ideal of Christian mothers at length brought her husband the grace of baptism and of a holy death, about the year 371. He lost his faith and later converted back to Christianity. At forty-two, became a bishop and occupied the See of Hippo for thirty-four years. He understood well how to combine the exercise of his pastoral duties with the austerities of the religious life, and although he left his order, his episcopal residence became a monastery where he lived a community life with his clergy, who bound themselves to observe religious poverty. The episcopal house of Hippo became a veritable nursery which supplied the founders of the monasteries that were soon spread all over Africa and the bishops who occupied the neighboring sees. Augustine earned the title of patriarch of the religious, and renovator of the clerical, life in Africa.

Thomas Aquinas
Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 7 March 1274) was an Italian Dominican priest of the Roman Catholic Church, and an immensely influential philosopher and theologian in the tradition of scholasticism. He came from one of the noblest families of the Kingdom of Naples, with the title of “counts of Aquino”. He was the foremost classical proponent of natural theology, and the father of Thomism. His influence on Western thought is considerable, and much of modern philosophy was conceived in development or refutation of his ideas, particularly in the areas of ethics, natural law, metaphysics, and political theory. Thomas Aquinas is held in the Catholic Church to be the model teacher for those studying for the priesthood and the highest expression of both natural reason and speculative theology. He is one of the 35 Doctors of the Church, he is considered the Church's greatest theologian and philosopher.

Martin Luther
Martin Luther was born on November 10, 1483 in Eisleben in the Holy Roman Empire - in what is today southern Germany. He died 18 February 1546. He was the second son born to Hans and Margarete (Lindemann) Luther. He later entered the Augustinian Monastery at Erfurt. In 1513, he began his first lectures on the Psalms. In these lectures, Luther's critique of the theological world around him began to take shape. Later, in lectures on Paul's Epistle to the Romans (in 1515/16) his critique became more noticeable. It was during these lectures that Luther finally found the assurance that had evaded him for years. The discovery that changed Luther's life ultimately changed the course of church history and the history of Europe. He had discovered (or recovered) the doctrine of justification by grace alone.

John Calvin
Jean Calvin (born Jehan Cauvin, 10 July 1509 - 27 May 1564) was an influential French theologian and pastor during the Protestant Reformation. He was a principal figure in the development of the system of Christian theology later called Calvinism. Originally trained as a humanist lawyer, he broke from the Roman Catholic Church around 1530. After religious tensions provoked a violent uprising against Protestants in France, Calvin fled to Basel, Switzerland, where he published the first edition of his seminal work The Institutes of the Christian Religion in 1536. Calvin's writing and preachings provided the seeds for the branch of theology that bears his name. The Reformed
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

and Presbyterian churches, which look to Calvin as a chief expositor of their beliefs, have spread throughout the world.

Matthew Henry
Matthew Henry (18 October 1662 – 22 June 1714) was an English commentator on the Bible and Presbyterian minister. He was born at Broad Oak, a farmhouse on the borders of Flintshire and Shropshire. His father, Philip Henry, had just been ejected under the Act of Uniformity 1662. Unlike most of his fellow-sufferers, Philip possessed some private means, and was thus able to give his son a good education. Matthew went first to a school at Islington, and then to Gray's Inn. He soon gave up his legal studies for theology, and in 1687 became minister of a Presbyterian congregation at Chester. He moved again in 1712 to Mare Street, Hackney. Two years later (22 June 1714), he died suddenly of apoplexy at the Queen's Aid House (41 High Street) in Nantwich while on a journey from Chester to London.

John Wesley
John Wesley (17 June 1703 – 2 March 1791) was an Anglican cleric and Christian theologian. Wesley is largely credited, along with his brother Charles Wesley, as founding the Methodist movement which began when he took to open-air preaching in a similar manner to George Whitefield. In contrast to Whitefield's Calvinism, Wesley embraced the Arminian doctrines that were dominant in the 18th-century Church of England. Methodism in both forms became a highly successful evangelical movement in Britain and later in the United States. His work also helped lead to the development of the Holiness movement and Pentecostalism. Wesley helped to organise and form societies of Christians throughout Great Britain, North America and Ireland as small groups that developed intensive, personal accountability, discipleship and religious instruction among members. His great contribution was to appoint itinerant, unordained preachers who travelled widely to evangelize and care for people in the societies. Under Wesley's direction, Methodists became leaders in many social issues of the day, including the prison reform and abolitionism movements.

Rolf Bouma
Rolf Bouma is the Pastor for Academic Ministries at the Campus Chapel in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and teaches environmental ethics and public policy at the University of Michigan. He holds advanced degrees in law and in systematic theology, with thesis work in biotechnology and a theology of nature. He has also served as a pastor to congregations.

The Ministry Theorem
The Ministry Theorem seeks to remind pastors and other leaders in the church that an appreciation of science lies deep within the Reformed tradition as well as within the Christian tradition generally. From a biblical-theological standpoint, Christians rightly view science as a partner in the preaching and teaching ministry of the church, increasing our wonder over God's works and so enhancing our worship of this Creator God. Developed by the Center for Excellence in Preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary and the Science Division of Calvin College, The Ministry Theorem serves to promote an enhanced awareness of contemporary science and to provide resources and encouragement for engaging science in the ministries of congregations everywhere. The resources we provide will be of help to preaching pastors, Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, worship planners, and others in the leadership of congregations.

Aaron Sherwood
Dr. Aaron Sherwood, Ph.D. has an educational background in the humanities (theology and religion, culture, history, philosophy, arts and literature, film and media, etc.) and experience as an educator - most recently on the faculty in the Religion and Philosophy Department at Roanoke College in Salem, VA.
The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”

Bibliography


Mantis Software Mobile Phone App., *King James Version with Strong’s*, [See http://mantisbible.com/Support/AboutMantisBibleStudy/tabid/140/Default.aspx.]


The “Third Heaven”, “New Jerusalem”, “New Heaven”, and “New Earth”
