

## The Paradise of God

### Revelation 2:7

#### Introduction

1. The New Testament speaks of Paradise three time:
    - a. It is a place Jesus promises the repentant thief will be that grants him great comfort – **Luke 23:43**
    - b. It is a place of great significance that Paul was privileged to see in a vision – **2 Corinthians 12:4**
    - c. It is a place Jesus promises to those who overcome, granting them great hope in spite of difficulties – **Revelation 2:7**
  2. Paradise is a word with rich, meaningful history, but which we must allow God to explain to the degree He has.
  3. Comfort is abundantly given with the expectation of Paradise for people who love God and are faithful to Him.
- I. Terminology and References
- A. Etymology of Paradeisos
    - a. “a Persian loanword” (ISBE) – *pairidaēza* – “The Persian word originally meant ‘an enclosure’ and came to mean ‘a park surrounded by a wall.’” (ISBE)
    - b. **Hebrew** – *pardês* – 3x in OT (Nehemiah, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon) – “park, enclosed garden” (TWOT)
      - i. **“forest” (Nehemiah 2:8); “orchard” (Ecclesiastes 2:5; Song of Solomon 4:13)**
    - c. **Greek** – *paradeisos* – 3x in NT (Luke, 2 Corinthians, Revelation) – “garden, orchard” (LEH Lexicon of the Septuagint)
      - i. **“Paradise”** – transliterated.
  - B. Paradeisos in the Septuagint (LXX)
    - a. 27x in 25 verses
    - b. 13x – **Genesis 2-3** – the garden (*paradeisos*) of Eden.
    - c. 7x – elsewhere in reference to the garden of Eden.
      - i. **“the garden of the Lord” (Genesis 13:10; Isaiah 51:3)**
        1. Hebrew – **“the garden of YHWH”**
      - ii. **“the garden of God” (Ezekiel 28:13; 31:8, 9)**
- II. The Significance of Paradise
- A. Fellowship – God’s Presence
    - a. **“Garden of the Lord/God” indicates the significance of the garden is due to its connection with God.**
    - b. God planted the garden – **Genesis 2:8**
    - c. God walked among Adam and Eve in the garden – **Genesis 3:8**
      - i. We are not given to know the amount of time Adam and Eve spent in the garden before they sinned.

- ii. However, the content of this verse expresses the intention of God in planting the garden and placing man there – to “walk” with Him in fellowship.
  - iii. It was when man stopped walking with God (**cf. Genesis 5:22**) that they hid from His presence – fellowship broken.
  - d. Tree of life – **Genesis 2:9; 3:22-24**
    - i. **2:9** – **“the Lord God made”** – “The fact that Gen 2:9 emphasizes not the tree of life but the tree’s planter reinforces the idea that life is from God, not from the tree.” (Hamilton, Victor P., Genesis, NIC Old Testament)
      - 1. The emphasis is on their fellowship/proximity to God who imparts life – it is He who made the tree and gave access to it.
      - 2. **The significance of *paradeisos* is the fellowship with God – hence, spiritual life.**
    - ii. **3:22-24** – man was driven out, and kept out by God, cutting him off from the source of life – ultimately God.
      - 1. “The reason for death is not due to the loss of the tree of life, but rather to the sin of this first couple in the garden.” (Hamilton, Victor P., Genesis, NIC Old Testament)
  - e. **“garden of the Lord”** – makes the greatest emphasis on the Lord that the garden belongs to – **it is God’s presence, then, that is the main focus of paradise.**
  - f. Messianic prophecy – **Isaiah 51:1-3** – in contrast to the unfaithful, the Lord speaks of those who seek Him and call them to look to Abraham – the father of the faithful who trusted in God and saw God deliver.
    - i. **(v. 3)** – comfort in the future in contrast to the current despair of captivity – *paradeisos* used to express the blessedness of this age – ultimately fulfilled in the reign of the Messiah.
    - ii. The Lord and His presence is the ultimate focus, bringing **“Joy and gladness”** and **“Thanksgiving and the voice of melody.”**
- B. Supreme Blessedness
- a. *Paradeisos*, ultimately emphasizing God’s presence and fellowship, includes the idea of supreme blessedness.
  - b. **Genesis 2:9, 10, 16** – continual sustenance.
  - c. **Genesis 2:15** – blessed labor in God’s presence.
  - d. **Genesis 2:18** – supplied companionship/community together with God.
  - e. **Genesis 3:8** – intimate fellowship with God.
- C. *Paradeisos* in the New Testament Context
- a. *Paradeisos* is only found 3x in the NT – twice by Jesus (thief, letter to Ephesus), once by Paul (2 Corinthians).
  - b. The LXX translation, which used *paradeisos* in reference to the garden of God, was made between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC.

- c. “Parádeisos developed into a specific eschatological concept in the Jewish intertestamental writings, especially in the apocalyptic literature. The starting point for all Jewish thinking about paradise, under the influence of the LXX, was the garden of Eden.” (ISBE, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)
- d. **Despite its popularity among intertestamental writers in speculation of what was not revealed, Jesus and Paul used such by divine knowledge and inspired revelation – i.e. their references are certain and have spiritual context to draw from.**

### III. The Paradise in Hades

#### A. Jesus to the Thief

- a. The synoptic gospels record the robbers crucified on either side of Jesus mocking Him – **Matthew 27:44; Mark 15:32**
- b. Luke’s gospel gives more detail, including a dramatic change in one thief over the course of the crucifixion – **Luke 23:39-43** – whatever led to this man’s change of heart, He heard great words of comfort from Jesus.
- c. **“today”** – i.e. not in the judgment when the dead are raised to go to heaven, but this very day.
  - i. **Acts 2:25-28, 31** – Peter quoted **Psalm 16:8-11** and applied it to Christ – He was in hades after He died, but not left there.
    - 1. *hadēs* – “the place (state) of departed souls” (STRONG) (Corresponds to the Hebrew *Sheol*.)
    - 2. Hence, **“You will not leave my soul in Hades.”**
    - 3. **“nor did His flesh see corruption” (v. 31)** – because His soul was brought back into His body in His resurrection.
- d. **“you will be with Me in Paradise”** – Jesus expected to be somewhere upon His death, and the thief would be with Him.
  - i. Where would Jesus be? – **Luke 23:46** – in the care of God. (cf. **Acts 7:59** – Stephen)
  - ii. As *paradeisos* did in reference to the garden of God, it’s greatest focus is being in fellowship with God, and in His care.

#### B. The Rich Man and Lazarus

- a. In the hearing of some covetous Pharisees, Jesus spoke of the fate of a rich man contrasted with that of a man named Lazarus – **Luke 16:19-31**
- b. Upon death, both existed in a realm of the dead – **(vv. 22-23)**
  - i. They are still dead (body and spirit departed, **James 2:26**), but are conscious, and in respective places.
  - ii. **Lazarus** – Abraham’s bosom
    - 1. **(v. 25)** – He is comforted.
  - iii. **Rich Man** – torments in Hades
    - 1. **(vv. 24-25)** – He is tormented.
    - 2. **Hades** – no different than what related to Jesus before.
      - a. **“in (en, locational) torments in (en, locational) Hades”**

- b. **(v. 26)** – **“pass from here to you,” “from there pass to us”** – two locations.
  - c. **Hades is the realm of the dead, containing two places – comfort and torment.**
- c. Abraham’s bosom:
- i. A place where Abraham was himself **(v. 24)** – **cf. Luke 20:37-38** – existing in God’s care awaiting the resurrection.
  - ii. Bosom – a place of embrace, or reclining at supper, denoting fellowship with him – **“the father of all those who believe” (Romans 4:11).**
  - iii. **Luke 19:9** – speaking of Zacchaeus due to his tremendous faith and repentance. **(v. 10)** – by faith
  - iv. **So, a place of fellowship with God, and all those who have fellowship with God, where they are comforted until the last day when all are raised (as Abraham was waiting).**
- C. Other Passages of Significance
- a. **John 6:38-39; Romans 8:38-39** – those who come to belong to Jesus will not be lost or separated from Christ at death.
    - i. The resurrection will ultimately ensure He will lose nothing.
    - ii. **What until then? They are in Christ’s love, in His care.**
  - b. **1 Thessalonians 4:13-14** – they **“sleep in Jesus”** – i.e. their death came upon them as they were in Jesus, but they remain in Jesus.
    - i. **NOTE: “Sleep” is a euphemism for death, but it has connotations of rest, and peace.**
  - c. **Philippians 1:21-24; 2 Timothy 1:12** – dying was gain to Paul, because it meant he would be with Christ – Christ would keep what he committed to Him until the last day.
  - d. **2 Corinthians 5:6-8** – Paul speaks of confidence, or **“courage” (NASB, ESV)**, in death, even if he dies before the Lord comes to give the immortal body.
    - i. Threat of death in their ministry – **2 Corinthians 4:7, 10-12, 14, 16**
    - ii. Confidence in an immortal body prepared – **2 Corinthians 5:1-5**
      - 1. This is the body which is spoken of in **1 Corinthians 15:50-53**
      - 2. Whether by resurrection, or transformation on that day.
    - iii. Acknowledgment of what death entails – **2 Corinthians 5:2-4**
      - 1. Naked/unclothed = without a body
      - 2. If Paul’s physical body is killed, he will be without a body until being clothed with the immortal one.
      - 3. His focus – not to be unclothed but further clothed **(v. 4).**
      - 4. **What about if it is not immediate? (v. 3)**
    - iv. Courage/confidence, even if he is without a body for some time – **2 Corinthians 5:6-8**

1. That immortal body has been guaranteed – **(v. 5)** – this is where the confidence/courage in the face of death comes from.
2. **(v. 7)** – parenthetical, answering to being absent from the Lord in the body – not totally, but in respect to the nature he has discussed with the house not made with hands.
3. **(vv. 6, 8)** – form the full thought.
  - a. **(v. 8)** – not just confident, but well-pleased – i.e. it is more desired – to be absent from the body.
  - b. This equates to **verse 4** – being unclothed.
  - c. Why would he have a greater desire for this? – **“to be present with the Lord” (Philippians 1:21, 23)**
4. **Paul is saying, even though the resurrection be future, as well as heaven, it is better to depart from this life – to be with the Lord, to be in Paradise.**
  - a. **Yet, though it is acknowledged as better, it is not confused with the final state of blessedness which includes the resurrected body “eternal in the heavens” (v. 1).**

#### IV. The Paradise of God

- A. Of the three appearances of *paradeisos* in the New Testament, there appears to be two places/things it describes – the hadean paradise from **Luke 23:43** has been considered.
- B. Paul Concerning His Visions
  - a. Paul is countering the false apostles and their boasting by reluctantly boasting himself, primarily in his weaknesses – **2 Corinthians 12:1-2a** – it is not profitable, but he will speak of the revelations he had been given.
    - i. **(v. 2a)** – **“I know a man...”** – He speaks of himself, but in the third person.
    - ii. Self-boasting is such that he does not want to be directly involved in it. **(v. 5)**
  - b. His vision – **2 Corinthians 12:2-4** – He was caught up.
    - i. **“the third heaven” (v. 2) = “Paradise” (paradeisos) (v. 4)**
    - ii. Third heaven – firmament, then space, then God’s abode.
    - iii. Paradise (*paradeisos*) – used in reference to heaven, God’s abode, the place prepared for the saints in the end.
      1. Not where the dead are now.
      2. Where we will be in the end, when we’re given the body of our inheritance – **1 Corinthians 15:50**
  - c. What was it like? What did he experience? What did he hear? – **(v. 4)**
    - i. **“heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”**
    - ii. **“inexpressible”** – *arrhētos* – “a, negative, *rhetos*, “spoken”” (VINE); “of what cannot be expressed in words” (ALGNT)

- iii. **“not lawful”** to utter – *ou* (absolute negative) *exestin* (lawful)
  - iv. **Not only was what he experienced beyond his power to explain, but it was not lawful for him to – it doesn’t profit us to speculate.**
- C. Christ’s Promise to Them That Overcome
- a. Ephesus was the first of seven churches addressed by Jesus in Revelation – called to repent, and given a promise if change was made – **Revelation 2:7**
    - i. **“To him who overcomes”** – finality, i.e. looking to the end.
    - ii. **“tree of life...Paradise of God”** – both bring the mind back to the garden of Eden.
      - 1. **Tree of life** – signified fullness of life, and immunity from death – **Genesis 2:9; 3:22**
        - a. Again, it is the Planter/Giver of the tree that is emphasized.
        - b. Life comes from God.
      - 2. **Paradise of God** – **“of God,”** like in the references to *paradeisos* in the LXX, places the significance on God – His place of dwelling, His presence – fellowship with God is Paradise.
  - b. Revelation extends the metaphorical language to describe regaining what was lost in Eden for those who are in Christ – **Revelation 22:1-5** – note that the overwhelming emphasis is life drawn from the very presence of God – fellowship with Him is the focus of Heaven.
    - i. **(v. 1)** – water of life because it comes from God – the fountainhead of life.
    - ii. **(v. 2a)** – tree of life, watered by the river, comes from God.
    - iii. **(v. 2b)** – fruit of the tree – continual sustenance, abundance.
    - iv. **(vv. 3-4)** – no more curse, but God’s presence – servants – fellowship.
    - v. **(v. 5)** – the light is the Lord God – His presence.
    - vi. SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE TO EMPHASIZE ETERNAL FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD, SERVING HIM IN HIS VERY PRESENCE – THIS IS THE BLESSING OF HEAVEN, AND WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN US TO HOPE FOR, AND FIND COMFORT IN.

### Conclusion

1. Full fellowship with God is what Paradise is all about.
2. We experience fellowship with God as His children in this life, but such is limited by the physical existence.
3. When we part from this life, we will be in God’s care in a way we’ve never experienced before.
4. When the final day comes, all the saints will be changed in a body ready to inhabit the Paradise of God, where we will be in the most intimate fellowship with Him forever.