

What is the "third heaven"?

Question: Paul says he was “caught up to the third heaven” (2 Cor. 12:2). What does this mean and what are the other two?

Answer: The word “heaven” is used in three different ways in the Bible:

1. The first heaven is the **atmospheric heavens**. This is the clouds and where the birds fly (Ps. 8:8, 77:17-18, 79:2, 104:12).
2. The second heaven is the **starry heavens**. This is the moon and the stars (Gen. 22:17, Ps. 8:3, Isa. 13:10)
3. The third heaven is the **abode of God**. We pray to the Father in heaven.

Paul says God took him to heaven and told him things that he couldn't share with others (2 Cor. 12:2, Matt. 5:45, 6:9, 16:17). He was referring to the abode of God.

When the Bible speaks of the heavens passing away (2 Pet. 3:10), it is speaking of the first and second heavens being destroyed, but not the third heaven.