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THIRD HEAVEN

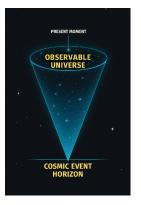


The Cosmic Event Horizon and the Third Heaven

by Dr. Larry Ollison

The Cosmic Event Horizon is defined as the outermost boundary of the observable universe where light from beyond can never reach us due to the expansion of spacetime.

Because space itself is expending, distant galaxies can **recede from us faster than the speed of light**—not because they are moving through space at that speed, but because space itself is stretching. This is allowed by **general relativity**, which does not impose a speed limit on the expansion of space.



Recalling Paul's Vision

The apostle Paul had an amazing experience when he was taken to the third heaven which he called Paradise. This extraordinary event is recorded in his letter (2 Corinthians 12:2-4) and raises this question. Where is the third heaven? Let's review the circumstances of this event.

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

2 Corinthians 12:2-4

Paul, speaking in the third person (which the Pharisees of his day often did), said that an event took place fourteen years before that was evidently so life-changing and personal that he did not reveal this experience for fourteen years. What happened fourteen years ago? How did this change the direction of Paul's ministry?

The Incident at Lystra

Exactly fourteen years before, Paul was in the city of Lystra. While he was there, a group of hostile Jews from Antioch and Iconium stirred up the crowd and they

stoned Paul (Acts 14:19). This was a method of execution at that time. Supposing Paul to be dead, they dragged his body outside the city to decay. However, later his disciples (those who were assisting him and following his ministry) gathered around his body and he got up—alive—and went back into the city (Acts 14:20).

Could it be that Paul actually was executed by the crowd as planned and had what today we would call a near-death experience? Paul implied strongly in his teachings that to be absent from the body was to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8) and James (the half-brother of Jesus) said that without the spirit the body is dead (James 2:26). Could it be that Paul died and was taken to the Paradise of God in heaven, experienced the awesome glories of that magnificent place, and then came back to life when the disciples surrounded him?

It's interesting that Jesus said those who believe in Him would do the same works and even greater works than He did, and one of the things He did was raise the dead (John 11:43-44). In fact, when He sent out His twelve disciples, He told them to raise the dead (Matthew 10:8). Could it be that the believers who surrounded Paul did just that?

This event undoubtedly changed Paul's ministry. After his adventure in Paradise, he went on to write thirteen books in our Bible. In one of his writings, he said he had been on earth, and he had been in heaven and he would much rather be there with Christ; but because of the mission ahead of him, it was important that he continue the path ahead of him (Philippians 1:20-26).

The Mystery of the Third Heaven

Where is the third heaven? When was it created? Is it in heaven? When was heaven created? Is it measured in distance or in dimension? Is it light years away or near and only unseen? Is there a place in outer space that is unattainable by mankind



Expanding Universe

now or ever? Is there a place that man could never reach even if he could travel at the speed of light?

The third heaven contains the Paradise of God (2 Corinthians 12:4). No one can enter the third heaven unless God allows it.

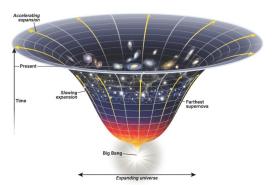
In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:1

God did not create the heavens and the earth out of nothing. He created them out of the unseen.

By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

Hebrews 11:3



Expanding Universe

When God said, "Let there be light," He never said "Stop!" Thus we have an ever expanding universe. The expansion is not at the speed of light but the speed of light cannot keep up with the expansion. That sounds like a paradox.

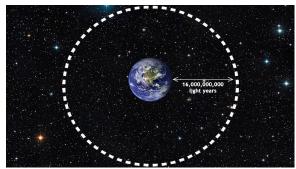
There seems to be a conflict with some Christians between the Bible and science. God created the physics of this world. True science and true Scripture do not conflict. Every time a new scientific discovery is made, it proves the Word of God to be true. With that in mind, let's take a look at a subject rarely explored. As Christians, we should have answers when the world asks us.



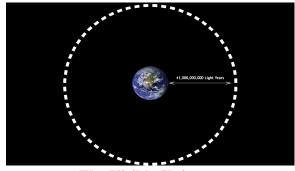
The Cosmic Event Horizon

In outer space there is a circular area around the earth that is currently estimated to be sixteen billion light years away. This ring or area is known as the cosmic event horizon. The cosmic event horizon marks the boundary beyond which galaxies are receding so fast—due to the universe's expansion—that their light will never reach us, even in the infinite future. It is not a physical wall, but rather a limit set by the expansion of the universe itself.

Galaxies within this cosmic boundary are still observable and will continue to be in the future. Yet, because of the universe's accelerating expansion, the galaxies beyond this horizon will eventually become permanently unreachable.



The Cosmic Event Horizon Boundary



The Visible Universe

The farther we go, the more distant they become. No matter how fast we move—even at light speed—mankind remains confined within the limits of the observable universe. There is a boundary in space that natural humans can never cross.

What is Beyond This Line of Limitation?

Could it be a place where God and His angels can travel, but we cannot in the natural? Paul was transported supernaturally to a place that when he returned, it was unlawful for him to say what he experienced. That place was Paradise.

Paradise is the home of the righteous who are in their spirit bodies waiting for Jesus to return to earth. According to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, when Jesus returns, the Father will send with Him the spirits of all the departed saints. The Bible says their graves will be opened, and as they are caught up into the air, their dead physical bodies will be reconstructed and become glorified—spirit, soul, and body. From that point on, they, along with the resurrected living who are likewise glorified with them, are forever with the Lord. Together they reside in heaven

where they will experience the judgment seat of Christ and the marriage supper of the Lamb before their return on white horses with Him at the second coming.

But where is this place called Paradise? Where is the place where the judgment seat of Christ and the marriage supper of the Lamb will take place? The Bible says that Jesus, the Messiah, our Savior is seated at the right hand of the Father (Ephesians 1:20). This is obviously in a place called heaven that is only attainable by invitation.

The first heaven is the atmosphere surrounding the earth where we live in our earthly bodies. The second heaven is beyond that where there are principalities and powers of the air with much angelic activity. Could it be that the third heaven and the Paradise of God is in the area beyond the cosmic event horizon, a place that is unattainable in the natural realm where we currently live?

All Things Created

Science believes that the universe started from a singularity smaller than an atom. (A singularity refers to a point in the very early universe where density and temperature are thought to have been infinitely high, and the laws of physics as we know them break down.) Regardless of whether this is true or not, there is something that we do know as an absolute truth—God has always existed without beginning. Whatever was created and how it was created was done by Him and His Word.

Colossians 1:16 says, "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him."

Not only did God create time (Titus 1:2) that is part of the unseen substance of creation, but He also created everything that can be seen. What does that mean? Simply this. Regardless of how far the Hubble and James Webb telescopes can see into space, everything that is seen and everything that is not seen was created by Him and through Him all things exist.

God Has No Beginning

"And He is <u>before</u> all things, and in Him all things consist" (Colossians 1:17).

There is no beginning to God. His existence is eternal. No one can write God's biography, because He has no beginning. That reality is incomprehensible to the human mind.

Yet this eternal God invites us to work with the most powerful substance in the universe—faith. It is a living substance in the unseen realm we can activate to change things in the seen realm.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

Hebrews 11:1-3

Believers who have passed from this life are in the third heaven—unseen by us, but we are visible to them. They are fully alive, functioning with all five senses and more, able to perceive across the veil into our realm.

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us...

Hebrews 12:1

The Unseen Realm

What is in the unseen realm? Spirits are in the unseen realm. Words are in the unseen realm. But even though they are unseen, they change things and their effect can be seen in the natural realm. Can you deny what you can't see just because you can't see it? That doesn't make it go away.

Jesus shows us this principle in John 3:8: "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

We must start thinking dimensionally rather than by distance. Consider a simple illustration: Venetian blinds. I took these two pictures of the same window in my

office—one with the blinds closed, the other with them open. When closed, the view outside is hidden. When opened, it's fully visible. Was the view always there? Absolutely. It didn't appear—it was simply obscured from sight.



While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:18

Another example is dark matter. How do we know it exists if we can't see it? Not by direct observation, but by its effects. We witness its presence through the way it influences gravity and bends light. Though invisible, its fingerprints are unmistakable.

The world typically runs on the principle of "what you see is what you get." But as believers, we cannot live by what we see. We must understand that God is the God of both the visible and the invisible—His power and presence extend far beyond what our eyes can perceive. He is far greater than we can possibly imagine.

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

2 Corinthians 5:7

An Astronomical Reality

The expansion of the universe does impose a fundamental limit on how far we could ever travel—even if we had the ability to move at the speed of light.

The key issue is that space itself is expanding, and distant regions of the universe are receding from us faster than the speed of light due to this expansion. This

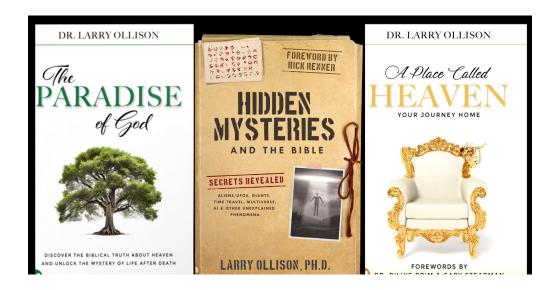
means that beyond a certain distance, known as the **cosmic event horizon**, objects are moving away so quickly that even light from them will never reach us.

Even if we could travel at the speed of light, we would never be able to reach these distant regions because they are effectively cut off from us forever—because of earthly physics in this dispensation of time—by the accelerating expansion of space. This is why the observable universe is limited to a finite region, even though the entire universe may be much larger—or even infinite.

However, in the fullness of time, through Paul's example, we gain insight into the nature of our spirit bodies and the glorified bodies we will receive at the rapture. These will not be bound by the laws of earthly physics—they can travel freely, unhindered by the spatial limitations we now experience.

God took Paul to the place where we, as His redeemed, will be for all eternity. A realm unrestricted by earthly limitations. There, we will exist as eternal beings with unlimited access to the limitless creation prepared for Him and His jointheirs—His church.

We have a God who created all that we see and all we don't see. Why would be put our trust anywhere else? So, wherever heaven is, there is only one way to get there and it's not on a spaceship—even at warp speed. Our relationship with the Messiah gives us an all-access pass to the kingdom of heaven and there will be a day very soon when the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords will come and take us home. Will you be ready?



Books available to order from Amazon.com or The Lighthouse Bookstore





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