

What about...Out of the body?

I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. 2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was *in the body or out of the body* I do not know—God knows. 3 And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—4 was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell. (2 Corinthians 12:1-4 NIV)

Is Paul saying that he didn't know whether this was an out-of-body experience (where his soul or spirit left his body) or not? Or is he simply saying he didn't know whether this happened to him physically or spiritually? Whether he was actually physically there or was this just a vision?

I think “out of the body,” does convey the idea of an out-of-body experience. But is this the most accurate translation? In verse two above, Paul uses the Greek phrase “ektos tou somatos,” which in most translations is translated “out of the body.” This is the only place in the New Testament where “ektos,” is translated “out of.” In verse three above, Paul uses the Greek phrase “chōris tou somatos,” which in most translations is also translated “out of the body.” This is the only place where “chōris,” is translated “out of,” in over forty instances in the New Testament. Does this show bias on the part of the translators? I believe it does. I find it rather suspicious that the translators would choose a rarely used interpretation that strongly supports what most Christians (including Bible translators) believe (that we have a soul that is our conscious self that can be separated from our body). Consider this also, if your soul could leave the body isn't that the most common description of dying? If you think it is the spirit that has this out-of-body experience the Bible addresses that in [James 2:26](#) by explaining that the body without the spirit is dead. Paul says nothing about having died to have this so called out-of-body experience. And I don't think he would be questioning whether or not he might have been caught up bodily to heaven if he had. In addition to that a very workable interpretation can be made using more common meanings of the Greek words “ektos,” and “chōris.” Ektos can be translated; without, outside, except, apart from. Chōris can be translated; apart from, separately from, without, independent of.

Fortunately the Greek phrase “ektos tou somatos,” translated “out of the body,” in 2 Corinthians 12:2 is used elsewhere by Paul in 1Corinthians 6:18 where it is translated “outside the body.”

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are *outside the body*, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. (1 Corinthians 6:18 NIV)

The idea conveyed by “ektos tou somatos, in 1Corinthians 6:18 is that sins beside sexual sins are “outside” the body or “external” to the body. Certainly other sins can involve the body but sexual sins are considered as sinning against your body. The underlying thought is that sins beside sexual sins do not “involve” the body like sexual sins do. Plug this interpretation into 2 Corinthians 12:2 and Paul was saying that when he was caught up to heaven he didn't know if he was caught up bodily (in the body) or whether it didn't actually “involve” his body (outside/without/independent of the body). Because it was so real he couldn't tell the difference.

Here's a couple of translations that interpret 2 Corinthians 12:1-4 differently [[GOD'S WORD Translation](#), [Good News Translation](#)]. Of course, me finding a couple translations that agree with my viewpoint proves little. I don't know if I have convinced you of anything in this chapter. This might be one of those instances where the strength of the argument relies on the weight of everything else I will present in other chapters. As a free thinking adult the decision is up to you. I have a grandson (who at the time was almost 18) that complained to his mom after being told he would have to pay his own way to go to an amusement park, “Why do you always treat me like an adult?” I know you won't complain that I treat you like an adult but, I would understand if you found the amount of detail in this chapter rather dry. I did and I wrote it. Ugh, let's get on to the next chapter.