

THE INTERCONTINENTAL CHURCH OF GOD

SPECIFIC BIBLE STUDIES - THIEF CRUCIFIED WITH JESUS

SUBJECT: Thief Crucified with Jesus, where did he go? - Heaven and Thief Crucified with Jesus

QUESTIONS: Where did the thieves go after they died?

ANSWER:

There is a well known and documented error in the translation.

Punctuation Problems

Luke 23:43 has been erroneously used by some to claim that Jesus went straight to heaven at His death. The original Greek did not have punctuation marks as we do today. The KJV states, "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." The comma should not be after "thee", but "today." The believing malefactor would be with Christ in the paradise of the redeemed when he was resurrected far into the future.

The idea of going to heaven when we die is not supported in the scriptures.

One question you might ask is why would Christ tell the malefactor that he would be in heaven that day when He was going to be in the grave?

Another question is, why would dead people go to heaven if Christ is coming back to the Earth to set up a 1000 year kingdom?

1Thes 4:16-17

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (these verses speaking to the firstfruits)

Note: The dead (sleeping) are resurrected to rise up to meet Christ in the air. If there were dead in heaven, why is there not a description of them coming down and why would there be some in heaven and some still in the ground?

Jesus, himself said that no man has ever gone to heaven...

John 3:13

13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

Here is another explanation I found at a Contradictions Explained web sites:

Did the malefactor go into Paradise on the day of the crucifixion?

Luke 23:43:

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

John 20:17:

Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

Acts 2:24,31:

Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

The apparent contradiction between such sections of Scripture is caused by (1) a wrong understanding of the terms "Paradise", and (2) a wrong translation and punctuation of Luke 23:43. For many, "Paradise" means the same as "Heaven" and perhaps this is the reason for the inclusion of John 20:17 in the above mentioned statement of the problem. "Paradise" however is biblically not the same as "heaven", and it must be noted that "heaven" takes on different meanings in various contexts where it is used. "Paradise" first of all describes the garden of Eden, the original paradise where in the beginning Adam and Eve lived and from where they were driven out after the fall of man (cp Genesis 1 -- 3). It was a location on earth, not a location in heaven. In the Bible "paradise" is mentioned only in reference to the still future "paradise" after God will have established a new heaven and a new earth (cp Revelation 22), and then again it will be a place on earth. In between these two poles there is no "paradise", therefore it was and is not possible for anyone to go to paradise until the future paradise has been established by God.

Having this absolutely clear biblical background, it is now possible to solve the problem with the statement in Luke 23:43. On that very day there was no paradise in existence where Jesus and the believing malefactor could have gone. Where did Jesus "go" that day? As Acts 2:24 and 31 state, Jesus died that day and was buried in the grave where he remained for 3 days and 3 nights. He was in gravedom, held by death for this period of time. With the malefactor it was the same in that he died that day and ended up in the grave where he still is to this day. Did Jesus make a false promise that day? Was he of the opinion that he would be in paradise that very day even though he had declared at a different time that he would be in the grave for 3 days and 3 nights? No!

Translators and those interpreting the Scriptures have translated Jesus' words this way based on their own belief and the traditional doctrine that believers go to heaven immediately after death and that "heaven" and "paradise" are the same. This way it is in accordance with their biased opinion, but not with the rest of Scripture. One has to recognize that there was no punctuation in the oldest manuscripts of the Biblical texts and that punctuation therefore is not part of the originally God inspired Word of God. If one looks at the Greek text of Luke 23:43, one can read (without punctuation): and he said unto him verily to you I say today with me will you be in paradise

The problem is immediately solved when the verse is understood in light of the previously mentioned truths and correctly punctuated: and he said unto him: Verily to you I say today, With me will you be in paradise!

The expression "I say to you today" is very typical for Semitic languages, such as Aramaic and Hebrew, in order to put a special emphasis on what then follows as a statement. It is found several places in the Old Testament already in important places. One should also note that the malefactor in his request to Jesus did not think of a paradise on that day at all, but he spoke of "when thou comest into thy kingdom". Jesus then in his response referred to this future reality of his kingdom with the term "paradise". On that very day of their death there was no paradise, but Jesus did give this repenting malefactor on that very day a promise that he would in the future be with him in paradise.!

---end---

Note: Christ was telling the malafactor that he would be in the Kingdom of God, not heaven.

Now a word about "sleeping".

SLEEP

A natural period of rest during which consciousness is suspended. In the Bible, sleep is a common metaphor for death. In 1 and 2 Kings, especially, the phrase, "he rested (slept, KJV) with his fathers," occurs many times <1 Kin. 2:10; 11:43>. The Christian dead "sleep in Jesus" <1 Thes. 4:14>. Sleep also can symbolize physical laziness, which brings poverty . In the New Testament sleep often suggests spiritual or moral laziness <1 Thes. 5:6>. On the other hand, sleep can be a symbol of living in safety . God gives sleep to the righteous and to the hard worker .

(from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

SLEEP

SLEEP. The rendering of several Heb. and Gk. words, used in the general sense of sleep or rest for the body . The manner of sleeping in warm Eastern climates is different than that in colder countries. Their beds are generally hard; feather beds are unknown. The poor often sleep on mats or wrapped in their outer garment, for which reason the latter was not allowed to be retained in pledge overnight . The wealthy sleep on mattresses stuffed with wool or cotton, being often only a thick quilt, used singly or piled upon each other. In winter a similar quilt of finer material forms the cover, whereas a thin blanket suffices in summer; unless, indeed, the convenient outer garment is used <1 Sam. 19:13>. See Bed. Figurative. Sleep is employed as a symbol of death (; etc.; KJV only:); of the moral

slackness, indolence, or stupid inactivity of the wicked .

(from New Unger's Bible Dictionary)

I Cor. 15 is the Resurrection Chapter of the Bible. It uses the word sleep in verse 51...

1 Cor 15:51

51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

(KJV)

Here is the Strong Concordance meaning of the word.

2837 koimao (koy-mah'-o);

from 2749; to put to sleep, i.e. (passively or reflexively) to slumber; figuratively, to de cease:

KJV-- (be a-, fall a-, fall on) sleep, be dead.