

THE THIEF ON THE CROSS

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Much has been said and made of the thief on the cross. Many people have taken comfort from the story of the thief to whom Jesus makes the famous quote, "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Unfortunately for the people who quote or rely on this scripture, the meaning of this verse is not what they believe. Before we discuss this scripture, we need to understand why people have placed so much significance on these words. Many today want to take the easy way out (with little responsibility or commitment), or they are looking for Godly hope and they find it very comforting to think, that when they are on death's doorstep, they can simply say sorry and all will be well. They are wrong! The other concept which comes forward is the appreciation that when you die, you go straight to heaven to be with the Lord. That also is error. Let us have a closer look at the words of Jesus and see what He is truly saying.

This is the scripture that many find confusing. LUK 23:42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. **43** And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

The thief requests to be remembered... Jesus replies, "To day (gr, semeron, this day) shalt thou be with me in paradise' (Greek 'paradeisos'... para. around + 'deisos' a wall, i.e. bordered park. The word 'paradise' means a bordered garden, parkland area... it has both spiritual and natural applications. Eg., Garden of Eden, natural parklands and the 3rd heaven was a spiritual parkland. The context of how the word is used determines its application... like many other biblical words. Jesus was simply saying to the thief, this day we are both going to the grave and nothing more. Literal translation from the Greek ...'this day (not another day) with me thou shalt be in paradise'. Vines dictionary makes it very clear as well.

In order for his sacrificial death to occur, God had to allow Jesus to be in the hands of men for the whole time, without intervention.

Jesus could not forgive sin while he was on the cross ... he had to ask God even though the sin was against his person. MAT 9:6 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, This ceased after his arrest.

LUK 23:34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. *This is the only time in his ministry, he asked God to forgive someone else's sin... he had lost that authority.*

MAT 27:46 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken (totally abandoned) me? No Spirit, no God, no natural hope.

Jesus had the authority to end his crucifixion at any time, but chose to suffer all things, including pain, sorrow, distress and the ultimate rejection.

Bible prophecy confirms the people surrounding his death. ISA 53:9 And he made his grave (was buried) with the wicked (hostile to God), and with the rich in his death; *A redeemed thief doesn't appear in any prophecy or record.*

The burial. JOH 19:38 And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave [him] leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. **39** And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound [weight]. **40** Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. **41** Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. **42** There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation [day]; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand. *Jesus was laid in a sepulchre in the GARDEN.*

He died with the wicked (not one saved and one wicked) and was buried in a rich mans' grave). The custom of the day was to bury the dead in parks and gardens. Jesus and the thief didn't go to heaven (incorrectly concluded from the Greek word... 'paradeisos') but rather to the grave. Literally... a park or garden surrounded by a hedge or fence etc., (Eden was also surrounded by a border, as the Cherubims guarded the entrance at the east of the garden).

When did Jesus rise from the dead? Consider a couple of other points which also relate to this moment. From the time that Jesus was arrested and imprisoned, he had become responsible for the sin for the whole human race. LUK 24:7 Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. Also, **2COR 5:21** For he hath made him [to be] sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Even though Jesus could have pulled out of his sacrifice at any time, God had to turn his back on him so death could follow. As 'sin', being on his own, he had no power to forgive sin or make any other promises at this time. Jesus was in no position to offer the thief on the cross anything at all. He had handed himself over to the authority of men in the garden that he might be sacrificed on the cross. He couldn't do anything except die, otherwise he would no longer be the sacrifice. He simply stated the reality of their position... they were going to die and be buried that day. There's no mention of forgiveness to the thief as he was always careful to announce when blessing people.

MAT 12:40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (man's control as opposed to God's). From his arrest, to his death and resurrection: 3 days and 3 nights (biblical days went from sunset to sunset). It's also ironic that one of the symbols of the papacy and false Christianity is a fish. Like Jonah, a great 'fish' (being a religious political alliance), took Jesus. *Apostate Christianity eat fish on Friday, the same day that Jesus died (a 'Freudian slip' celebrating Christ's murder).

Both Jonah and Jesus were delivered from the 'fish' and went on to save many people... Jonah went to Ninevah where 120k were saved (Pentecost 120 received).

MAT 28:1 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first [day] of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. *Jesus didn't rise until the third full day of his captivity... Neither Jesus nor the thief went to heaven the day that they died, in fact it was another 40 days before Jesus returned to God. ACT 1:3* To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

The thief normally would have had a slow and painful death... over a couple of days. JOH 19:31 The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and [that] they might be taken away. *The Jews requested that the legs of those on the crosses be broken to speed up their deaths because the following day was a Sabbath (high) day. The thief was certainly going to the grave that day and not the next or the next.*

Many of Jesus disciples, perhaps even the thief, thought that he would come down off the cross and usher in a new kingdom overthrowing the Romans and the Jews.

The thief may not have maintained his repentance as some assume. MAT 27:44 The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast (3679 oneidizo... to upbraid) **the same in his teeth.** *How sincere was the 'repentant' thief? His repentance might not have lasted all that long. Initially, he may have been genuine, but rejected Jesus when it was clear that the grave was awaiting all of them. He acknowledged that Jesus was the son of God by asking to be remembered in the kingdom... he thought Jesus was going to save himself as many also did. It appears he also mocked Jesus after the Lord made it clear that he wasn't going to be supernaturally delivered, but rather, he was going to the grave. This would have left the thief with no escape from death or judgment and would better explain Jesus short reply. There is no further reference to the thief in the scriptures.*

Jesus had no power to personally vouch for anyone wishing to be saved... everyone had to meet the conditions of their own salvation... no exception.

The thief wasn't the only one that wanted Jesus to help them get into the Kingdom of God. MAT 20:21 And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. **23** And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, **is not mine to give, but [it shall be given to them] for whom it is prepared of my Father.** *It was up to God... not Jesus. Jesus never at any time promised anyone entry into the kingdom of heaven by his authority alone. He revealed the coming salvation plan relating to repentance and baptism in water and spirit, but at no time short circuited this procedure otherwise he would not need to die at all. Jesus has become a mediator between man and God, working through the Holy Spirit. Jesus didn't mediate salvation till the day of Pentecost. 1TIM 2:5* For [there is] one God, and one mediator (one who intervenes between two) between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

The risen Jesus makes further statements. JOH 20:15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, **supposing him to be the gardener,** saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. **16** Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. **17** Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not (*don't adhere to me yet*); **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. *Mary went to the grave but the stone had been rolled away and the body of Jesus was gone. As Jesus spoke to her, she assumed it was the gardener speaking (Jesus went to paradise, the grave ...Garden, and of necessity there is a gardener).*

**If "paradise" was heaven then neither Jesus nor the thief went there on the day of their deaths and on that basis, the bible account would have to be wrong. If 'paradise' is a garden or park, also the burial place of the dead, then the biblical account is in harmony with both the Greek and Hebrew language as well as the historical account. The evidence is compelling.*

No one has yet entered the Kingdom of God, except Jesus Christ. 1 COR 15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, [and] become the firstfruits of them that **slept** (*have died*). Christ is the first to rise from the dead. No one else will rise till he returns. **23** **But every man in his own order** (*there is an order by which the dead will rise*): Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's **at his coming.** *The dead Christians will not live again until Christ returns... the dead are sleeping and not in heaven as many incorrectly assume.*

1THE 4:16 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:** *If the dead, overcoming Christians are first to be raised, then there can be no others raised yet... can there?*

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. **18** Wherefore comfort one another with these words. *How could the thief be in heaven when no one is raised from the dead until after the 2nd coming of Christ? What help did Jesus give the thief?*

There is an alternative reason why religion requires the thief to be in heaven. Many 'Christians' refuse to follow the Bible pattern of salvation which Peter proclaimed on the day of Pentecost.

They prefer to 'give their heart to the Lord' or 'believe on Christ', etc. Salvation comes through receiving the Holy Spirit speaking in tongues, with the full compliment of spiritual gifts. Many want to dispute the signs and obedience that Jesus demanded, thus they remain compromised. The thief on the cross was one of the few 'heroes' that they could produce to support their 'watery' doctrine. If the thief could be shown to be dead rather than in heaven, then their faith would collapse. This is why many will continue to uphold the thief on the cross despite very clear evidence to the contrary.

If their hero is dead, their doctrine and church is also dead.

Let's have a proper look at Christ's words and get some solid, scriptural direction. MAR 16:17 And these signs shall follow them that **believe** (*do you believe*); In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; **18** They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. *What scriptural signs follow you?*

19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. *Forty days after his resurrection ...not on the day of his death.* **20** And they went forth, and preached every where, **the Lord working with [them], and confirming the word with signs following.** Amen. *It hasn't changed, God's Word is still the same today and will remain the same till Jesus returns.*