

CONTRARY PASSAGES?



Lesson 9 for
November 26, 2022

"You search
the Scriptures
for in them
you think you
have eternal
life; and these
are they which
testify of Me"

John 5:39



There are some passages in the New Testament that might seem to imply that there are immortal souls or spirits, or that there's a hell of fire where the wicked are burning forever.

However, they don't actually mean that. When studying their context and connecting them to other passages in Scriptures, they teach the same thing as the rest of the Bible does: Death is an unconscious state until the resurrection.



- Luke 16:19-31: Parable or reality?
- Luke 23:43: A problematic comma
- Philippians 1:21-24: Dying and being with Jesus
- 1 Peter 3:13-20: The spirits in prison?
- Revelation 6:9-11: Souls crying for justice

PARABLE OR REALITY?

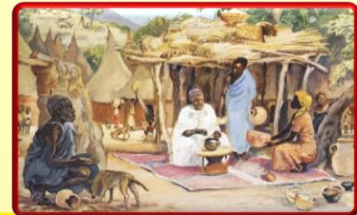
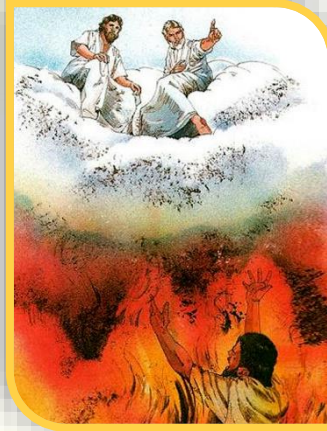
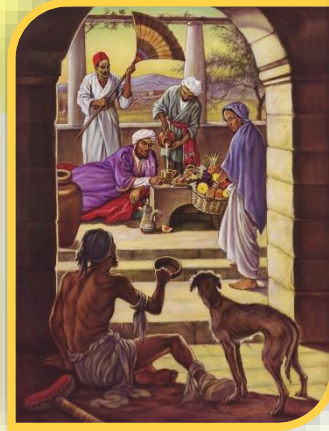
"In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side." (Luke 16:23)

The story of the rich man and Lazarus is a parable meant to teach something, not to explain reality. If it were something real:



- ➡ Heaven and hell would be so close that people in them can talk to each other but are separated by a great chasm (v. 26 niv).**
- ➡ After death, souls would be conscious and would have eyes, fingers, and tongue, and could be thirsty (v. 23-24).**
- ➡ The saints would be watching how the wicked are suffering (even their own children) but cannot do anything to help them (v. 25).**

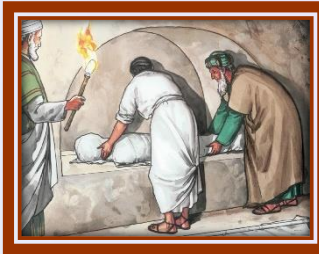
Jesus wanted to teach that our future reward doesn't depend on our current wealth, that our final destiny is determined in this life, and that the Bible is our textbook to learn about the plan of salvation.



PARABLE OR REALITY?

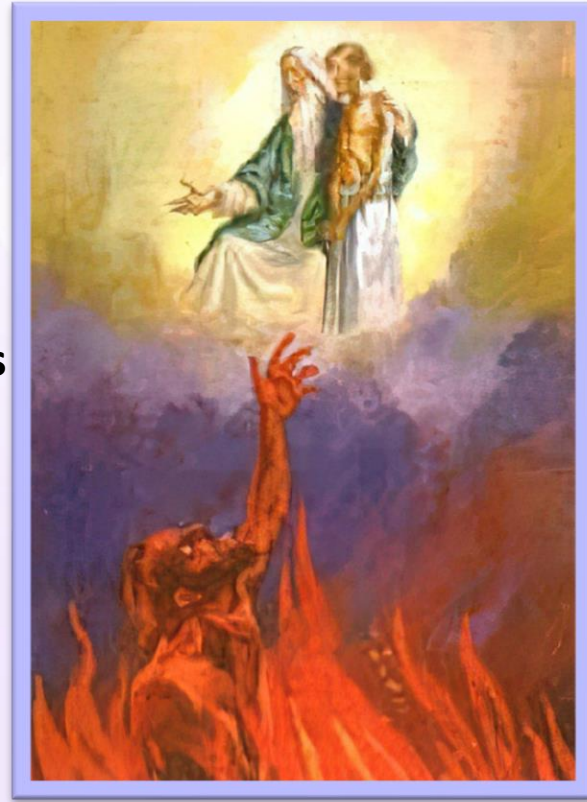
"In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side." (Luke 16:23)

In Greek, the place where the rich man is suffering is called "Hades." It is equal to the Hebrew word "Seol." This is evident in Peter's translation of Psalm 16:10 in Acts 2:27.

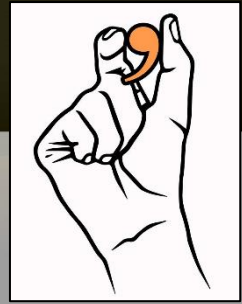


If we were to accept this parable as proof of what happens to death people, we would've to accept something inconceivable: that Jesus was also tormented in that place (because Peter used Psalm 16:10 to refer to Jesus being dead before His resurrection).

A literal interpretation of the parable would cancel God's promise that He "will wipe away every tear" and "there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying." (Rev. 21:4)




A PROBLEMATIC COMMA




“And Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’” (Luke 23:43)

In most of the translations of this verse, it seems that Jesus and the “good thief” would be in paradise that same day after dying.

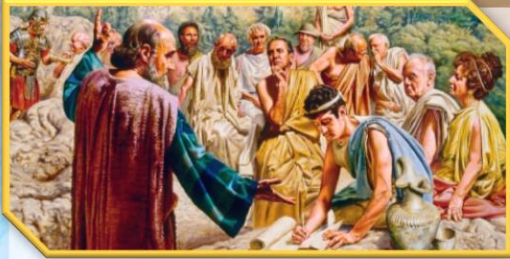
However, no commas were used in the original Greek text. Therefore, there are two ways this sentence could be translated depending on the position of the comma:

 “[...] I say to you, today you will be with Me [...]” In that case, Jesus would’ve ascended to Heaven that same day. However, He said “I have not yet ascended to the Father” two days later (Jn. 20:17).

 “[...] I say to you today, you will be with Me [...]” Correct! Jesus assured the thief that He would remember him when He’ll come back in His Kingdom, just as the thief had asked (Lk. 23:42).

DYING AND BEING WITH JESUS

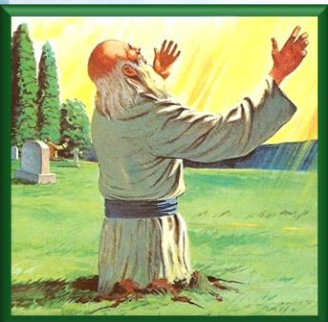
"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain [...] having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." (Philippians 1:21, 23)



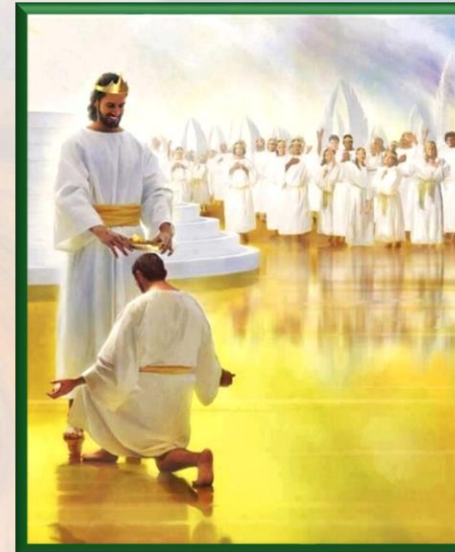
Paul was hesitating. Would it be better to live and work in favor of the Church and the Gospel (Philp. 1:22, 24) or to die and to be with Jesus, resting from the arduous work (Philp. 1:23)?



Dying and being with Jesus? Paul taught that the saints are sleeping until the Second Coming of Jesus (1Ths. 4:13-15). He didn't expect to receive his crown until a future moment (2Tm. 4:8). Wasn't he contradicting himself?



The dead are unconscious (Job 14:10-12; Ps. 146:4; Eccl. 9:10). Therefore, after Paul died, the next thing he will see will be Jesus' face in His Second Coming after being resurrected, "to be with the Lord" (see 1Ths. 4:17).



THE SPIRITS IN PRISON?

"[...] but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison,"
(1 Peter 3:18-19)

Who are those spirits in prison to whom Jesus preached "by the spirit" (1P. 3:18)?



Some people say they're fallen angels based in 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6. However, why would He preach to those who are not going to repent anymore?

Peter clearly states that they're the rebellious antediluvians who heard Noah's preaching (1P. 3:20). Noah spoke with the spirit of Christ like all other prophets, offering salvation to his contemporaries (1P. 1:10-11).



Peter used the expression "spirits in prison" to refer to people who are enslaved by sin (Jn. 8:34).

SOULS CRYING FOR JUSTICE

“When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.” (Revelation 6:9)



Did John see the incorporeal souls of the martyrs talking to God in Heaven?



The altar in this verse is the altar of burnt offering (Lv. 4:25)



It was located in the courtyard which symbolizes Earth (Rev. 11:2)



The souls represent people (1K. 15:29) who were martyred on Earth



The cry is a symbol, like Abel's blood crying out in Genesis 4:10



They will not receive any reward until the Second Coming when “the number of their fellow servants” will be complete (Rev. 7:3-4, 14-15)

John saw the historical time of the Inquisition martyrs in vision, not incorporeal souls.

“A correct understanding of ‘what saith the Scriptures’ in regard to the state of the dead is essential for this time. God's Word declares that the dead know not anything, their hatred and love have alike perished. We must come to the sure word of prophecy for our authority [...] Unless we are rooted and grounded in the truth, we shall be swept away by Satan's delusive snares. We must cling to our Bibles.”

E. G. W. (Evangelism, cp. 8, p. 249)