

Three Paradises

No. 289

Introduction.

I. In Luke 23:33 we learn Jesus was crucified at the place of the Skull with two thieves - one on His left hand and one on His right hand. With this in mind I would like to invite your attention to the reading of Luke 23:39-43.

39 And one of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" 40 But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 "And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." 42 And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" 43 And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."

II. Jesus said , as we just read, to the penitent thief, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."

III. I would like for us to make a study of the word "Paradise."

A. The word "paradise" had a Persian origin and had the idea of “a park, hunting-ground, a grand enclose or preserve.” ^{Thayer}

B. The Greek word for “paradise” is "paradeisos" meaning “a place of delight, “a place of blessing.”

C. The Bible tells us of "Three Paradises."

I. **The Garden Of Eden** - The first paradise was the garden of Eden.

A. This garden is described in Genesis the 2nd chapter. (Gen. 2:8-15).

8 And the Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. 9 And out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. 10 Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers. 11 The name of the first is Pishon; it flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 And the gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there. 13 And the name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the whole land of Cush. 14 And the name of the third river is Tigris; it flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. 15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

B. Moses clearly reveals that the "garden of Eden" was in the ancient Mesopotamia - present day Iraq. Two of the four rivers irrigating Eden, the Tigris and the Euphrates, are still known to geographers.

C. The name "Eden" comes from the Hebrew "eden" meaning “delight, pleasantness.”

1. **The garden of Eden was a delightful garden.** It had no thorns, brambles or thistles. It had no diseases, decay or death.
2. It is no wonder that the translators of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, called the garden "paradise" in Genesis 2:8.

D. There were two special trees in this paradise.

1. One was "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" and the other was "the tree of life."
2. Adam and Eve were strictly forbidden to eat of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." (Gen. 2:17).
3. We remember that Adam and Eve sinned and ate of the forbidden tree.
4. Because of their sin, they suffered a number of penalties including being driven from "the tree of life" lest they eat of it and live forever. (Gen. 3:22).
5. The garden of Eden has long since disappeared, and so the story of the first Paradise ends in sadness.

II. Spiritual Place Of Comfort - The second Paradise is not a physical place, but a spiritual place of comfort.

- A. It is not, however, the "heavens of heavens" where God dwells. (1 Kg. 8:27; Acts 7:49a).
- B. It is a spiritual place of comfort for the departed spirits of the righteous.
- C. **Here are some revealed facts.** (Show chart **Some Facts About Jesus**)

1. Jesus died on Friday	4. Jesus left His body on the cross , but His spirit went to Paradise. (Lk. 23:43).	7. Jesus was raised from the dead . All 4 gospels record.
2. He promised the thief on the cross He would be with him in this Paradise that day (Lk. 23:43)	5. His body was later placed in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea that Friday. (Lk. 23:53). See time of burial. (Lk. 23:54).	8. He appeared first to Mary Magdalene. (Mk. 16:9). Mary was very glad to see Jesus and clung to Him. (Jn. 20:17).
3. As He was dying He commended His spirit to God . (Lk. 23:46).	6. On Sunday morning Jesus' spirit returned to His body in the tomb. See James 2:26.	

D. These facts reveal the following. (Show chart **Jesus Not In Heaven On Friday**)

1. Jesus was not saying He would be in heaven on Friday with the thief as many have thought.	2. Jesus had gone to Paradise on Friday afternoon, but on Sunday morning He has not yet ascended to be with the Father in heaven. (Jn. 20:17).	3. It is clear from the words of Jesus that "Paradise" in Luke 23 is not heaven. It is another place of bliss.
--	--	---

E. The most reasonable conclusion is that Paradise is one and the same as "Abraham's bosom."

1. Jesus gives us this information about Abraham's bosom. (Lk. 16:19 -25).

19 "Now there was a certain rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, gaily living in splendor every day. 20 "And a certain poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, 21 and longing to be fed with

the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. 22 "Now it came about that the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. 23 "And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 "And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.' 25 "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.

2. We find in this reading that **Abraham's bosom is clearly called a place of comfort** for righteous people.
3. **Unless there are 2 places of comfort** for the souls of righteous people, it seems certain that "Abraham's bosom" and Paradise are the same place.

F. **"Abrahams bosom" or "Paradise" has a 3rd name in the scriptures.**

1. It is also called the "third heaven". The first heaven is the heaven where the birds fly. The second heaven is the heaven where the celestial bodies are located. The third heaven is "Paradise" or "Abraham's bosom" where souls go at death.
2. **In about 43 A.D., Paul went miraculously to "the third heaven."** This is described in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 - written about 57 A.D..

2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago-- whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- such a man was caught up to the third heaven. 3 And I know how such a man-- whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows-- 4 was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

4. Paul here speaks of the "third heaven." (Show chart on screen)

1. Most people assume "the third heaven" is the heaven of heavens where God dwells,	2. This is very questionable	4. It is clear from the writings of John that at the time Paul wrote these words that no one had seen God. (Jn. 1:18; 1 Jn. 4:12).	6. It appears Paul miraculously went to the "third heaven" (paradise) and returned to earth having "heard unutterable words, which a man is not permitted to speak."
	3. Those who go to heaven have the promise of seeing God. (Matt. 5:8). Exod. 33:20	5. John 3:13 Elijah (2 Kgs. 2:11). David had not gone to heaven. (Acts 2:34). Stephen did not go to heaven. (Acts 7:60). Paul had not gone to heaven.	7. We can conclude from all of this that "Abraham's bosom", "paradise" and the third heaven are all the same place

III. **Heaven Of Heavens** - There is a third paradise in the scriptures.

- A. Paradise is used to describe the garden of Eden, it is used to describe the place of the departed righteous spirits, and it is

used to describe the heaven of heavens. The book of Revelation shows, that though “Paradise” can be used of any delightful place, that “Paradise” in this book is used of heaven itself.

B. Jesus made this promise to the ones who overcome the trials and persecutions of this world. (Rev. 2:7).

1. Jesus says the ones overcoming will be permitted “to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.”

2. Later in the book of Revelation, John gives us a vivid description of heaven.

a. Listen to the description he gives. (Rev. 22:1-5).

1 And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, 2 in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; 4 and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. 5 And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever.

b. Note from this reading John gives us **the new location of the tree of life**. It is no longer in the garden of Eden. It is not in “Abraham’s bosom” (the intermediate spiritual paradise). It is in heaven.

c. **It is not a single tree**. The tree of life grows on both sides of the river and bears twelve fruits monthly.

d. **Those in this heaven will see God**. Those who are in heaven will have free access to the tree of life. Those who have access to this tree will not know pain, or disease, or death and will live forever. (Rev. 22:3, 5)

Conclusion.

I. Brethren, we can look forward to two of the “Paradises” discussed in this lesson.

A. We will never be in the paradise of Eden because it is gone forever.

B. But if we live righteously, we will at death go the “Abraham’s bosom,” the intermediate spiritual paradise (also called the third heaven).

1. The righteous remain in this place of comfort where they enjoy the care of God until Christ comes.

2. Once Jesus comes again the spirits of the righteous will leave “Abraham’s bosom” (paradise) and will be reunited with their physical bodies.

3. They will be **raised from the dead**. (Jn. 5:28, 29; 6:40).

4. They will receive **a new spiritual body**. (1 Cor. 15:53).

5. The righteous, along with the wicked, will all stand before **the judgment seat of Christ**. (2 Cor 5:10).

6. The righteous will then **ascend to be with God**. (1 Thess. 4:17, 18).

7. The righteous will then **enter heaven** (the eternal paradise) and enjoy God’s great blessings.

8. There the righteous will **have the new spiritual bodies** perfectly adapted for heaven.
9. There they will have **access to the tree of life**.
10. There they **will see God**. (Rev. 22:3). Keep in mind the aged John said no one had ever seen God. (1 Jn. 4:12).
11. There they **will reign forever**. (Rev. 22:5).

II. The certain hope of these two paradises should motivate us as Christians to live faithfully.

III. This certainty of the two paradises should motivate those outside of Christ to repent of their sins and come to Christ. Christ will save those who will trust in Him, turn from their sins, be baptized, and serve Him. Come now to Christ as we stand and sing.

"Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®,
© Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation
Used by permission." (www.Lockman.org)