

Taken from <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Olympus/5257/haveyou.htm>

HAVE YOU HEARD?

By Juan Baixeras

Most Christians are under the impression that what they have come to believe and accept as Christianity, is the same as what Jesus and the Apostles taught. This unfortunately is not the case. **Greek philosophy**, disastrously crept into the early church and changed some of the most fundamental and important concepts of the faith. What happened in a nutshell is the following: in the time of Jesus and the Apostles, Greek thought was considered to be the **most enlightening** way of thinking. All the educated people in those days had been educated in Greek philosophy. Greek was considered to be the international language of the civilized world, much as English is today. This is why the New Testament was written in Greek. **Platonism** was very widespread and very influential in those days. All of a sudden, here comes this man called Paul preaching the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, and doing incredible miracles in Jesus' name. In his visits he converts many Greeks and people who have been taught the ways of **Greek philosophy** their whole lives. These were people who had been pagans for their entire lives up to this point, and now suddenly, they hear Paul's message of the kingdom and believe the truth. They truly accept the **kingdom of God** message and Jesus Christ as **the Messiah**. But when time passes and the Apostles are no longer around, they start reading the Hebrew Scriptures with a Greek mind, that is, a thought process that is **influenced by Greek philosophy**. Attempting to read Hebrew Scriptures in this way will inevitably lead to the misinterpretation of some of the writings, which is exactly what happened in some key areas. A friend of mine has a great example of what I am speaking about. He says that if an Englishman says "*I am mad about my flat.*" He is actually saying that he is excited about his apartment, but to an American it means that

"he is angry about his flat tire." In this case they are both speaking English in the same century, now imagine what can happen when you try to interpret **Hebrew** writings using **Greek philosophy** a few centuries later. We must discard the Greek philosophical interpretations and return to what the words originally meant in Hebrew and Greek. Make no mistake, Greek philosophy has different definitions for words than does the Greek language.

By using Greek philosophical definitions the most important message of the Bible has been changed into something that has very few if anything in common with the original message. This is why it is so important for each of us to know God's word, so that we can avoid being deceived.

"Many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 Jn 4:1).

"False messiahs and false prophets will arise, and they will perform signs and wonders so great as to deceive, if that were possible, even the elect" (Mt 24:24).

By answering a few of the following questions, you will be able to tell if you have been led astray by false teachings. Believe me, Satan does not want you to hear this message. If you do not find one of the verses which I quote from the Old Testament, please look one verse above or below, some Bibles have a slight difference in numeration in the Old Testament.

What does the Bible say that it takes to have eternal life? 99.999% of people I ask this question to will answer by quoting one of the Scriptures in which Jesus says that whoever **believes in him** has eternal life, such as **Jn 3:16**. My next question to them is, believes in him what? The reply is always, that **Jesus died for your sins**. This answer is only **half-correct**, but they are missing a very important half. Right now you are probably saying to yourself "*what can the other half possibly be?*" Let me answer that question with another question.

Why did Jesus come into this world? Again, the reply is; that Jesus came to die on the cross and pay for our sins. Let us take a look at the reason Jesus gives us as to why he came.

Luke 4:43

*"To the other towns I must proclaim the good news of **the kingdom of God**, because for this purpose **I have been sent**."*

Luke 8:1

*"Afterward he journeyed from one town and village to another, preaching and proclaiming the good news of **the kingdom of God**."*

Mark 1: 14-15

*"After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the **gospel of God**. This is the time of fulfillment. The **kingdom of God** is at hand."*

The kingdom of God is also referred to as the *kingdom of heaven, the gospel of the kingdom, the word of God, the gospel, word of the Lord, the mystery of the gospel, the gospel of Christ, the truth, and the word*. These are the main titles that are used to refer to the **kingdom of God**, there are several more which are used less frequently, But these will suffice for this paper.

The reason Jesus came was to **proclaim the kingdom of God** message. The reason that **he died** on the cross was so that we could **enter into the kingdom of God**. When Jesus says that he who believes in him has eternal life, he is not talking about believing that he

died for your sins, he is **still alive** at this time. Even his Apostles did not understand about the resurrection until the **very end**.

As Jesus and the Apostles are approaching Jerusalem, Jesus for the **third time** tries to explain to them why he has to die, and they still do not understand.

*"But they **understood nothing** of this; the word remained hidden from them and they **failed to comprehend** what he said" (Luke 18:34).*

But way before this episode, Luke talks about Jesus sending the 12 Apostles out to preach the kingdom of God:

*"And he sent them to **proclaim the kingdom of God** and to heal the sick"*

(Luke 9:2).

Then he sent out the seventy-two to proclaim the kingdom of God:

*"cure the sick in it and say to them, **"The kingdom of God is at hand for you"***

(Luke 10:9).

Obviously the resurrection of Jesus is not a part of the kingdom of God message which Jesus and the Apostles are proclaiming at that time.

The kingdom of God message is the central theme of the Old and New Testament. When Jesus, after the resurrection appears to them for forty days, his main instruction is still **on the kingdom of God**.

*"He presented himself alive to them by many proofs after he had suffered, appearing to them during forty days and **speaking about the kingdom of God**" (Acts 1:3).*

This was the **main mission** of Jesus and the Apostles, to proclaim the kingdom of God. Here are some more examples:

Matthew 24:14 (Jesus speaking)

*"And the gospel of **the kingdom** will be preached **throughout the whole world** as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."*

Acts 8:12

*"But once they began to believe Philip as he preached the good news about **the kingdom of God** and the name of Jesus Christ."*

Acts 19:8 (Paul)

*"He entered the synagogue, and for three months debated boldly with persuasive arguments about **the kingdom of God.**"*

Acts 20:25 (Paul)

*"But now I know that none of you to whom I preached **the kingdom** during my travels will ever see my face again."*

Acts 28:23 (Paul)

*"Bearing witness to **the kingdom of God** and trying to convince them about Jesus from the law of Moses and the prophets."*

Acts 28:31 (Paul)

*"And without hindrance he proclaimed **the kingdom of God** and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ."*

Your next question should be; **what is the kingdom of God message**, and why have I not heard almost anything on it before? The reason you have not heard much about the kingdom of God message is because this is the message that Satan hates the most, because this is the message that saves you. The kingdom of God message that is prophesied by the Hebrew prophets is summarized as:

*"The kingdom of God will be established **throughout the world** with a rehabilitated Jerusalem as **its capital** and the **Messiah** (Jesus, whom God resurrected) as **God's ideal king of Israel** (Israel=Christians) administering an ideal government. It will be a government of peace and justice, and we, **the resurrected saints**, will help Jesus in its administration."*

This is the message that we must believe in. This is the theme of the entire Bible. The reason of the resurrection was not only to atone for our sins, but it was also the proof that Jesus was who he said he was, **the Messiah**. When Jesus said that whoever believes in him will have eternal life, he was saying that whoever believes that **he is the Messiah** will have eternal life, not that whoever believes that he died for your sins will have eternal life. The Messiah **is** supposed to die for our sins, but that is only a **part** of the kingdom of God message, it is not the whole message. This is how Satan has tried to distort matters, and by looking at the current situation, he has done a pretty good job of it.

If you would like to see the seriousness of the message and how Satan tries to keep you from it, just read the Parable of the Sower :

Luke 8:11-12

*"The seed is the **word of God** (means "word of the kingdom," compare it to **Matthew 13:19**). Those on the path are the ones who **have heard**, but the **devil** comes and takes the word from their hearts that they may **not believe and be saved**."*

Satan will do **whatever he can** to keep you from this message, this is why most of us are so unfamiliar with it. Don't you think that since this was the central theme of Jesus and the Apostle's teachings, that we should be a little more familiar with it. But most of us are not. When you do hear something on it, it is usually distorted and a completely **different message** from what the prophets talked about. People will say that the kingdom of God is really in your heart, or that it is the church. In order to clear up any misunderstandings, let us take a look at all the prophesies of the Messiah and the kingdom of God from Abraham all the way through the New Testament and let you judge for yourself.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

In these verses you will see what God has promised Abraham and his descendants, **the land, the earth, the nations as our inheritance**, not heaven. It started with the promises that God made to Abraham that he and his descendants would inherit the Promised Land forever. This of course has not happened. Abraham never inherited the land, and his descendants who reached Israel did not keep it forever. They lost their land and recovered it again in 1948. Obviously God's promises to Abraham have not been fulfilled yet, and since God does not lie, it will happen.

Psalms 115:16

*"The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the **earth** he has given to **man**."*

Genesis 13:15

*"All the **land** that you see I will give to you (Abraham) and your seed forever."*

Psalms 37:9,11,22,29,34

*"But those who wait for the LORD shall possess **the land**."*

*"But the meek shall possess **the land**."*

*"But those whom He blesses shall possess **the land**."*

*"The just shall possess **the land** and **dwell in it forever**."*

*"He will promote you to ownership of **the land**."*

Psalm 2:7-9

*"The LORD said to me, "You are my son; this day I have begotten you. Ask of me and I will give you the **nations for an inheritance** and the ends of the **earth** for your possession. You shall rule them with an iron rod."*

Zechariah 9:10

*"The warriors bow shall be banished, and he shall proclaim peace to **the nations**. His dominion shall be from **sea to sea**, and from the River to the **ends of the earth**."*

Isaiah 65:9,17

*"My chosen ones shall inherit the **land**."*

*Lo, I am about to create new heavens and a **new earth**; the things of the past shall not be remembered or come to mind."*

In these verses you will see that the Messiah is supposed to be a **king** whose domain is the entire **earth** and all the **nations and its peoples**. His kingdom is **forever** and all shall serve him.

Daniel 7:13-14

*"One like a son of man coming, on the clouds of heaven; When he reached the Ancient One and was presented before Him, he received dominion, glory, and **kingship**; **nations** and **peoples** of every language serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away, **his kingship** shall not be destroyed."*

2 Samuel 7:12-14,16

*"And when your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I will make his **kingdom** firm. It is he who shall build a house for my name. And I will make his royal throne firm forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. Your house and your **kingdom** shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm **forever**."*

Jeremiah 23:5

*"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up a righteous shoot of David; As **king** he shall **reign** and **govern** wisely, he shall do what is just and right in the **land**."*

Daniel 7:27

*"Then the **kingship** and dominion and majesty of all the kingdoms **under the heavens** shall be given to the **holy people** of the Most High. Whose **kingdom shall be everlasting**: all dominions **shall serve** and obey him."*

Isaiah 49:6-7

*"I will make you a light to the **nations**, that my salvation may reach to the **ends of the earth**. When kings see you, they shall stand up, and princes shall prostrate themselves."*

Psalms 72:11,17

*"All kings shall pay him homage, all **nations** shall serve him.*

May his name be blessed forever; as long as the sun his name shall remain. In him all the tribes of the earth be blessed."

Psalms 111:6

*"He has made known to His people the power of His works, giving them the **lands of the nations**."*

In the Messianic kingdom there will have to be a centralized seat of power from where the Messiah (king) will reign. These verses will show you that the **capital** of the Messianic kingdom will be a rehabilitated Jerusalem. **Israel = Zion**.

Isaiah 24:23: *"For the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and **in Jerusalem**."*

Psalms 135:21: *"Blessed from Zion be the LORD, who **dwells in Jerusalem**."*

Micah 5:2,3-4

*"From you shall come forth for me one who is to be **ruler in Israel**.*

*He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock by the strength of the LORD, in the majestic name of the LORD, **his God**; And they shall remain, for now his greatness shall reach to the ends of **the earth**; he shall be peace."*

Psalms 89:4,27-30,37

"Forever will I confirm your posterity and establish your throne for all generations.

*He shall say of me "You are my father, **my God**, the rock, my savior." And I will make him the first-born, highest of the **kings of the earth**. Forever I will maintain my kindness toward him, and my covenant with him stands firm. I will make his posterity endure forever."*

Psalm 110:1-2

*"The LORD said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand till I make your enemies your footstool." The scepter of your power the LORD will stretch forth **from Zion**."*

Psalm 132:11,14,17-18

"Your own offspring I will set upon your throne.

***Zion** is my resting place forever; in her **I will dwell**, for I prefer her.*

In her I will make a horn sprout forth for David; I will place a lamp for my anointed. His enemies I will clothe with shame, But upon him my crown shall shine."

Isaiah 2:3-4

*"For from **Zion** shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD **from Jerusalem**. He shall judge between the **nations**, and impose terms on **many peoples**.*

One nation shall not raise the sword against another."

These verses show that the Messiah will suffer and pay for the **world's sins**.

Genesis 12:3

*"All the communities of **the earth** shall find blessing in you."*

Isaiah 53:5-6,11-12

*"But he was pierced for our offenses, crushed for **our sins**.*

*But the LORD laid upon him the **guilt of us all**.*

*Through his suffering, my servant shall **justify many**, and **their guilt he shall bear**. Therefore I will give him his portion among the great.*

*And he shall take away the **sins of many**, and win pardon for their offenses."*

NEW TESTAMENT

Now we will compare to see if the New Testament is in agreement with the Old Testament. These verses will show you that the promises made to Abraham in the Old Testament are still the **central focus** of Christianity. Jesus Christ came to **proclaim** and **confirm** the promises made to Abraham.

Galatians 3:29

*"If you belong to Christ, then you are reckoned as **Abraham's descendants**, heirs according to the **promise**."*

Romans 4:13

*"The **promise was made to Abraham** and his descendants that he would **inherit the world**."*

Romans 15:8

*"Christ became a minister of the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, to **confirm the promises made to the patriarchs**" (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob)*

Ephesians 3:6

*"The Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the **promise** in Christ Jesus through the gospel."*

Acts 26:6-7

*"I am standing trial because of my hope in the **promise made by God to our ancestors**. Our twelve tribes hope to attain to that **promise** as they fervently worship God day and night; and on account of this hope I am accused by Jews."*

These first verses will show that the **kingdom of God** is still as the Old Testament states, **on the earth**.

Revelation 5:10

*"You made them a kingdom and priests for our God, and they will **reign on earth**."*

Matthew 5:5

*"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit **the land**."*

Matthew 25:31-32

*"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious **throne**, and all the **nations** will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats."*

Revelation 2:26

*"To the victor, who keeps to my ways until the end, I will give **authority over the nations**."*

These verses will show us that it is **an actual kingdom**. We are even instructed by **Jesus to pray** for the **coming** of this kingdom.

Luke 1:32-33

*"He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the **throne of David** his father, and he will **rule** over the house of **Jacob forever**, and of his **kingdom there will be no end**."*

Revelation 3:21

*"I will give the victor the right to sit with me on **my throne**, as I myself first won the victory to sit with my Father on **his throne**."*

1 Corinthians 6:2

"Do you not know that the holy one will judge the world."

Luke 12:32

*"For your Father is pleased to give you the **kingdom**."*

Matthew 6:10

*"Your **kingdom come**."*

These verses show that we the saints (Christians) will **reign with Christ** in his kingdom. The word that is used for reign in these verses is better understood as **administer**. So we will help Jesus the Messiah **administer** the kingdom of God.

Luke 22:29-30

*"And I confer a **kingdom** on you, just as my Father has conferred one on me, that you may eat and drink at my table in **my kingdom**; and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of **Israel**."*

Revelation 20:4-5

*"They came to life and they **reigned with Christ** for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were over."*

Revelation 20:6

*"They will be priests of God and **reign with him** for the thousand years."*

2 Timothy 2:12

*"If we persevere we shall also **reign with him**."*

The New Testament **agrees completely** with what the prophets told us in the Old Testament. The angel Gabriel tells Mary exactly why Jesus has come in **Lk 1:32**. The kingdom is **here on earth**, with Jesus the Messiah **as our king**.

The last piece of this puzzle is; if the kingdom of God is here on earth, how does going to heaven fit in? The answer is, it doesn't! We are not supposed to go to heaven. Heaven is where God, Jesus, (until his Second Coming) and the angels dwell. God made the **earth for us**. The paradise where Adam and Eve lived was here on earth, it was not in heaven.

The concept of going to heaven is another one of those **Greek concepts** that filtered into early Christianity. The Greek philosophers (**Pythagoreans**) are the ones who believe that the **soul separates** from the body after death. This is not what the Bible teaches. We are supposed to resurrect like Jesus. Webster's Dictionary states:

*Resurrect - rising from **the dead**.*

If your soul is alive in heaven, then you are by no means dead. Another problem with the concept of your soul going to heaven or hell when you die is, that judgment happens only **after** Jesus returns. How then, can a soul go to heaven or hell if it hasn't been judged yet?

Justin Martyr, one of the early Christian theologians wrote **in 150 AD**:

*"If you meet some who say that their souls go to heaven when they die, **do not believe that they are Christians!**"*

He wrote this in order **to warn his fellow Christians** about a strange new idea that was beginning to creep into Christianity. Well, it is time for you to be the judge again. Here are some examples:

When the Bible talks about being asleep, it means being dead. Read **John 11:11-14** if you have any doubts. You will notice that Jesus says that **no one has been to heaven**. King David who was one of God's favorites **is not in heaven**. You will see that there is **no knowledge of God** when you are dead. If we were to go to heaven I would suppose that you would be well aware of God. The Bible says that man and animals go to **the same place** when we die, that there is no difference, except that man will one day resurrect. You will notice that all will come to life only at Jesus' return, and not before. Remember we do **not have immortal souls**, that is a **Greek philosophical** idea. **Only God is immortal**. The Jewish and Christian concept of death is that the **whole person dies**.

Who is in heaven besides God, Jesus, and the angels? **No one**.

John 3:13

"No one has gone up to heaven."

Acts 2:29

*"My brothers, one can confidently say about the patriarch David that **he died** and was buried, and his tomb is in our midst to this day."*

Acts 2:34

*"For David **did not** go up into heaven."*

Hebrews 11:13

*"**All these died in faith**" (Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah).*

Where are the dead? In their **tombs in the earth**. When you are dead there is **no knowledge** of anything, **not even of God**.

2 Peter 3:4

*"From the time when our **ancestors fell asleep**, everything has remained as it was from the beginning of creation."*

John 5:28-29

*"Do not be amazed at this, because the hour is coming in which **all who are in the tombs** will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good deeds to the **resurrection** of life, but those who have done wicked deeds to the resurrection of condemnation."*

Daniel 12:2

*"Many of those **who sleep in the dust of the earth** shall awake; some shall live forever, others shall be an everlasting horror and disgrace."*

Genesis 3:19

"Until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; for you are dirt, and to dirt you shall return."

Psalms 6:5-6

*"Return, O LORD, save my life; rescue me because of your kindness, for **among the dead no one remembers you;**"*

Ezekiel 18:4

*"The soul that sins, **it shall die.**"*

Ecclesiastes 9:10

*"For there will be no work, nor **reason**, nor **knowledge**, nor **wisdom** in the nether world where you are going."*

Psalms 115:17

*"It is **not the dead** who praise the LORD."*

Ecclesiastes 3:19-20

*"For the lot of man and of beast is **one lot**; the one dies **as well** as the other. Both have the same life-breath, and man has **no** advantage over the beast; but all is vanity. Both go to the **same** place; both were made from the dust, and to the dust they **both return.**"*

Psalms 146:4

*"When his spirit departs he **returns to his earth**; on that day his plans **perish.**"*

When will the dead rise? At Jesus' **Second Coming**, on the **last day**.

1 Thessalonians 4: 16-17

*"For the Lord himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven, and the **dead in Christ will rise first**. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."*

Revelation 20:4-5

*"They came **to life** and they **reigned with Christ** for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were over."*

1 Corinthians 15:22-23

*"For just as in Adam all die, so to in Christ shall all be brought to life, but each one in proper order: Christ the firstfruits; then, **at his coming**, those who belong to Christ."*

John 11:24

*"Martha said to him, " I know he will rise, **in the resurrection on the last day**."*

Job 14:12

*"So men lie down and rise not again. Till the **heavens are no more**, they shall **not awake**, nor be roused out of their sleep."*

Mark 12:23

*"**At the resurrection** when they arise, whose wife will she be."*

BUT WHAT ABOUT THESE VERSES?

Q. Didn't Jesus' Spirit go to be with God when he died?

This question comes from an incorrect **Hellenistic** (Greek philosophy) interpretation of **Luke 23:46**:

*"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit, and when he had said this he **breathed his last**."*

There are two ways to interpret this verse. The first is the way that most of us have been taught, which is the **Hellenistic** interpretation. The second is if we use the Jewish meaning of the word "*spirit*," this is the meaning that was intended by its Jewish author. Lets review what the word "*spirit*" means to both a Greek philosopher and to a Jew. First,

the Greek philosophical definition. To a Greek philosopher, spirit and soul are interchangeable.

Platonism – Believed that we must be capable of **existing apart** from our bodies. **The flesh is evil**. The body is a **prison**. It is **bad** for the soul (i.e. spirit) to be in the body. Platonism suggests the **immortality of the soul**, and the soul then becoming incarnate.

This idea of souls separating from our bodies was unknown to the Hebrews. The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible states:

"The ancient Hebrews knew nothing of the Greek concept of salvation by flight from the body and the world of which man is a part of."

This understanding of "*spirit*" will lead us to many false conclusions. It has problems right away with other passages in the Bible. First, **only God** is immortal

(1 Timothy 6:15-16). Second, I do not know of anyone that would dispute that judgement happens at the **return** of Christ. So how can your spirit or soul go to heaven or hell if it has **not been judged**? This should be a clue that something is wrong with this definition of "*spirit*."

Using this definition of "*spirit*" we arrive at the conclusion that when Jesus died, his spirit went to heaven to be with God. This has a few major problems. First, if Jesus went to be with the Father and then came back to appear before the Apostles, and then plans to return again on the day of judgement, then his return will be the **third coming** of Christ instead of the second. $1+1+1=3$. But the biggest problem with this interpretation is that it forms a huge contradiction with **John 20:27**:

"Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father."

Jesus says this to Mary of Magdala after he has resurrected, three days after he commended his spirit to God. He is clearly stating that he has **not been** to the Father.

If he is has not been with the Father, where has he been? **John 12:32 and Matthew 12:40** provide us with the answer:

*"And when I am lifted up **from the earth**, I will draw everyone to myself."*

*"so will the Son of Man be in the **heart of the earth** three days and three nights."*

Jesus has been in **Sheol**, a.k.a. the **pit**, the **grave**, the **earth**, for the last three days. Jesus himself tells us he has not been to heaven.

These are the sort of problems that arise when you use definitions that are different from the ones that the writers used. Now lets see what "*spirit*" means to a Jew:

Spirit (ruah & pneuma) – **Breath of life**. The vital principle by which the body is **animated**.

In other words, it is the life force that God gives to people and animals, which **animates their bodies**, which gives them **life**. When He takes it away, **they die**.

*"When you **take away their breath** (ruah), **they perish** and return to the dust from which they came. When you **send forth your breath** (ruah), they are **created**" (Psalm 104:29:30).*

*"When his spirit (ruah) **departs he returns to his earth**; on that day his plans perish" (Psalm 146:4).*

"And when the dust returns to the earth as it once was, and the **life breath** (ruah) **returns to God who gave it**" (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

With the proper definition of "*spirit*" we can now interpret this verse correctly:

Jesus commends his spirit (**breath of life**) to God. God takes his breath of life and Jesus breathes his last (**he died**).

This is the intended Jewish meaning of this verse. This interpretation is in agreement with the Jewish definition of "*spirit*" and with the psalms that are quoted above. It also does not contradict John 20:17.

Q. What about the thief on the cross, wasn't he with Jesus in paradise that same day?

This question arises from the verse in **Luke 23:43**: It states:

"Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me in your kingdom.' He replied to him, 'Amen, I say to you today you will be with me in paradise.'"

This verse will take two entirely different meanings depending on where you put the comma. In Greek there are no commas, so when the Bible is translated into English the translator puts the comma where he thinks it should go. But if the translator believes in Greek type spirits that leave your body at death, he is going to put the comma after "*you*" before "*today*." The other place it can go, the correct place is after "*today*."

There are many examples of people saying "*I tell you something today (right now)*." It was a common way of speaking. Here are a few examples:

*"Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you **today**" (Deuteronomy 6:6).*

*"besides setting up on Mount Ebal these stones concerning which I commanded you **today**" (Deuteronomy 27:4).*

*"Therefore, **I declare to you today** that I am innocent of the blood of all men" (Acts 20:26).*

All these are excellent examples, but the best is Paul's statement, *"I declare to you today."* It is **identical** to Jesus' statement.

I say to you today = I declare to you today

Jesus and Paul are saying. *"I am telling you **this moment**, right now."*

Let's see the consequences of both. If we use the first interpretation that the thief was in paradise with Jesus that day, then we run into the same problems that we had with the spirit of Jesus going to the Father. Jesus tells us three days after his burial that he **has not yet been** to the Father (**John 20:17**). He also tells us that he has been in the **earth**, not in paradise (**John 12:32**). If Jesus has not been to the Father, then how can we expect the thief to be in paradise with Jesus that very same day? Notice also that the thief asks Jesus to remember him when he comes into his kingdom.

The kingdom of God = Paradise

The kingdom of God has obviously **not come yet**. After Jesus resurrected, he appeared to the Apostles and instructed them on the kingdom of God for forty days (**Acts 1:3**). They then asked him:

*"Lord, are you **at this time** going to restore **the kingdom** to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).*

Even after the resurrection, the kingdom of God had still not come. So how could the thief have been in the kingdom on that very same day?

If we use the other way of interpreting this verse, it means that the thief asked Jesus to remember him when his kingdom comes. Jesus replies to him **at that moment**, that on that day, you will be with. With this interpretation there are no contradictions and we do not have to throw away 20 to 30 verses on death that will also contradict the previous interpretation.

Q. What about these two verses?

2 Corinthians 5:8 - *"absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord"*

and,

Philippians 1:23 - *"I long to depart this life and be with Christ."*

People have taken these two verses to mean that when you die you are automatically taken to heaven to be with Christ. The question that we must ask ourselves is, what does Paul mean when he says, *"with Christ?"* When does Paul expect to be *with Christ*? Is it immediately after death, or is it during the resurrection of the dead at the Second Coming of Christ? This is an easy question to answer if you know where to look, but first let's take a look at what a few sources say about this verse. The New American Bible states the following on **2 Corinthians chapter 5**:

*"Unlike the Greeks (philosophers), who found **dissolution of the body desirable** (cf Socrates), Paul has a **Jewish horror** of it."*

The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible states the following on **2 Corinthians 5:8**:

*"Paul's pithy statement, to be "absent from the body and to be present with the Lord," a statement pregnant with hope for all Christians, is understood to reflect an immediacy of sequence in the **consciousness of the individual only**. When a Christian closes his eyes in death, the next moment, **as far as he is concerned**, he will be with the Lord, though **countless millennia may have intervened**. Thus the basic structure of the New Testament, which is **death followed by resurrection** is preserved; at the same time the postponement of the resurrection **until the parousia**, is maintained."*

In other words, there is no sensation of time when you are dead. When you die, **the next thing that you will experience** is being with the Lord Jesus Christ on the day of his return, even though **thousands of years** have passed by.

Let us now go back and answer the question that we asked before, *"When does Paul expect to be with the Lord?"* The answer is in **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** where Paul is speaking of the Second Coming of Christ:

*"And the dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be **with the Lord**."*

This is when Paul expects to be with the Lord, **at the resurrection of the dead** at the **return of Christ**, not before then. Let us see another wonderful example of when Paul plans to be with Jesus.

2 Thessalonians 2:1 states:

*"We ask you, brothers, with regard to **the coming** of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembly **with him**."*

Again, we can see that Paul expects the Thessalonians and himself to assemble with Christ **AT HIS COMING**."

When you read the Bible you must always keep in mind who the writer was writing to and why. Paul in this example was not writing with the idea that his letter would become part of the New Testament for all to read for generations to come. He was writing to the church at Corinth and at Philippi that he had **personally established**. The churches at Corinth and Philippi were already familiar with the teachings of Paul on the return of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. This is why he did not mention the time period between death and the return of Christ. In the Bible, and when speaking with other Christians, many times we read or say that Jesus died and three days later he resurrected. Other times we say that Jesus died and resurrected. We do not mention the three days in between his death and resurrection because we both know what we are talking about. This is all that happened in these verses. Paul was writing to his churches, people whom he instructed personally, not to people that were unfamiliar with Christianity. They knew exactly what he was talking about. Here are a few examples:

*"It is Christ Jesus who died, rather, was raised, who also is at the right hand of God, who intercedes for us" (**Romans 8:34**).*

The same author Paul does not mention the three days from Jesus' death till his resurrection, but we all know that he is not implying that Jesus died and rose immediately. Paul is just omitting an obvious fact. **1 Peter 3:22** states:

"But an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God."

Peter does not mention the forty days in between the resurrection and his ascension that Jesus was with the Apostles before going to heaven to sit at the right hand of God. It is because the people that Peter was writing to were familiar with this fact already.

Q. What about Luke 16:19-31 - The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus?

A lot of people have used this parable as the **sole basis** for their doctrine on death. They will quote this one verse and completely **ignore all the verses** that have been covered in this paper. This is an irresponsible way of interpreting Scripture. You should never make a conclusion out of one verse, but instead compare all the related verses on that topic before making your conclusions. In this case, the situation is made worse by the fact that the verse that is used to create an entire doctrine of death happens to be **a parable**. All major Bible scholars consider this to be a parable. Let's see what a parable is. According to the **New American Bible** under a section entitled Literary Genres or Forms, it states:

Parable – A short **fictitious** narrative from which a moral or spiritual truth is drawn. Keep in mind that **the point** of the parable (**not the details**) is God's message to believers.

Parables are fictitious, they have **never** happened. They are meant to teach us a **point**. We cannot take this parable literally. If we do, it will contradict everything in the Bible that teaches us that you will receive your reward or punishment on **judgment day** and not before, and everything that we have covered on death. The biggest clue that this is not a literal passage is that the rich man is speaking from the netherworld. When I looked up Netherworld in the New American Bible Dictionary it said, "See Sheol."

Sheol – The ancient concept of the abode of the dead (the netherworld, in Hebrew, Sheol) supposed **no activity** or lofty **emotion among the deceased**, who were pictured as surrounded but the darkness **of oblivion**.

The rich man is speaking from the netherworld, he is displaying torment, and he is pleading with Abraham in order to help himself and save his brothers. These are impossibilities from the netherworld. In the netherworld there is **no activity or emotion** among the deceased, they are **in oblivion**. Yet the rich man displays both of them. If we do take it literally it will make no sense whatsoever. We will also have the poor man on Abraham's **chest**, spirits that have actual **eyes and tongues**, plus the righteous and the wicked can see and speak to each other. This is bizarre!

This parable is not intended to teach us about death. Unfortunately many interpreters have made this parable the sole authority on death. The reason that they have misinterpreted this verse is that they bring with them a lot of baggage (preconceived ideas) which hide from them the true meaning of this verse and leads them to an incorrect conclusion. Please approach this parable with a mind set free from prior influences and the truth will be obvious. If you approach this with the mind set that this is about death, then that's what you will find.

In order to understand a parable you must always be aware of the context of the verses before and after the parable. These usually provide you with clues to what the point of the

parable is about. In this case only the preceding verses are helpful. This parable has two points, one primary and a secondary. So let's see what this most controversial parable is about.

Jesus gives us this parable because of the conflict that he is having with the Pharisees over their love of money, their use of "dishonest wealth." This thought started in the Parable of the Dishonest Steward in **Luke 16:1** and continued until **Luke 16:15** which a few verses later led up to the Parable of the Rich man and Lazarus. In **Luke 16:13-14** Jesus says:

*"No servant can serve **two masters**. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (money). The Pharisees who loved money, heard all these things and sneered at him."*

All the Parables of the Bible states on this verse:

"These religious leaders who fared sumptuously, living in the love of money, and of the enjoyments which money purchased, only mocked at the counsel of using their wealth for the benefit of others in a way to earn them eternal rewards. Their money was theirs and they wanted no advice from Jesus as to its right use. Then came this parable."

The main point of this parable is to show the consequences of making money your god, putting it first in your life instead of putting the will of God first. The sin of the rich man was not that he was rich, but that he failed to realize that he was God's trustee, with wealth and influence that could have been used for God's glory, and for the spiritual and material benefit of his fellow-men. Lazarus was rewarded because in spite of his pitiful condition, he had served God, finding his constant help in Him.

In a similar twist, The Quest Study Bible states on this verse:

*"**His point** was that, contrary to popular opinion, money is not evidence of favor with God, nor does poverty indicate God's displeasure."*

Its secondary point is to teach us that even **after Jesus' resurrection**, men will still **refuse to repent** and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 31 says:

"Then Abraham said, if they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they repent if someone should rise from the dead."

Let's take a look at what The New American Bible states on this verse:

*"A foreshadowing in Luke's gospel of the **rejection of the call to repentance** even after Jesus' resurrection."*

Now that we understand the reason and the point of the parable, let us examine the details of this parable that have been disastrously misinterpreted. We will start with verse 22:

"When the poor man died he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham."

What does the *"bosom of Abraham mean?"* According to Thayer's Greek Lexicon bosom as it is used in this verse means: *To be a partaker of the same blessedness as Abraham in paradise.*

So Lazarus will share the same reward with Abraham in paradise. God blessed Abraham by promising him that he would inherit **the world** (the kingdom of God). **Romans 4:13** states:

*"It was not through the law that the promise was made to Abraham and his descendants that he would **inherit the world**, but through the righteousness that comes through faith."*

Abraham has not inherited the world yet, he will first have to be resurrected. When will the resurrection occur? At the coming of the new age, the Second Coming of Christ.

Luke 20:35 states:

*"But those who are deemed worthy to **attain to the coming age** and to the **resurrection of the dead**."*

Lazarus was carried away by angels to be with Abraham. When are the angel supposed to collect the elect? At the coming of Christ at the end of the age in order to enter the kingdom of God. **Matthew 13:39-42** states it clearly:

*"The harvest is the **end of the age**, and the harvesters are **angels**. Just as weeds are collected and burned up (destroyed) with fire, so will it be at **the end of the age**." The Son of Man will **send his angels**, and they will collect out of his kingdom all who cause others to sin and all evildoers. They will throw them into the **fiery furnace** (to be destroyed as the weeds were destroyed).*

Matthew 13: 49 follows six parables on the kingdom of God, the Parable of the Sower, the Weeds, the Mustard Seed, the Treasure, the Pearl, and the Net Thrown into the Sea. It is still dealing with the same topic, the kingdom of God. It states:

*"Thus it will be at the **end of the age**. **The angels will go out** and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the **fiery furnace** where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth."*

Both of these events, Abraham's blessing and the collection of the righteous by the angels are events that will happen in the future, at the return of Christ. Let's continue and then we will put it all together. Verse 22-23 states:

*"The rich man also died and was buried, and from **the netherworld**, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham **far off** and Lazarus at his side."*

The rich man and Lazarus are not in the same place, one is in the kingdom of God and the other is in the netherworld. When the rich man sees Abraham "*far off*" it means that he sees him far off in time not in distance. This parable is pretending that the rich man from his grave in the present time is having a vision of Abraham (in the kingdom of God) in the future after the angels have collected the elect and the dead have been resurrected, and realizes that he is still in the grave and has missed out on the blessings of Abraham.

He is in torment because he realizes that he will not have life in the age to come because he has been thrown into the fiery flames (destroyed).

The rich man then asks Abraham to send Lazarus to his brothers in the present time to warn them so that they will not suffer the same fate as him in the future. Verse 27 states:

"Then I beg you, father, send him (Lazarus) to my father's house, for I have five brothers. So that he may warn them."

But Lazarus in the present time is also dead. When Abraham says in verse 29, "*They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.*" The rich man replies in verse 30:

*"He said, Oh no father Abraham, but if someone (Lazarus from verse 27) **from the dead** goes to them they will repent."*

Where is Lazarus? He is dead in Sheol. This is why the rich man says that, "*If someone from the dead comes they will repent.*" He will be in the kingdom next to Abraham after the resurrection when the Son of Man comes and sends his angels to collect the dead in Christ.

Of course this verse foreshadows Jesus' resurrection, but it is here speaking specifically about Lazarus.

Summary – You cannot serve two masters at once. If you choose the things of this world (i.e. money) over God, when Christ returns and inaugurates the kingdom of God you will be counted with the wicked and will not share in the inheritance (bosom) of Abraham. You will instead be thrown into the fiery flames and destroyed.

Remember that this is **a parable**, and a parable is a **fictitious short story with a point**. The details are not important, only the point. This parable was not meant to be the sole authority on death. It does however detail the end results correctly. Either we enter the kingdom of God or we are destroyed forever.

Q. What about 2 Kings 2:11: "And Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind."

This verse has of course been taken to mean that Elijah went to heaven and then so will we when we die. The Jewish word that is translated as heaven literally means, "sky." I will explain this verse by saying that what happened to Elijah was not that he was taken up to heaven where God dwells, but that he was **translated to another location** on earth. This explanation is very easy to prove. Read **1 Kings 18:7-16** where Elijah is speaking to Obadiah, King Ahab's vizier. We see in verse 8 that Elijah asks Obadiah to go and tell Ahab that Elijah is here. Obadiah replies that there is no nation or kingdom that Ahab has not **searched for Elijah** in, and that they could **not find him**. In verse 12 Obadiah says to Elijah that he is afraid to go and tell Ahab that Elijah is here because when he leaves, the Spirit of the LORD will **carry him off** somewhere that he does not know, and Ahab will have him killed.

*"After I leave you, **the Spirit of the LORD will carry you to some place I do not know, and when I go to inform Ahab and he does not find you, he will have me killed.**"*

Being translated is not too common in the Bible but it does happen. Philip was translated in **Acts 8:39**:

*"When they came out of the water, **The Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away and the eunuch saw him no more.**"*

Another excellent verse to show that Elijah is still on earth after the event on the chariot of fire is that he **writes a letter** to King Jehoram in **2 Chronicles 21:10-13** telling him that the LORD will strike his people with a great plague. Verse 12 is worth quoting:

*"He (Jehoram) received a letter from **the prophet Elijah** with this message."*

The crucial point in these verses is that Elijah wrote a letter to **King Jehoram** who was the son of **King Jehoshaphat**. Elijah was **transported during the reign** of King Jehoshaphat. **Jehoram came after Jehoshaphat**, and it was Jehoram that received a letter from Elijah. The obvious conclusion is that **Elijah is still alive** here on earth. If Elijah did go to heaven, then how could we explain Jesus' statement in **John 3:13**:

"No one has gone up to heaven."

Is Jesus wrong? Or is it that man's interpretation of this verse is wrong?

Q. What about Enoch?

The problem with Enoch is two-fold. The first is in **Genesis 5:24**, it states:

"Then Enoch walked with God, and he was no longer here, for God took him."

In order to understand this verse you will have to read all of chapter five. People claim that since of everyone else it is said, "then he died" and of Enoch it is not, but instead it says that he "walked with God, for God took him," then that means that Enoch went to heaven with God. If you read the paragraph that talks about Enoch without this preconceived idea, you will come to the conclusion that Enoch died.

It says in verse 23:

*"That the **whole lifetime of Enoch** was three hundred and sixty-five years."*

To me that implies that Enoch's whole lifetime was three hundred and sixty-five years and **then he died**. I do not see any hint that Enoch did not die. It says that "Enoch walked with God," but so did Noah in **Genesis 6:10**:

*"Noah, a good man and blameless in that age, for **he walked with God.**"*

"Walked with God," means that the person follows God's will. "God took him," means that God took his breath of life and that person died. We still use this saying today, we commonly say that God took a family member or a friend when we mean that someone died. The word translated as "took" is the Hebrew word *laqah*. It means:

laqah – of removal by death.

An excellent example of the usage of this word is in **Ezekiel 33:6**:

*"But if the watchman sees the sword coming and fails to blow the warning trumpet, so that the sword comes and **takes** (laqah) anyone, I will hold the watchman responsible for **that person's death**, even though that person is **taken** (laqah) because of their own sin."*

Notice how it is used, the sword comes and **takes** someone, in other words, **kills** someone. This is why the watchman will be held responsible for that **person's death**.

So why is there a difference between the phrases of all the other people mentioned and Enoch? There is no clear-cut answer, but my opinion is that something happened to Enoch that cut his life short. Either an accident or illness, but something that prevented him from dying of old age like the others. Everyone mentioned lived to **over nine hundred** years old, except Lamech who lived to almost eight hundred years old. However, Enoch **only lived to be three hundred and sixty-five years old**. Something happened to Enoch that cut his life short; this is why it is said, "God took him."

The second verse is in **Hebrews 11:5** where Paul is speaking about the faith of the ancients. It says:

*"By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should **not see death**, and he was found no more because God had taken him."*

The problem that we arrive at if we say that because of this verse Enoch did not die, is that the same author in the same chapter in verse **13** says that all the ancients that he was talking about (which Enoch was one of) have died:

"All these died in faith."

So Abraham and Noah and **Enoch** and all the others mentioned **died**. So how do we explain verse 5? The clue is in knowing what the author meant when he said *"That he should not see death."* I have not found the answer to that question. **Obviously he does not mean that he did not die because he writes a few verses later that he did die. In John 8:51** Jesus says:

*"I say to you, whoever keeps my word will **never see death**."*

This is identical to **Hebrews 11:5**. I do not think that Jesus meant that whoever keeps his word will be taken to heaven without ever experiencing death. It is more likely that Jesus means that whoever keeps his word will not experience **eternal death**. That they will be **resurrected on the last day**. **Hebrews 11:5** meaning is probably along these lines.

For me, I am convinced that Enoch did die. I cannot let one verse that I cannot explain fully counter all the evidence in the massive amount of verses that are very specific on death.

Paul who wrote Hebrews says in **Romans 5:12**:

*"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way **death came to all men**, because all sinned"*

Death came to all men, that includes Enoch. This statement of Paul also strengthens the position of **Hebrews 11:13** *"They all died in faith."*

If we **isolate** Enoch from all the evidence on death, the preponderance of the evidence is about 75% in favor that Enoch died, and 25% that he did not see death. If we do not isolate Enoch from all the other Scriptures on death Enoch is really not a factor.

If Enoch went to heaven, then again, we have to assume that Jesus was wrong in **John 3:13**:

"No one has gone up to heaven."

Q. What about the transfiguration of Jesus?

The transfiguration of Jesus is a vision, it is a way in which God reveals a message to us. Jesus in speaking about the transfiguration says in **Matthew 17:9**:

*"As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, 'Do not tell **the vision** to anyone until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.'"*

A vision is not reality, it is a way in which God communicates or instructs us. In the transfiguration, the message was intended for Peter, James, and John.

Let's take a look at some other visions. **Genesis 15:1** says:

*"After these things the word of the LORD came to Abraham in **a vision**."*

*"Daniel had a dream as he lay in bed, and was terrified by **the visions** of his mind" (**Daniel 7:1**).*

Daniel then goes on to describe his vision which includes four beasts, one that looks like a lion with eagle wings etc. This is an excellent example of a vision. God is revealing a message to Daniel, the details are not necessarily reality, it is the message that is important. The message in this case is about the end times. God many times uses symbols to get his point across. But there are not going to be four actual beasts that look like a lion with eagle wings etc.

The purpose of the vision of the transfiguration was to confirm to Peter, James, and John that **Jesus is the fulfillment** of the law and the prophets. The New American Bible states on this verse:

*"Moses and Elijah **represent** respectively law and prophecy in the Old Testament and are linked to Mount Sinai. They now appear with Jesus as witnesses to **the fulfillment** of the law and prophets taking place in the person of Jesus as he appears in glory."*

It was a vision. It would be irresponsible to use this episode for any other purpose than what it was intended for.

There are a few more verses that might cause a little confusion, but they are easily explained.

The Bible is very clear on the subjects we have covered in this brief paper. Man made traditions have done everything possible to confuse God's word, but it is very easy to see past the lies if one just takes the time to look. Once you understand these important points, a lot of the Bible starts to make sense, because **it stops contradicting itself**. You are no longer trying to force **Greek thought** into Hebrew writings. Think about it, if you

believe that you go to heaven after you die, how would you explain all the verses in this paper without making a shamble out of the Bible?

God bless you and see you at the resurrection!

If you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact us at:

767juan@compuserve.com