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## The Thief On The Cross Luke 23:43



By Dan Maines

## The Thief On The Cross Luke 23:43

### Introduction

† The words spoken by Jesus on the cross aren't random, they're precise, and they must be understood in harmony with all of Scripture, not isolated from it.

† The question that often comes up is how Luke 23:43 fits with John 20:17 and 1 Peter 3:18-19, and whether the punctuation

needs to be changed.

† The answer is simple when we let Scripture define its own terms instead of forcing assumptions onto the text.

† We're not dealing with contradictions, we're dealing with misunderstood definitions of places and timing.

### **Luke 23:43**

And He said to him, Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.

† Jesus made a direct promise, and He said today, not later, not after ascension, but that very day.

† The key is understanding what He meant by Paradise, not changing what He said.

† Paradise here isn't the throne of the Father in heaven, it's the realm of the dead where the righteous were kept.

† This is the same realm described elsewhere, not the final dwelling after all things were fulfilled.

† If we keep the definition consistent, there isn't any conflict.

### **John 20:17**

Jesus said to her, Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brothers and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.

† After His resurrection, Jesus clearly states He had not yet ascended to the Father.

† That means whatever happened in Luke 23:43 wasn't the ascension.

† This alone proves Paradise isn't the same as the Father's presence in this context.

† The timing is clear, death, then time in the realm of the dead, then resurrection, then ascension.

† Scripture isn't contradicting itself, it's laying out a sequence.

### **1 Peter 3:18-19**

For Christ also suffered for sins once for all time, the righteous for the unrighteous, so that He might bring you to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which He also went and made proclamation to the spirits in prison,

† After His death, Christ went somewhere, and that place is described as where spirits were in prison.

† This aligns perfectly with the understanding of the realm of the dead.

† He wasn't inactive, He was proclaiming, fulfilling what was written.

† This shows movement after death but before ascension.

† Again, this confirms that Paradise is part of that realm, not the final heavenly throne.

### **Luke 16:22**

Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's arms; and the rich man also died and was buried.

† Jesus already described this realm during His ministry.

† Abraham's arms represents comfort for the righteous dead.

† This isn't heaven where the Father is, it's a distinct place.

† The thief would've gone to this same place.

† That's where Jesus and the thief were together that day.

† Jesus Himself uses the language of the realm of the dead elsewhere, confirming this wasn't a new concept but something already understood in Israel.

† This shows that when He spoke to the thief, He was using language that already had meaning, not introducing something new on the cross.

## **Bringing It Together**

† Jesus died and entered the realm of the dead.

† The thief died and entered that same realm.

† They were together that very day, exactly as Jesus said.

† There is no gap in the timeline, death happened, then both entered the same realm that very day, exactly as stated.

† The resurrection did not happen that day, and the ascension did not happen that day, so Paradise cannot mean the Father's throne.

† Jesus had not yet ascended to the Father when He spoke to Mary.

† There isn't any need to move commas or change the text.

† If the comma needed to be moved, then the statement would lose its immediate fulfillment, but Jesus emphasized today, and He meant it.

† The issue has never been punctuation, it's always been definition.

† When we let Scripture define Paradise, everything lines up perfectly.

## **Historical References**

† Irenaeus wrote that the Lord descended into the regions beneath the earth, preaching His advent there, confirming the understanding of an intermediate realm.

† Tertullian taught that souls are kept in Hades until the resurrection, distinguishing it from heaven.

† Hippolytus of Rome described the righteous being in a place of light within Hades, separated from the wicked.

† These early writers weren't confused about this, they understood the distinction clearly.

## **How It Applies To Us Today**

† We don't need to alter Scripture to make it fit our theology, we need to align our understanding with Scripture.

† When something seems like a contradiction, it's usually because definitions have been mixed.

† Jesus kept His promise exactly as He said it, that should strengthen our confidence in every word He spoke.

† This also shows that God's plan was unfolding in stages, not all at once, and each step had purpose.

† We're not left guessing, Scripture gives us a complete and consistent picture when we read it together.

## **Q & A Appendix**

**Q** Does Luke 23:43 require changing the comma to make sense?

**A** No, it does not. When Paradise is understood as the realm of the dead, the verse stands exactly as written and fits perfectly with John 20:17 and 1 Peter 3:18-19.

**Q** Where did Jesus go after He died?

**A** He went to the realm of the dead, where He made proclamation to the spirits in prison, as shown in 1 Peter 3:18-19.

**Q** Was Paradise the same as heaven where the Father is?

**A** No, Jesus said in John 20:17 that He had not yet ascended to the Father, proving they are not the same in this context.

**Q** Where was the thief that day?

**A** He was with Jesus in Paradise, the place of the righteous dead, as described in Luke 23:43 and Luke 16:22.

**Q** Did Jesus fulfill His promise to the thief immediately?

**A** Yes, He did. Jesus said today, and both entered the same realm of the dead that very day, fulfilling His words exactly.

**Q** Why do people think Paradise means heaven?

**A** Because terms get blended together, but Scripture separates them clearly, Paradise is shown as the place of the righteous dead, while the Father's presence is associated with ascension, which had not yet happened in John 20:17.

**Q** Does this teaching remove any tension between these verses?

**A** Yes, it removes all tension. Once Paradise is understood correctly, Luke 23:43, John 20:17, and 1 Peter 3:18-19 all align perfectly without any need to change punctuation.

**† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †**

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## Source Index

† Luke 23:43; John 20:17; 1 Peter 3:18-19; Luke 16:22

† Irenaeus, Against Heresies Book 5; Tertullian, On the Soul; Hippolytus, Against Plato

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