

## Sabbath School Lesson #9 – Contrary Passages? – 19-25 November 2022

**C**hrist said that they “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39). The Jews to whom Jesus said these words had been searching the Scriptures all their lives, for Jews knew the word of God and had a duty: “thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt walkest of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deut. 6:7). Hence it was said of Timothy, “From a child thou hast known, the Holy Scriptures” (1 Tim. 3:15). Why did people who had been learning about Christ all their lives not know Him, but persecuted and crucified Him? It was because “their minds were blinded,” and “the veil is upon their hearts” (2 Cor. 3:14-14). How much could you see a thing if you tried to see it with your eyes covered? Yet this is how most Jews looked at Scriptures. It is why most people today misread immortality of soul into Scriptures.

**Sunday: The Rich Man and Lazarus** – In Luke 16, what did the Jews listening to this parable know about hades or sheol? The word in Hebrew which corresponds to the Greek word hades, and means the same thing, is sheol. The Jews knew this about hades from Scriptures: That all alike go there (Numbers 16:30, 33; Psalm 89:48); That the whole man goes there (Genesis 42:38; Psalm 30:1, 3); That it is located in the earth beneath (Ezekiel 31:15-18); That the righteous dead do not praise the lord there (Psalm 6:5; 146:1-4; Isaiah 38:10-19); That the wicked are all silent there (Psalm 31:17; 1 Samuel 2:9); That it is a place of silence, sleep, rest, darkness, corruption, and worms, in which there is no work, wisdom or knowledge (Job 14:11-19; 17:13-16; Ecclesiastes 9:4-6, 10). How then would have the Jews understood the parable of the rich man and Lazarus? We have also in the Old Testament, representations precisely similar to this in Luke 16, respecting the inhabitants of sheol. Multitudes who have gone down to the grave through the oppression of tyrannical kings, are represented as lying with their swords under their heads, and worms covering them, and yet as rising up and paying mock obeisance to their oppressors when they come into sheol, and taunting them with becoming weak as themselves. See the address to the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14:9-11, and the lamentation for Egypt in Ezekiel 32:18-32. So, in the case of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man in hades, where, as they were fully instructed, there was no knowledge, consciousness, nor life, is nevertheless represented by the figure of personification, as living and acting as there represented. And the object was to show that the next state of being after the present (passing over the intermediate state of unconscious) will be one of torment and suffering to the ungodly, covetous rich man, but one of happiness and bliss to the righteous poor. With the language of the Old Testament before them respecting sheol, and the parables respecting the king of Babylon and Egypt, the Jews listening to the parable would readily understand it. It was not given to show the nature of hades, nor the condition of those who go there, and hence is not to be used for that purpose.

**Monday: “‘Today . . . With Me in Paradise’”** – How do you answer to the view that the thief’s soul went to heaven with Jesus the day of Christ’s crucifixion? Luke 23:39-43 is seen to supposedly contain another strong proof of the conscious state of the dead, in the words of Christ to the thief on the cross. The thief’s request was, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” To which Christ made answer, “Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” How could the thief be with Christ in paradise that day, it is triumphantly asked, unless by means of a disembodied conscious spirit? If he was to be with Him in paradise that very day, it must have been in the form of an immortal soul, unless he had been raised from the dead, or been translated. But Christ did not go to paradise that day, because He told Mary, on the day of His resurrection, three days after His crucifixion, that He had not yet ascended to His Father. Where His Father was there is paradise (2 Corinthians 12:2, 4; Revelation 2:7; 22:1-2). He had not at that time been to paradise; and consequently the thief could not have been with Him in paradise on day of His crucifixion.

**Tuesday: “To Depart and Be With Christ”** – Can Philippians 1:23 prove that souls are conscious after death? Paul says, “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better” (Philippians 1:21-24). The only way in which this text can be made to do service in behalf of the conscious intermediate state, is to connect

the being with Christ immediately with the departing. But Paul does not so connect them. The next thing of which the person is conscious after departing is being with Christ. But this does not preclude the idea that a long space might be passed over in unconsciousness. And such a period the apostle would of necessity pass over in silence, as it is an utter blank to the individual, and the change from one state to the other seems to him to be instantaneous. Paul has in other places told us very definitely when we go to be with Christ (read Romans 8:23; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 2 Timothy 4:8; Hebrews 11:39-40). Thus, his testimony in Philippians 1:23, must not therefore be interpreted in such a way as to contradict his other statements. And hence it cannot be used in support of the theory of the conscious intermediate state.

**Wednesday: Preaching to the Spirits in Prison** – How do you correct the view that 1 Peter 3:19 teaches immortality of the soul? “By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison” (1 Peter 3:19). This is supposed to be a text in favour of the intermediate conscious state of the dead; for here were spirits in prison, supposed to mean in the grave, or in death, and they must have been conscious and intelligent, because they were preached to. We inquire who these spirits were? The following verse says: “Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing.” The persons meant by the word spirits are therefore the wicked antediluvians. But what is meant by their being in prison? In Isaiah 61:1 is found a prophecy concerning the work of Christ, and it is said that he should proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. This prophecy is quoted by our Lord himself in Luke 4:18 and an application made of it to His own work. The situation of the antediluvians while Noah was preaching to them was similar to that of those to whom Christ preached. They were in darkness and error and under the condemnation of death. Therefore the antediluvians may likewise have been said to be in prison, while Noah was preaching to them. We inquire further who it was that preached to these spirits? It was Christ. When did he preach? In the days of Noah while the ark was preparing. Through whom did he preach? Through Noah. The preaching was done by the spirit of Christ in Noah (1 Peter 1:10-11). It therefore has no bearing upon this question of the intermediate state of the dead. If these spirits were the spirits of the wicked antediluvians, and the preaching was done by the spirit of Christ while His body lay in the grave, these spirits were then in hell; and why should the spirit of Christ go down into hell to preach to the antediluvians? Could they be benefited by it? No. Then what was the object of it? The theory is absurd. Before the preaching is spoken of, the quickening of Christ is brought to view, verse 18, therefore it could not have been by the disembodied spirit of Christ that this preaching was done while He lay in the grave.

**Thursday: The Souls Under the Altar** – What about Revelation 6:9? These souls were seen under the altar. What altar? Evidently the altar of sacrifice where they were slain. Is there such an altar as that in Heaven? These souls were the victims of papal persecution; and they are represented as having fallen down by the altar where they were slain. But if they are not conscious in Heaven, how could they cry to God for vengeance? By the figure of personification, just as Abel’s blood is represented as crying to God, or the stone out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber, spoken of by Habakkuk 2:11, or as the wages of the laborers spoken of by James 5:4. These souls cried to be avenged. And who were those upon whom they called for vengeance? Their persecutors. And where were these persecutors? If dead, according to the popular view, they were in hell. And as that view further represents, they were right before the face and eyes of those saints in Heaven. This, it is claimed is taught by the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. How, then, could they call for vengeance upon them? Was it not vengeance enough for them to be tormented in the flames of hell? How amiable does this make these righteous souls appear! And if we say that those persecutors were not then dead, in the natural course of things they would soon be in hell, tormented, it would seem, as fiercely as any one could wish. Such is the absurdity that is attached to the popular view of this text. But how, it is asked further, could white robes be given unto them? We answer, those were given in the Reformation when the characters of these martyrs were vindicated from the aspersions of their Romish executioners. We find, therefore, in this testimony no evidences for the doctrine of the conscious state of the dead.