



73 Twenty Ministries
BIBLE STUDIES FOR THE ENTHUSIAST

IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD

Understanding Paradise and Abraham's Bosom in the Words of Jesus

73 TWENTY MINISTRIES

A TEACHING MINISTRY OF DR. ROBERT C CROWDER

73TWENTY MINISTRIES: CHARTING THE WORD, NAVIGATING FAITH

Rooted in a lifelong passion for teaching and guiding others in Biblical truth, 73Twenty Ministries is devoted to helping believers navigate the depths of Scripture with both clarity and conviction.

The name 73Twenty holds deep personal significance: it comes from my childhood home at 7320 Greenwood Boulevard in Denver, Colorado. It was here that the foundations of my faith, study, and service were first laid. With the majestic Rocky Mountains ever-present on my horizons, God's Word has been a constant guide and presence throughout my life. The logo of 73Twenty Ministries, with its three mountain peaks in gray, blue, and orange, symbolizes not only the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but also the unwavering foundation of Biblical truth upon which our faith is built.

For more than twenty years, I've served as a pastor, teacher, mentor, and author, committed to making Biblical truths accessible and applicable. Through sermons, Bible studies, books, articles, and other teaching resources, 73Twenty Ministries exists to equip believers, strengthen churches, and proclaim the Gospel. Our mission is both simple and profound: to chart the Word, guiding faith, and helping others anchor their lives in Scripture.

At 73Twenty Ministries, we believe that faithful Biblical study should engage the mind, transform the heart, and shape daily life. Whether through exegetical teaching, character studies, theological exploration, or practical application, every resource is crafted to deepen understanding, strengthen conviction, and encourage obedience to God's Word.

As a ministry grounded in a conservative Baptist, dispensationalist approach, we focus on Biblical exposition, doctrinal clarity, and practical discipleship. We uphold the belief that Scripture is the authoritative, inerrant, and sufficient Word of God, and it's our privilege to help others navigate its timeless truths.

I invite you to explore the resources at 73TwentyMinistries.com and join us on this journey of discovery, growth, and unwavering faith. Together, let's stand on the mountain of God's truths and proclaim His name to every generation.

For His glory alone,

Dr. Robert C. Crowder, Th.D.

Founder, 73Twenty Ministries

IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD

Understanding Paradise and Abraham's Bosom in the Words of Jesus

Few subjects in Scripture stir both curiosity and comfort like the question, "Where do believers go when they die?" For many, this is not simply an academic inquiry but a deeply personal concern, especially when facing the loss of loved ones or contemplating the reality of their own mortality. While the Bible does not give us every detail about the life to come, it does pull back the veil far enough for us to see the certainty of God's promises and the hope that awaits those who belong to Him.

Two of the clearest glimpses into this hope are found in Jesus' words from the cross to the repentant thief — "*To day shalt thou be with me in paradise*" (Luke 23:43) — and in His parable of the rich man and Lazarus, where the beggar is "*carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom*" (Luke 16:22). Though separated in context, both statements point to the same blessed reality: that at the moment of death, the souls of the redeemed enter into a place of conscious rest, joy, and fellowship in the presence of God, awaiting the final resurrection.

These terms — *paradise* and *Abraham's bosom* — draw from different backgrounds. *Paradise*, with its roots in Persian and Greek usage, evokes the beauty and delight of an enclosed garden, like the Garden of Eden restored. *Abraham's bosom*, born out of Jewish covenant imagery, paints the picture of a banquet of honor and intimacy with the father of the faithful. Yet despite their differing cultural and linguistic origins, both refer to the same destination for the righteous dead in the intermediate state.

In the following study, we will explore the biblical usage, historical background, and theological meaning of these two expressions. We will see how Jesus' words, grounded in the truths of the Old Testament and the beliefs of His day, offer more than poetic comfort — they offer the unshakable assurance that death for the believer is not an end, but an immediate entrance into the presence of the Lord.

INTRODUCTION TO PARADISE

Few moments in Scripture shine with such grace and urgency as the scene on Calvary when a dying thief received the promise of eternal comfort from the lips of the Savior Himself. In Luke 23:43, Jesus speaks words that have echoed through centuries of Christian hope: "*Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*" Here, in the midst of unspeakable suffering, our Lord opens a window into the afterlife; not through a philosophical discourse, but through a personal promise to one who, moments earlier, had been a reviler (Matthew 27:44), yet now looked to Jesus with repentant faith.

The term *paradise* is not a casual poetic flourish; it is a theologically loaded word that carried deep meaning for the Jews of the first century and for the early church. Rooted in the Persian idea of an enclosed garden of beauty and delight, *paradeisos* in the Greek Scriptures became a way to describe the dwelling place of the righteous dead; a place of peace, blessing, and fellowship with God, even before the final resurrection. To the thief, it meant that his soul, though his body would soon perish, would that very day enter a realm of conscious rest in the presence of the Redeemer.

Understanding Jesus' promise requires us to consider how the Bible uses the word *paradise*, how it connects with the Jewish concept of "Abraham's bosom" in Luke 16, and how both point to the intermediate state of the believer; that blessed condition between death and the bodily resurrection. In this study, we will explore the background, biblical usage, and theological richness of this term, seeing how Jesus' words not only comforted a dying man but continue to anchor the hope of every believer in Christ.

PARADISE IN LUKE 23:43

The Promise of Paradise in Luke 23:43

Luke 23:43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

These words, spoken from the cross, carry both tenderness and authority. With His body wracked in pain and the weight of the world's sin upon Him, the Lord Jesus yet turned to the repentant thief and gave him the assurance that before the sun set, his soul would be in a place of rest and joy: *paradise*. This was not a vague comfort or poetic sentiment, but a precise promise, rooted in the language and imagery of Scripture and well understood in the culture of the day.

The Greek word translated *paradise* is *paradeisos* (παράδεισος), a term that first entered the Greek language from the ancient Persians. It referred to an enclosed, well-watered garden or royal park: a place of beauty, abundance, and peace. In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, *paradeisos* is used to describe the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:8), that perfect dwelling where God walked with man before sin entered the world. In the New Testament, the word occurs only three times, each with profound significance:

- Luke 23:43: the place where the repentant thief would join Jesus *that very day*.
- 2 Corinthians 12:4: Paul's account of being "caught up into paradise," hearing unspeakable words not lawful for man to utter.
- Revelation 2:7: the location of the "tree of life... in the midst of the paradise of God," promised to those who overcome.

In the first-century Jewish and early Christian understanding, *paradise* was not yet the final heaven, but the blessed portion of *Sheol* (Hebrew) or *Hades* (Greek): the realm of the dead, where the righteous awaited the resurrection. This place of comfort was distinct from the place of torment occupied by the unrighteous. To promise the thief that he would be in paradise "today" was to assure him of immediate, conscious fellowship with the Lord after death, in the presence and comfort of God, though still awaiting the final bodily resurrection and glorification.

The Lord's words reveal not only the reality of the intermediate state but also the certainty of salvation for the one who turns to Him in faith. In a single sentence, Jesus swept away the thief's guilt, silenced his fears, and opened to him the gates of God's garden; not in some distant future, but before the day was done.

ABRAHAM'S BOSOM IN FIRST-CENTURY JEWISH THOUGHT

The Hope of Abraham's Bosom

When our Lord told the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16, He was not introducing a strange or mystical concept to His hearers. Rather, He was drawing upon a familiar and deeply cherished image in Jewish thought — the idea of *Abraham's bosom*. For a first-century Jewish audience, the phrase instantly conveyed the picture of a place of blessed rest in the presence of Israel's covenant father, Abraham. To be “in Abraham's bosom” was to be safe, honored, and comforted, enjoying the privileges of God's covenant promises.

This was no vague or sentimental notion. In the Jewish understanding of the afterlife, shaped during the period of the Second Temple (circa 516 BC – AD 70), *Sheol* (in Hebrew) or *Hades* (in Greek) was the realm where all the dead awaited resurrection — both righteous and wicked — yet in very different conditions. By the first century, the concept had developed into two distinct divisions:

1. The place of comfort: the blessed dwelling of the righteous, often portrayed as being “with Abraham,” the father of the faithful.
2. The place of torment: the sorrowful and painful abode of the wicked, awaiting final judgment.

In the parable, Jesus described Lazarus; a beggar covered with sores, despised in life, as being “carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom” (Luke 16:22). This was an image of honor and acceptance. The “bosom” language came from the banquet table, where guests reclined on couches, leaning toward the chest of a beloved friend or honored host (cf. John 13:23). To rest in Abraham's bosom was to be welcomed into the most intimate fellowship with the covenant patriarch, a sign that one had entered the place of God's blessing and rest.

The contrast in the parable is striking. The rich man, who in life had enjoyed wealth, ease, and luxury, found himself in *Hades*, “being in torments” (Luke 16:23). Lazarus, who had suffered want and humiliation, now rested in glory and comfort. This reversal of fortunes highlighted an unchanging truth: God's covenant blessings are not measured by earthly possessions or status, but by faith in Him.

In the theology of Jesus' day, *Abraham's bosom* was understood to be the same blessed realm that Jesus, in Luke 23:43, calls *paradise*. Both terms point to the intermediate state of the righteous dead — a condition of conscious fellowship with God and His people, a place of joy and safety before the final resurrection. For believers, it is a reminder that death is not the end, but the doorway to the company of the redeemed, where we await the day when body and soul will be reunited in glory.

Thus, Abraham's bosom is not merely an ancient Jewish idiom. It is a window into the believer's hope — the certainty that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8), and that the company we keep in eternity is determined, not by our earthly standing, but by our relationship to the God of Abraham through faith in His Son.

SUMMARY COMPARISON: PARADISE AND ABRAHAM’S BOSOM

Term	Paradise (<i>paradeisos</i>)	Abraham’s Bosom
Language/Origin	Greek (from Persian), used in the Septuagint to translate Hebrew <i>gan</i> (“garden”) ¹	Hebrew/Aramaic idiom with covenant symbolism ⁵
Primary Imagery	Enclosed Garden of Delight	Banquet Embrace
Meaning in 1st Century Jewish & Early Christian Thought:	The blessed portion of Sheol/Hades where the righteous dwell in conscious fellowship with God, awaiting resurrection ²	The place of honor and rest for the righteous dead in close fellowship with Abraham, the covenant father of Israel ⁶
NT References:	Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:4; Revelation 2:7 ³	Luke 16:22–23
OT / Jewish Background:	Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:8); Jewish expectation of a restored Eden ⁴	Covenant promises to Abraham (Genesis 12:1–3; 15:1–6) ⁷
Connection to Abraham’s Bosom:	Emphasizes beauty, abundance, joy, and God’s presence in the intermediate state	Emphasizes covenant identity, safety, and intimacy; culturally equivalent to paradise in meaning and location

CONCLUSION

The words of Jesus to the repentant thief and His parable of the rich man and Lazarus open a window into the unseen realm where the righteous find rest. Whether described as *paradise*, the restored garden of God’s presence, or as *Abraham’s bosom*, the place of covenant fellowship and honor, the truth remains the same: for the believer, death is not a descent into darkness, but an immediate entrance into the company of the redeemed, in conscious fellowship with the Lord.

These terms are not meant to satisfy idle curiosity about the afterlife, but to anchor the heart of the believer in the unchanging promises of God. In the midst of life’s uncertainties, they declare that the one who trusts in Christ need not fear the grave. The moment the last breath is drawn, the believer is “absent from the body” and “present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8).

For the thief, this promise was the difference between despair and eternal hope. For us, it is the same. The voice that spoke to him still speaks to all who will hear: “*Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*” Until that day comes for us, we live with the sure expectation that the Lord who saves us will also receive us; and that His presence will be our home forever.

FOOTNOTES

1. Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 512 — notes the Septuagint's use of *paradeisos* in Genesis 2:8 and its application to the future dwelling of the righteous.
2. J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 409–410 — explains the intermediate state as the blessed compartment of Sheol for the righteous prior to the resurrection.
3. John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 72 — identifies paradise in Revelation 2:7 as the dwelling of the righteous in God's presence.
4. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah* (San Antonio: Ariel Ministries, 2003), 146–147 — draws connections between Eden, the Messianic Kingdom, and the eternal state.
5. Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 46 — defines "Abraham's bosom" as a Jewish idiom denoting the place of rest and honor for the faithful dead.
6. Stanley D. Toussaint, "The Rich Man and Lazarus," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 113 (1956): 225–226 — details the banquet imagery and the intimacy of being "in the bosom" of Abraham.
7. Paul N. Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2006), 127–128 — connects the covenant promises to Abraham with the eschatological hope of the faithful in the intermediate state.