

PATHWAY TO PEACE: BIBLE STUDY GUIDE – LESSON 11**Lesson 11: “The Weight of the Evidence”**

One of the most important principles of Bible study is that we must never build a theology, doctrine, or belief on just one or two Bible scriptures. When studying the Bible we must look at the **weight of the evidence** much like a jury or judge does in the court of law. For example, in a criminal trial, such as 1st degree murder, the prosecutor has to show the jury enough evidence that the defendant committed the crime “beyond a shadow of a doubt.” This means that the prosecutor has to show the jury overwhelming evidence that proves beyond a “shadow of a doubt” that the defendant committed the crime and is guilty as charged. The prosecutor is literally going to overwhelm the jury and judge with witnesses, pictures, crime reports, exhibits, etcetera as evidence to prove that the defendant committed the crime. At the end of the trial the jury makes its decision based on the **weight of the evidence** given in court. The same is true when studying Bible principles and doctrines; we must compare scripture with scripture and read the full-context of Bible scriptures to weigh the evidences of Bible TRUTH. We must never weigh out the evidence of Bible truth based man’s ideas and traditions! That is fatal. Only weigh out the Bible TRUTH with Bible scriptures. Now as you study Bible truths you will see that there is harmony throughout the entire Bible.

This Bible study will show you a practical way to use the weight of the evidence of the Bible. We are going to look at two passages of Bible scriptures that may be confusing or appear to conflict with other passages in the Bible. Remember every thought or doctrines of the Bible are consistent, they do not contradict.

1. Read carefully the two main passages of scriptures and answer the questions below:

Read ALL the following Bible text: Luke 23:42,43; Luke 16:22, 23 and 2 Corinthians 5:8

Luke 23:42, 43 is referring to who? _____

What does it appear that Jesus is saying to the thief on the cross? _____

What is Luke 16:22 & 23 referring to? _____

What does it appear that this passage of scripture is talking about? _____

Read 2 Corinthians 5:8. What does it appear to be stating? _____

Typically when Luke 23:42, 43; Luke 16:22, 23 and even 2 Corinthians 5:8 is read it at first appears that when a person dies he or she either goes straight to heaven or hell. Are these three passages of scriptures evidence enough to conclude that when a person dies he/she goes directly to heaven or hell?

Like the court of law, let's weigh out the evidence from the Bible to find out if we can conclude that people go straight to heaven or hell after death. Let's briefly build our case from the Bible to see if a person goes directly to heaven or hell after death.

2. (Review) Does a person go directly to heaven or hell after death?

Read ALL the following Bible text: Genesis 2:7; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6; Psalm 146:4; Ecclesiastes 12:7_ Psalm 115:17; Ezekiel 18:20; John 11:11-14; Acts 2:29, 34;

Write Bible Answer:

So based on the weight of the evidence thus far it clearly appears that when a person dies, he/she is in an unconscious state with no breath in their bodies. Their soul or “spirit” is not still living an immortal state in heaven or hell. ***Ecclesiastes 12:7*** says “Then the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.” “Spirit” in this text literally means breath. The Hebrew word for spirit is “ruwach” which means breath. If you have a margin in your Bible you will see that the “spirit” in Ecclesiastes 12:7 means breath. So when a person dies their breath goes back to God.

Again based on the weight of the evidence of the Bible when a person dies, he/she is in an unconscious state with no breath in their bodies. They do not go directly to heaven or hell after death. Let’s look at some more evidence of this from the Bible. When you read ***John 11:11-14*** concerning the death of Lazarus Jesus explains death as a sleep, a state of unconsciousness. Matter of fact if you read the rest of Lazarus story in John 11:1 – 44 you will notice that Jesus made no references that Lazarus went straight to heaven after he died. In verse 44 when Jesus rose Lazarus from the tomb, Jesus said “Lazarus come forth!” Jesus did not say “Lazarus come down [meaning out of heaven]!” If it was Biblically true that Lazarus went straight to heaven after death, do you think it was a joy for him to return to this sinful earth as opposed to peace heaven? Of course not! Also in ***John 20:17*** Jesus makes it clear that after His death of the cross that he did not automatically go straight to Heaven. Matter fact, when Jesus rose from the dead Jesus said to Mary when He saw her, “I am not yet ascended to my Father.”

To add, First ***Thessalonians 4:16*** indicates that when Jesus returns that the righteous dead will be resurrected. In ***John 5:29*** it mentions that there is going to be two resurrections, a resurrection of life for those who have done good and a resurrection of damnation for those who have done evil. So if people go straight to heaven or hell after death what would be the need of a resurrection? Or if people went straight to heaven after death why does First Thessalonians 4:16 say that when Jesus returns the second time the dead in Christ shall rise first? The Bible is abundantly clear that when a person dies they are dead in their graves not aware of anything, like a sleep. The early church of Acts understood this clearly. In Acts 2:29, 34 Peter preached that King David in verse 29 “is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher (meaning grave) is with us this day. And in verse 34 he says clearly that “For David is not ascended into the heavens.”

What we just did was weigh the evidence of “does a person go straight to heaven or hell after death?” The Bible answer is clearly no. They go to their graves in a sleep like state with no breath or awareness waiting for the resurrection day.

Thief On the Cross (Read and study below)

Let’s go back to our first main text, ***Luke 23:43***, concerning the converted thief on the cross. Did he go directly to heaven that day? Based on the weight of the evidence the answer is positively no. So what does Luke 23:43 mean? Let’s re-examine briefly. You may not know that the early Greek manuscripts of the

New Testament did not contain any punctuation at all. The words and sentences were written in all capital letters with no space or punctuation. Punctuation was added later to the Greek manuscripts as it was translated into other languages. The Bible is inspired by God, but not the punctuation. Where a comma is placed can make the difference in the meaning of a text. With that in mind let's look at Luke 23: 43. It says "And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." From this passage of scripture, it appears that the thief of the cross went straight to heaven, but based on the weight of the evidence you know that this can not be the case. Also note again that Jesus did not go to heaven that same day, He would have been lying to the thief to say that He will see him in paradise that very same day. In the original Greek manuscript of Luke 23:43 it is capital letters with no punctuation marks. Where you place the commas make a big difference to the meaning. Based on the weight of the evidence if we place the comma in its proper place then the text will make more sense and it will totally agree with the weight of the evidence of the Bible. Let's now look at it, "Assuredly, I say to you today, you will be with Me in Paradise." Do you see the difference in meaning now? The comma should have been placed after the "today" instead of the first "you". So this text is not saying that Jesus will see the thief in heaven that very day, it is saying that what I am saying right now is this, you will be with Me in Paradise when I come again to receive the faithful. Again, *First Thessalonians. 4:16-17* makes this clear. Now there are exceptions in the Bible were there are some people who were translated to heaven, but the Bible makes it very clear, such as Enoch, Moses, and Elijah.

Rich Man & Poor Lazarus (Read and study below)

Second main scripture: Luke 16:22, 23 Also read the entire chapter of Luke 16.

At first glance Luke 16:22, 23 is an apparent contradiction to the belief that the dead are truly dead [ceased from existence]. But the weight of the evidence of the Bible gives us overwhelming evidence that when a person dies he/she is dead; unable to breath, touch, smell or talk and he/she does not have a "spirit" existing in heaven or hell. So what does Luke 16:22, 23 mean?

First you must read the texts before Luke 16:22, 23 and after it to get the full context or understanding of its full meaning or lesson. When you read the entire chapter of Luke 16, you see that Luke 16: 22, 23 is a part of a parable that Jesus told directly to the Pharisees starting with verse 19 known as "The Rich Man and Lazarus." Parables are usually fictional simple stories to teach a moral truth. Jesus often used parables in the Bible to teach moral principles or to drive home a point. Now it is important to understand the setting and mood of this parable. If you go back to read Luke 15 and Luke 16: 1-13 you will find that the parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus is the last of five parables believed to be told the same day by Jesus to the disciples, Pharisees, and other on lookers. So what moral principle is Jesus teaching in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. In Luke 16 starting in verse 19 Jesus begins to tell the Pharisees of a certain rich man and a beggar called Lazarus. In summary of the parable the beggar was a poor man who was hungry, homeless and sick. He laid at the gate of the rich man hoping to get some crumbs of food from the Rich Man. The rich man lived an extravagant life and ignored the poor beggar at his gate. Now, in verses 22 and 23, our original text in question says that "the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom"; the rich man also died and was buried and in "hell" he lifted his eyes, in torment, he saw Lazarus the poor beggar in the arms of Abraham. Now remember this text is a parable. We already studied overwhelming evidence that the dead are dead and do not go straight to heaven or hell. Now that you understand the Biblical doctrine of death and understand the context and mood of this parable, it is easy to know that "Abraham's bosom" does not represent the heavenly kingdom nor does the rich man lifting his eyes in hell represents everlasting hell that torments the wicked throughout eternity. So what point is Jesus

making here? And what is the significance of Lazarus in the arms of Abraham? Remember who Jesus is talking to – the Pharisees. The Pharisees were Jewish leaders and descendants of Abraham, God’s chosen. By virtue of this inheritance, many Pharisees believed that they had an automatic citizenship into the kingdom of God and that anyone not a descendant of Abraham did not matter, such as Lazarus in this parable. Jesus wanted to teach them in this parable that that is not the case. When you study this parable closely and carefully, you will see that Jesus wanted the Pharisees to use their present opportunities, resources, influence, and biblical knowledge to help all people and to think on the eternal consequences of their decisions. In this parable Jesus creates a “what if” story to bring out a point. “What if” when a man dies he is able to see his eternal consequence? And what may it look like? You may be surprised? In **verses 22 and 23**, we see that Gentiles [non-Jews] who accept Christ receive spiritual inheritance of Abraham and are accepted. Galatians 3:29 says that those who believe in Christ are of Abraham’s seed and recipients of the promise. The parable also shows us that blood inheritance or association with a particular organization does not guarantee eternal life.

Absent from the body(read and study below)

Third main scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:1-8(read whole chapter also)

One thing in studying the bible you must NEVER take one passage of scripture out of context and try to make it fit into a “man-made” theory or opinion that is not bible based. ALWAYS look at the context. At many a funeral preacher stand before and say “he/she is absent from the body and present with the Lord” but if you read the scripture carefully Paul says “willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord”. There is a difference, what is this difference? Notice Paul uses words like “earthly house”, “this tabernacles”, “building of God not made with hands”What does this mean, what is he saying? The word earthly in the greek “epigeios” means worldly or “terrestrial”. House in the greek “oikia” means: *residence* (abstractly), but usually (concretely) **an abode (literally or figuratively)**; by implication a *family* (especially *domestics*): - home, house (-hold). God the word house be in a figurative sense? We will look, so the Paul talk about this earthly house or Terrestrial abode, being dissolved. What is this house? Well Paul also said this the earthly house or “terrestrial abode” of this tabernacle. What does the word tabernacle mean in the greek? skēnos a *hut* or temporary residence, that is, (figuratively) **the human body** (as the abode of the spirit): - tabernacle. So Paul is talking about the terrestrial abode of the human body. He is talking about the terrestrial body being dissolved and having a building of God in the heavens. Even Peter used the term “tabernacle”.

3. Let's read how Peter Stated this. Read: 2Peter 1:13-15

Peter was talking about that he would shortly die, that what he meant by shortly put off (laying aside)this tabernacle. Like Paul he is using the term tabernacle in a figurative sense. Jesus revealed this to Peter in John 21:18-19, which was after His death and resurrection. So as you look at the context of 2 Corinthians 5:1-8 Paul talks about groaning presently in this tabernacle(human body) desiring to be clothed upon with our house(abode) from heaven or the building of God. He also mentions that when we are clothed with the house from heaven mortality will be swallowed up of life. The question then is when will this be?

4. When will we be clothed with the house from heaven so that mortality will be swallowed? Is there any other passage of scripture that uses the same language?

Read ALL the following scriptures: 1 Corinthians 15:51-54, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

Write Answer: _____

The being clothed upon that mortality might be swallowed up of life takes place at the “last trump”, “when the trumpet sounds, and the dead are raised”. This is when we will be clothed upon and no longer have to groan in these decaying mortal bodies. Also based upon 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 this clothing upon and having new tabernacles or earthly houses(bodies) takes place at the second coming of Christ. Once again the text in 1 Corinthians 5:8 said “absent from the body and to be present with the Lord”, not “is to be”. So we already saw from scripture that the tabernacle meant the human body.

Paul even makes it clear in the text as you read on. Based upon the context Paul is saying to be absent from the earthly mortal body and we understand that however we already read when that will take place and that would be at the second coming, so when will we be with the Lord? 1 Thessalonians 4:17 makes it clear at the second coming when we meet the Lord in the air (along with those who died in Christ) that is when we will be with the Lord. The text is not saying when we die our spirit man departs from the body and ascends up to be with the Lord. Scripture does not teach that. Paul is not even talking about some out of the body experience. We already the variety of scripture that makes it VERY clear what happens to a person when they die. So when we read the passage in 2 Corinthians 5:1-8 Paul is not talking about what many ministers are teaching(especially in funerals) saying that when a person dies they leave there body and their spirit is with the Lord. Paul rather is talking about his desire to no longer be in the mortal, Terrestrial body which he was presently groaning in, but to be clothed with immortality, and to one day be with the Lord. He knew when this would take place and it would be at the second coming of Christ. Paul was confident in the blessed hope and believed it by faith because he said it verses 6 and 7. He longed for the joy of having a new immortal tabernacle or body. He longed for the coming of Christ. We can be confident and joyful of that as well. If we are faithful we will experience that.