

WHAT IS MEANT BY "ABRAHAM'S BOSOM"?

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Exactly what is meant by the phrase "Abraham's bosom"? While over the centuries there have been various interpretations proposed regarding this phrase, allow me to share with you my personal understanding, as I have obtained it from the Scriptures. As some of my readers may know, this phrase is only mentioned one time in the Scriptures. That is, in the sixteenth chapter of the Gospel of Luke, where Jesus shares the Parable about the rich man and the beggar, Lazarus. Let me share it with you in its entirety:

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there

was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, 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 lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

Luke 16:19-31, KJV

As you can see by the previous set of verses, this place which Jesus refers to as "Abraham's bosom" is juxtaposed with a place of fiery torment, which is translated in verse twenty-three as "hell". As I explain in my eight-part series entitled "Hell, the Lake of Fire and Universalism", this particular usage of the word "hell" is translated from the Greek word "hades". Thayer's Greek English Lexicon notes the following regarding this ancient Koine Greek word:

----- Begin Quote -----

hades {hah'-dace}

AV - Hell 10, grave 1; 11

- 1) name Hades or Pluto, the god of the lower regions
- 2) Orcus, the nether world, the realm of the dead
- 3) later use of this word: the grave, death, hell

In Biblical Greek it is associated with Orcus, the infernal regions, a dark and dismal place in the very depths of the earth, the common receptacle of disembodied spirits. Usually Hades is just the abode of the wicked, Lu. 16:23, Rev. 20:13,14; a very uncomfortable place.

----- End Quote -----

The point is, Jesus is describing two very opposite places which are separated by a "great gulf" which no one can cross over in order to get to the other place. The rich man cannot cross over to Abraham and Lazarus; and Lazarus cannot cross over to where the rich man is. It might interest you to know that both Zophar the Naamathite in the Book of Job, and King David in the Book of Psalms, indirectly spoke of this great chasm, or gulf, and the contrast which exists between the height of heaven, and the depth of hell within the bowels of the Earth. Consider the following verses:

"Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?"
Job 11:7-8, KJV

"If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there."
Psalm 139:8, KJV

Thus we see a stark contrast between up and down, Heaven and Hell, and a clear, impenetrable separation of these distinct locations, exactly as Jesus describes in the Gospel of Luke.

Please notice that in the Parable, we are told that the rich man "was buried", while Lazarus "was carried by the angels." In my view, this suggests that one man went down, while the other went up. So what does this all mean? There are three big clues in this Parable which strongly suggest to me that Jesus is using the phrase "Abraham's bosom" as a metaphor for Heaven itself, and the abode of the righteous. First of all, we are told that the Angels transferred Lazarus to this place. Second, we are informed that this place is marked by comfort. Third, we are told that Abraham is there, and that the place is in fact named after Abraham. As you may know, there are three places in the Scriptures where Abraham is referred to as the "friend of God". Consider these verses:

"Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of

this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?"

2 Chronicles 20:7, KJV

"But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend."

Isaiah 41:8, KJV

"And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God."

James 2:23, KJV

Why is Abraham referred to as the friend of God? Well, quite plainly, it is because as the Apostle James notes above, he believed God. He had faith in God's Word and God's promises. As a result, Abraham's faith in the unseen was thus counted unto him for righteousness; as we can determine by this set of supporting verses:

"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness . . . Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith."

Romans 4:3, 9-13, KJV

"Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."

Galatians 3:6-9, KV

So it seems to me that if Abraham was made righteous by his faith, and if he is the friend of God, then by necessity, he must be in Heaven. Now, if he is in Heaven, then it stands to reason that "Abraham's Bosom" must likewise be symbolic of Heaven. Lazarus goes to this place in this Parable, because he is with Abraham, and in comfort, while the rich man finds himself in torment in the flames of Hell far below, separated by a great gulf.

But there is even more to this. Both the Scriptures as well as Jewish tradition indicate that centuries ago, there was a Jewish custom whereby when guests attended a particular feast, they would recline on couches at a table. At such a feast, each guest would lean on his left elbow, thus leaving his right arm free. Now, being as two or more people would lay on the same couch, the result would be that one man's head would be close to the chest of the man who lay behind him. Thus was coined the phrase "to lie in the bosom" of the other.

We find a very clear example of this custom during the Last Supper, as is described in the Gospel of John. As you may know, the Apostle John had a propensity for writing in the third person. Perhaps this was due to his humility. At any rate, the Scriptures inform us that John was dearly loved by Jesus. Perhaps that helps to explain John's location at the table during the Lord's last meal -- or Seder -- prior to His Crucifixion:

"Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?"

John 13:23-25, KJV

Just as John describes himself as leaning on Jesus' bosom, he describes Jesus in the very same fashion -- that is, "in the bosom of the Father" -- in the first chapter of his Gospel, as we see by the following verse:

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

John 1:18, KJV

So, adding one and one together, if "the bosom of the Father" is in Heaven, then in my opinion, the bosom of Abraham must represent the Kingdom of Heaven as well; because righteous Abraham was the father of faith. It is apparent that being allowed to lean on the bosom of the master of the feast was considered to be a rather special privilege. Obviously, not everyone could do it. It was indeed an indication of having favor and honor with the host of the feast. Concerning Jesus, we know that because of what He did for us, without a doubt He pleased His Father. This fact is clearly indicated by the following group of verses:

"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
Matthew 3:17, KJV

"Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles."
Matthew 12:18, KJV

"While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."
Matthew 17:5, KJV

"And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
Mark 1:11, KJV

"And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased."
Luke 3:22, KJV

"For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
2 Peter 1:17, KJV

While not everyone could physically lean into the bosom of the master of the feast, as Jesus indicates in the verses below, other guests could be given special recognition by being allowed to move higher up into seats and rooms of honor, as we see here:

"And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when

he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Luke 14:7-11, KJV

While I had never realized it before, in sharing the above Parable with His followers, the Lord was in fact quoting from the Book of Proverbs, as we can determine by the following verses:

"Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men: For better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldst be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen."

Proverbs 25:6-7, KJV

At the same time, Jesus also called out the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees who unworthily sat in the highest seats of the land, as we see by the following set of verses"

"Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi."

Matthew 23:1-7, KJV

Returning to the topic of Abraham and Abraham's bosom, just as Abraham became the friend of God because he believed in God's promises by faith, and thus was counted as being

righteous, we too become righteous, as well as the friends of God, and the children of God, through our faith in the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Not only that, but as the following set of verses indicates, we become the spiritual children of Abraham as well, because he is the father of faith:

"And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

Matthew 3:9, KJV

"I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham."

John 8:37-39, KJV

"Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."

Romans 9:6-8, KJV

"Know ye therefore that THEY WHICH ARE OF FAITH, THE SAME ARE THE CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham . . . That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith . . . And IF YE BE CHRIST'S, THEN ARE YE ABRAHAM'S SEED, and heirs according to the promise."

Galatians 3:7-9, 14, 29, KJV

"Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise."

Galatians 4:28, KJV

So as you can hopefully see, performing self-righteous works of the flesh could not make the Jews the real children of Abraham, no matter how hard they tried, and regardless of

how much they chose to believe it. They were indeed the seed of Abraham after the flesh -- that is to say, biologically speaking -- as Jesus clearly noted in the previous verses. However, they were not the true children of Abraham, because they lacked faith in Jesus Christ. They were -- and to this day, still remain -- the children of Hell, the spawn of the Devil, and the synagogue of Satan, unless they embrace Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Jesus said it, and I for one believe it. How about you?

To reiterate, as we saw earlier, those of us who believe in and embrace Jesus Christ are the true children of Abraham. We are the adopted children of God through faith in Christ. This important point is made very clear by verses such as the following ones:

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:"

John 1:12, KJV

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

Romans 8:15-17, KJV

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

Galatians 3:26, KJV

"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,"

Ephesians 1:5, KJV

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;"

Ephesians 2:19, KJV

To continue, as the Apostle Paul writes in Galatians and in other places, that is what the Lord meant when He said to Abraham "In thee shall all nations be blessed." The Lord was

in fact referring to the spiritual blessing of Salvation through faith, which is something most biological Jews do not have. They hate Christ, they curse in His name, and they spit at the mention of His name. Most of them are in fact rather antichrist. If you are one who doubts that this is the blessing that the Lord was referring to when He spoke to Abraham, then consider also what the Apostles Peter and Paul say in the Book of Acts and in the Epistle to the Galatians:

"Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in THY SEED shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, SENT HIM TO BLESS YOU, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."

Acts 3:25-26, KJV

"That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles THROUGH JESUS CHRIST; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith . . . Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And TO THY SEED, WHICH IS CHRIST."

Galatians 3:14, 16, KJV

Do you see that? Peter and Paul are clearly talking about the blessing of Salvation which comes through faith alone in Jesus Christ. It is all about faith, faith, faith. Period. Furthermore, please carefully notice that both Apostles make the point that the words "thy seed" are a direct reference to Jesus Christ. They aren't referring to the Jews in general as some people would have us to believe. Furthermore, even if we look at it in a purely biological sense, Jesus was indeed of the seed of Abraham. He was "thy seed" through His Jewish lineage being Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah . . . all the way down to Joseph and Mary. You will find the full lineage in the genealogies of the Gospels.

My friends, please do not be deceived by the modern lie which erroneously claims that we must bless the Jews if we wish God to bless our lives. That is NOT by any means what any of those verses mean. Do not fall for the deception that claims that we owe something to modern Jews, as if they are personally responsible for our Salvation, because they are most certainly not. Our Salvation came through the faith of Abraham, and through His spiritual children who faithfully preached the Gospel of repentance during the First Century. It came through Abraham's seed -- or "thy seed" -- in the

form of Jesus Christ. It has absolutely nothing to do with the modern, false, antichrist Jews who are not even true Jews at all. That is what John chapter eight is all about. Therefore, do not allow them or their misguided puppets -- the Zionist, Christian Judaizers -- to trap you under their legalistic yoke of bondage. Remain free through Christ. As the Lord told His Jewish listeners in the Gospel of John:

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

John 8:31-32, 36, KJV

So then, because we are the true children of faith, and the true children of Abraham through our faith in Jesus Christ, perhaps someday we too "shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob", as Jesus indicates in the eight chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. Perhaps we shall be given a place of honor at their table. Please note carefully that the Lord specifically tells us that Believers "shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN." So that is another clear indication -- at least to me -- regarding what "Abraham's bosom" signifies. Consider these verses:

"When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom [unbelieving Jews] shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Matthew 8:10-12, KJV

"Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are;

depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves [unbelieving Jews] thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last."

Luke 13:23-30, KJV

As you can plainly see, the false Jews, the false children of Abraham, the usurpers, the legalistic synagogue of Satan shall be cast out and thrust out due to their lack of faith in Jesus Christ. They will be exactly like the man who did not possess a wedding garment. That is, they won't be clothed in a garment of Salvation, and a robe of righteousness, which can only be obtained through faith in Jesus Christ. Please consider the following verses:

"I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem."

Job 29:14, KJV

"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."

Isaiah 61:10, KJV

"Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen."

Matthew 22:8-14, KJV

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God,

and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

Revelation 6:9-11, KJV

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands . . . And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Revelation 7:9, 13-14, KJV

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God."

Revelation 19:7-9, KJV

Dear reader, what about you? Do you want to be the friend of God, the friend of Jesus Christ, and the friend of Abraham? Do you want to rest in the bosom of the Father, and in the bosom of Abraham? Then if you have not done so already, now is the hour of your Salvation. Please accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, repent of your sins, and strive your best to live for Him. Please carefully consider this final group of verses:

"(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)"

2 Corinthians 6:2, KJV

"Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day,

after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

Hebrews 4:7, KJV

"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

James 4:14, KJV

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

Acts 17:30-31, KJV

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

Romans 13:11, KJV

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:"

Hebrews 9:27, KJV

"But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

Luke 12:20, KJV

With these thoughts I will bring this article to a close. I hope that you have found it informative, and I pray that it has been a blessing and an inspiration in your life. If you have enjoyed reading this article, please consider sharing its URL with your online friends. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr or with any other social network, I would also appreciate if you would take the time to click or tap on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information and further study, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were also mentioned in this article, or which are related to the topics which were discussed in this article. All of them are also located on the Bill's Bible Basics web server:

All Are Given a Chance, But . . .
Hell, the Lake of Fire and Universalism
Is the Message of Salvation Meant for All Men?
Many Are Called, But Few Are Chosen
Message to the World
Not Everyone is a Child of God

Written by Bill Kochman

wordweaver777@gmail.com
<https://www.billkochman.com>

End Of File