

Chapter 1

You Can Have A Happy Future!

Paragraph 6 states:

The well-known historical figure Jesus Christ described this feature of the knowledge of God in clear terms. He said: "This means *everlasting life*, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ." (John 17:3)...¹

For comparison, 72 Bible translations/versions² were consulted. The Bible in Basic English indicates "have knowledge," the Daniel Mace New Testament indicates "acknowledge," and the Orthodox Jewish Brit Chadasha indicates "have da'as" in John 17:3. Otherwise, the remaining 67 consulted Bibles indicate "know" or "knowing" (and spelling variations thereof) rather than "taking in knowledge" as reflected by the NWT in John 17:3. The translation of the Greek word in question is emphasized in bold.

John 17:3

*And this is life eternal, that they might **know** thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (KJV)*

*"This is eternal life, that they may **know** You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (NASB)*

*Now this is eternal life: that they may **know** you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. (NIV)*

*This means everlasting life, their **taking in knowledge** of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ. (NWT)*

The word in question has a Strong's number of 1097 and is transliterated from the original Greek as *ginosko*. How does Strong's define *ginosko*?

G1097

γινώσκω

ginōskō

ghin-ocē'-ko

A prolonged form of a primary verb; to "know" (absolutely), in a great variety of applications and with many implications...allow, be aware (of), feel, (have) known (-ledge), perceive, be resolved, can speak, be sure, understand.³

Thayer's defines *ginosko* as:

1. to learn to know, come to know, get a knowledge of, perceive, feel
 - a. to become known

[1] Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, Inc. KNOWLEDGE that Leads to Everlasting Life, 1995.

[2] Please see the Foreword, Bibles Consulted section for more information.

[3] Strong, James. "Entry for G1097 'ginosko.'" Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible. 1890.

2. to know, understand, perceive, have knowledge of
 - a. to understand
 - b. to know
3. Jewish idiom for sexual intercourse between a man and a woman
4. to become acquainted with, to know⁴

Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words also states, "In the NT *ginosko* frequently indicates a relationship between the person 'knowing' and the object known; in this respect, what is 'known' is of value or importance to the one who knows, and hence the establishment of the relationship..."⁵

Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology states, "The New Testament emphasizes that knowing God is not simply on intellectual apprehension, but a response of faith and an acceptance of Christ."⁶

Albert Barnes said of John 17:3, "The word 'know' here, as in other places, expresses more than a mere speculative acquaintance with the character and perfections of God. 'It includes all the impressions on the mind and life which a just view of God and of the Saviour is fitted to produce.' It includes, of course, love, reverence, obedience, honor, gratitude, supreme affection. 'To know God as he is' is to know and regard him as a lawgiver, a sovereign, a parent, a friend. It is to yield the whole soul to him, and strive to obey his law."⁷

The footnote for John 17:3 in the NET Bible states:

...(abundant) eternal life is defined as knowing (being in relationship with) the Father and the Son...**For John this knowledge is not intellectual, but relational. It involves being in relationship.**⁸ (Emphasis mine.)

Does "taking in knowledge" encompass the shades of meaning present in *ginosko*?

No.

Turning to Thayer's, we find an entry for a word that is translated "take knowledge of," as proposed by the NWT's translation of *ginosko* in John 17:3. That word is *epiginosko* and is defined in Thayer's as:

1. to become thoroughly acquainted with, to know thoroughly
 - a. to know accurately, know well
2. to know

[4] Thayer, Joseph H. "Entry for G1097 'ginosko.'" Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, 1896.

[5] Vine, W.E. "Entry for A1. Know, Known, Knowledge, Unknown [Verb], '*ginosko*'". Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words. 1966.

[6] Elwell, Walter A. "Entry for 'Know, Knowledge'". Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology, 1996.

[7] Barnes, Albert. "Commentary on John 17:3." " Barnes' Notes on the Bible. 1798-1870.

[8] www.bible.org "Footnote on John 17:3." The NET Bible. (Accessed January 2007.)

- a. to recognize
 - 1. by sight, hearing, of certain signs, to perceive who a person is
- b. to know i.e. to perceive
- c. to know i.e. to find out, ascertain
- d. to know i.e. to understand⁹

None of these definitions for *epiginosko* ("take knowledge of") implies a personal relationship and needless to say, *epiginosko* is not used in John 17:3. *Ginosko* is.

Ginosko is much more than *epiginosko* as "take knowledge of" (or "taking in knowledge" as translated by the NWT). *Ginosko* means knowing absolutely, perceiving, understanding and **forming a relationship**. The NWT's translation of *ginosko* in John 17:3, "taking in knowledge," does not reflect building a relationship with Yahweh and Jesus Christ. The emphasis of the NWT translation of *ginosko* is scholarly learning, for where in "taking in knowledge" is a relationship implied? Memorizing details about a celebrity's life and preferences doesn't mean that I know that celebrity, though it could certainly be said that I would be "taking in knowledge" of that celebrity. Similarly, memorizing Bible facts does not equate to knowing (forming a relationship with) Yahweh and Jesus Christ. For this reason, I object – strenuously – to the NWT's translation of *ginosko* as "taking in knowledge."

In this regard, John 5:39, 40 is particularly apropos:

[39] *Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. [40] And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.* (KJV)

[39] *"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; [40] and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.* (NASB)

[39] *You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, [40] yet you refuse to come to me to have life.* (NIV)

[39] *"YOU are searching the Scriptures, because YOU think that by means of them YOU will have everlasting life; and these are the very ones that bear witness about me. [40] And yet YOU do not want to come to me that YOU may have life.* (NWT)

To be fair, paragraph 18 in this same chapter of [KNOWLEDGE that Leads to Everlasting Life](#) states, "The knowledge of God can also do much for you right now. Life's deepest and most disturbing questions are answered in the Bible. Accepting its guidance will help you to **develop a friendship with God...**"¹⁰ (Emphasis mine.)

I do not contend that JW doctrine asserts that Bible knowledge alone leads to salvation. The above clearly states that accepting the Bible and what it says about Yahweh and Jesus will help us form a relationship ("friendship") with God and various quotes from JW literature indicates this as well. My argument, in this instance, is not with JW doctrine (though JW salvation doctrine will be addressed at a later time). My objection lies with the **translation** offered for *ginosko* in that "taking in knowledge" is insufficient because a personal relationship with God is not involved or implied. JWs may teach that

[9] Thayer, Joseph H. "Entry for G1921 'epiginosko'". [Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament](#), 1896.

[10] Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, Inc. [KNOWLEDGE that Leads to Everlasting Life](#), 1995.

forming a relationship with God leads to salvation, but this translation of John 17:3 certainly gives no indication of that.

Paragraph 8 states:

What the Bible says about the future of the earth and mankind might be summed up in one word – Paradise! Jesus Christ spoke of it when he told a dying man: “You will be with me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:43) The mention of Paradise no doubt brought to that man’s mind the happy state of our first parents, Adam and Eve...¹¹

What is Paradise? The word translated as Paradise in these verses is *paradeisos* in the original Greek. Strong’s entry for *paradeisos* reads as follows:

G3857

παράδεισος

paradeisos

par-ad'-i-sos

Of Oriental origin (compare [H6508]); a *park*, that is, (specifically) an *Eden* (place of future happiness, “paradise”): - paradise¹².

And Thayer’s:

G3857

παράδεισος

paradeisos

- 1) among the Persians a grand enclosure or preserve, hunting ground, park, shady and well watered, in which wild animals, were kept for the hunt; it was enclosed by walls and furnished with towers for the hunters
- 2) a garden, pleasure ground
 - 2a) grove, park
- 3) the part of Hades which was thought by the later Jews to be the abode of the souls of pious until the resurrection: but some understand this to be a heavenly paradise
- 4) the upper regions of the heavens. According to the early church Fathers, the paradise in which our first parents dwelt before the fall still exists, neither on the earth or in the heavens, but above and beyond the world
- 5) heaven¹³

The American Tract Society Bible Dictionary states, “In the New Testament, ‘paradise’ is put, in allusion to the paradise of Eden, for the place where the souls of the blessed enjoy happiness. Thus our Savior tells the penitent thief on the cross, ‘Today shalt thou be with me in paradise;’ that is, in

[11] Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, Inc. KNOWLEDGE that Leads to Everlasting Life, 1995.

[12] Strong, James. “Entry for G3857 ‘paradeisos.’” Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible. 1890.

[13] Thayer, Joseph H. “Entry for G3857 ‘paradeisos.’” Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, 1896.

the state of the blessed."¹⁴ Easton's Bible Dictionary says paradise, "...came in course of time to be used as a name for the world of happiness and rest hereafter,"¹⁵ and according to Smith's Theological Dictionary, "It is applied figuratively to the celestial dwelling of the righteous, in allusion to the garden of Eden."¹⁶

Paradeisos is only used three times in the New Testament. Here, in Luke 23:43 and in the following verses:

2 Corinthians 12:2, 4

Reading in context with *paradeisos* emphasized in **bold**:

[2] *I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. [4] How that he was caught up into **paradise**, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. (KJV)*

[2] *I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a man was caught up to the third heaven. [4] was caught up into **Paradise** and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. (NASB)*

[2] *I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know - God knows. [4] was caught up to **paradise**. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. (NIV)*

[2] *I know a man in union with Christ who, fourteen years ago - whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know; God knows - was caught away as such to the third heaven. [4] that he was caught away into **paradise** and heard unutterable words which it is not lawful for a man to speak. (NWT)*

Please note that the "third heaven" spoken of in 2 Corinthians 12:2 is called "paradise" in 2 Corinthians 12:4.

What, then, is the third heaven?

According to Barnes' Notes on the Bible:

"...the Bible speaks of but three heavens; and among the Jews in the apostolic ages, also, the heavens were divided into three:

(1.) The aerial, including the clouds and the atmosphere, the heavens above us, until we come to the stars.

(2.) The starry heavens--the heavens in which the sun, moon, and stars appear to be situated.

(3.) The heavens *beyond* the stars. That heaven was supposed to be the residence of God, of angels, and of holy spirits. It was this upper heaven, the dwelling-place of God, to which Paul was taken, and whose wonders he was permitted to behold--this region where God dwelt, where Christ was seated at

[14] Rand, W. W. "Entry for 'PARADISE'", American Tract Society Bible Dictionary, 1859.

[15] Easton, Matthew George. "Entry for 'Paradise'". Easton's Bible Dictionary. 1897.

[16] Smith, William, Dr. "Entry for 'Par'adise'". Smith's Bible Dictionary. 1901.

the right hand of the Father, and where the spirits of the just were assembled."¹⁷

Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible agreed:

"...he was caught up into the *third heaven*, the heaven of the blessed, above the aërial heaven, in which the fowls fly, above the starry heaven, which is adorned with those glorious orbs: it was into the third heaven, where God most eminently manifests his glory...This third heaven is called paradise (2 Corinthians 12:4), in allusion to the earthly paradise out of which Adam was driven for his transgression; it is called the paradise of God (Revelation 2:7), signifying to us that by Christ we are restored to all the joys and honours we lost by sin, yea, to much better."¹⁸

David Guzik further stated:

"...Paul is using terminology common in that day, which referred to the "blue sky" as the *first* heaven, the "starry sky" as the *second* heaven, and the *third* heaven as the place where God lived and reigned."¹⁹

The JW I studied with indicated that the third heaven Paul spoke of in 2 Corinthians 12:2 is the future paradise earth, that Paul was transported forward in time or was allowed to see a vision of the future. The JW also stated that the phrase "caught up into the third heaven" should be taken metaphorically, that the phrase was used only to emphasize the intense spiritual connection Paul had experienced.

Is either of these alternatives possible?

Needless to say, nothing is impossible for God so could God have transported Paul in time or revealed a future earthly paradise to him in a vision? Yes. Paul himself indicated that he did not know whether he was in his corporeal, physical body or out of his body during this revelation. A vision or visit to a future paradise earth is certainly within the realm of possibility of the powers of our Almighty God.

As far as "caught up into the third heaven" as a metaphor is concerned, The Adam Clarke Commentary stated:

"In the sacred writings *three* heavens only are mentioned. The *first* is the *atmosphere*, what appears to be intended by *rekiá*, the firmament or expansion, Genesis 1:6. The *second*, the starry heaven; where are the sun, moon, planets, and stars; but these two are often expressed under the one term *shamayim*, the *two heavens*, or expansions, and in Genesis 1:17, they appear to be both expressed by *rekiá hashshamayim*, the *firmament of heaven*. And, *thirdly*, the *place of the blessed*, or the *throne of the Divine glory*, probably expressed by the words *shemei hashshamayim*, the *heavens of heavens*. But on these subjects the Scripture affords us but little light; and on this distinction the reader is not desired to rely.

Much more may be seen in *Schoettgen*, who has exhausted the subject; and who has shown that *ascending to heaven*, or being *caught up to heaven*, is a form of speech among the Jewish writers to express the *highest degrees of inspiration*. They often say of Moses that he *ascended on high*, *ascended on the firmament*, *ascended to heaven*;

[17] Barnes, Albert. "Commentary on 2 Corinthians 12". Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible, 1798-1870.

[18] Henry, Matthew. "Complete Commentary on 2 Corinthians 12". Matthew Henry Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible. 1706.

[19] Guzik, David. "Commentary on 2 Corinthians 12". David Guzik's Commentaries on the Bible. 1997-2003.

where it is evident they mean only by it that he was favoured with the nearest intimacy with God, and the highest revelations relative to his will..."²⁰

Could Paul be using a figure of speech to indicate the intensity of his experience only? E.W. Bullinger's Figures of Speech Used in the Bible Explained and Illustrated²¹ does not list or even mention "caught up into the third heaven" or anything similar as a figure of speech as described above, but Clarke certainly indicated this is might be so.

Alfred Edersheim, in the preface of his classic book, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, however, recommended caution:

"...Those who have consulted the works of *Lightfoot, Schöttgen, Meuschen, Wetstein* and *Wünsche*, or even the extracts from them presented in Commentaries, know that the help derived from their Jewish references is very great. And yet, despite the immense learning and industry of these writers, there are serious drawbacks to their use. Sometimes the references are critically not quite accurate; sometimes they are derived from works that should not have been adduced in evidence; occasionally, either the rendering, or the application of what is separated from its context, is not reliable. A still more serious objection is, that these quotations are not unfrequently one sided; but chiefly this - perhaps, as the necessary consequence of being merely illustrative notes to certain verses in the Gospels - that they do not present a full and connected picture. And yet it is this which so often gives the most varied and welcome illustration of the Gospel narratives..."²²

Given the conflict in commentary on the subject, the issue of whether or not Paul experienced a literal or metaphoric "third heaven" should not be absolutely determined inside the context of 2 Corinthians 12:2, 4 alone. The other Biblical texts in which paradise occurs must be consulted.

Please note, as well, that in both 2 Corinthians 12:2 and in 2 Corinthians 12:4, Paul uses the words "caught up" in regards to both the third heaven and Paradise in the KJV, NASB and NIV while the NWT uses "caught away as such" to the third heaven and "caught away" to Paradise. I cannot hazard to guess as to the reason for this variation in wording since the same word, *harpazo* in Greek, is used in both 2 Corinthians 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 12:4, but the differentiation isn't standard among other translations. Of the 72 examined²³, only 5 and the NWT²⁴ use different words to translate this same

[20] Clarke, Adam. "Commentary on 2 Corinthians 12". The Adam Clarke Commentary. 1832.

[21] Bullinger, E.W. Figures of Speech Used in the Bible Explained and Illustrated, 1898.

[22] Edersheim, Alfred. The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 1883.

[23] Please see the Foreword, Bibles Consulted section for more information.

[24]

[2] *For instance, I know a man who, fourteen years ago, was **seized by Christ and swept in ecstasy** to the heights of heaven. I really don't know if this took place in the body or out of it; only God knows...*[4] *I also know that this man was **hijacked** into paradise - again, whether in or out of the body, I don't know; God knows. There he heard the unspeakable spoken, but was forbidden to tell what he heard. (THE MESSAGE: The Bible in Contemporary Language);*

[2] *I have da'as of a man in Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach arba esreh shanah before, whether in or out of the guf (body) I do not have da'as, Hashem knows, such a man was **snatched up and raptured** to th raki'a haShlishi of Shomayim. [4] that he was **caught away** into Gan-Eden and heard inexpressible dvarim for which bnei Adam to utter there is no heter (permit). (The Orthodox Jewish Brit Chadasha);*

[2] *I know a Christian man who fourteen years ago (whether in the body or out of it, I do not know - God knows) was **caught up as far as** the third heaven. [4] was **caught up** into paradise, and heard words so secret that human lips may not repeat them. (New English Bible);*

word, *harpazo*, differentiating its use in 2 Corinthians 12:2 from that of 2 Corinthians 12:4. Some of the 5 that differ are contemporary language translations given to paraphrase more so than the more literal, word-for-word translations, but the WTBTS does not contend that the NWT is a contemporary language translation. As such, the addition of "as such" to 2 Corinthians 12:2 in the NWT is completely unnecessary and unwarranted.

Revelation 2:7

(*paradeisos* emphasized in **bold**)

*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the **paradise** of God.* (KJV)

*'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the **Paradise** of God.'* (NASB)

*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the **paradise** of God.* (NIV)

*Let the one who has an ear hear what the spirit says to the congregations: To him that conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the **paradise** of God.* (NWT)

The relevant phrase in this verse is, "which **is** in the Paradise of God." (Emphasis mine.) Please note the tense of the verb used in this phrase: is. The word in Greek is *esti*, which both Strong's²⁵ and Thayer's²⁶ indicates is the third person singular present indicative. This message was directed to the church of Ephesus, in John's day. The **present tense** of the verb "is" indicates that Paradise existed, **currently existed**, even then. This present tense rules out a future-only Paradise, be it on earth or otherwise. Paradise existed because Jesus promised it to overcomers in Ephesus, told the Ephesian church that the promised Paradise "is."

As for its location, earth certainly wasn't a paradise at the time of John and the Ephesian church. So the paradise spoken of must be located somewhere else. Where else? In the third heaven, as Paul indicated in 2 Corinthians 12:2, 4. Not a metaphoric third heaven. A literal place.

In summary, *paradeisos* is used only three times in the New Testament. In Luke 23:43, Jesus Christ tells the thief on the cross that he will be with Jesus in Paradise. In 2 Corinthians 12:4, Paul indicates that he was caught up into Paradise, which he told us is the "third heaven" in 2 Corinthians 12:2. Finally, in Revelation 2:7, Paradise is said to currently exist in John's day. Since earth was not a paradise at the time of John and the Ephesian

[2, 3] *Fourteen years ago I was **taken up** to heaven for a visit. Don't ask me whether my body was there or just my spirit, for I don't know; only God can answer that. But anyway, there I **was in** paradise, [4] heard things so astounding that they are beyond a man's power to describe or put in words (and anyway, I am not allowed to tell them to others).* (Living Bible);

[2] *I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—was **caught up as far as** the third heaven. [4] how he was **caught up into Paradise** and heard words too sacred to tell, which no human being is allowed to repeat.* (Modern Language Bible).

[25] Strong, James. "Entry for G2076 'esti.'" Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible. 1890.

[26] Thayer, Joseph H. "Entry for G2076 'esti'". Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, 1896.

church, Paradise must be located elsewhere. Paul locates Paradise in the "third heaven." Ergo, Jesus told the thief that he would be with Jesus in a paradise that already existed, in the "third heaven," the Heaven of God.

Comma placement, 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. (KJV)*

*And He said to him, "Truly I say to **you**, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." (NASB)*

*Jesus answered him, "I tell you the **truth**, today you will be with me in paradise." (NIV)*

*And he said to him: "Truly I tell you **today**, You will be with me in Paradise." (NWT)*

As noted above, the NWT places the comma after "today" in Luke 23:43 while KJV, NASB and NIV place the comma before "today." In fact, all 72 translations²⁷ I consulted placed the comma/break before "today" -- except the NWT, the Peshita-Lamsa Translation and The J.B. Rotherham Emphasized Bible²⁸. Why is the placement of a comma important? The question lies in what phrase "today" modifies. Is Jesus telling the thief today? Or will the thief be in Paradise that day? The comma tells the tale. If "today" indicates when Jesus is speaking, it doesn't change Christian doctrine in the slightest. If, however, "today" indicates when the thief will be in Paradise, the effects on JW doctrine are disastrous.

The original Greek did not have punctuation marks so it is left to translators to decide how punctuation is to be used in the text. To determine where the comma should be placed in Luke 23:43, we should look to how similar phrases and grammatical constructions are punctuated.

Jesus frequently used the phrase, "verily I say unto you" (KJV), "Truly, I say to you" (NASB), "I tell you the truth" (NIV), or "Truly, I tell you" (NWT). All of these translations correspond to the same phrase in transliterated Greek, *amhn legw soi/umin*. Variations are made in this basic construct based on whether or not who or whom Jesus was speaking to was one specific person (*soi*)²⁹ or a group of people (*umin*)³⁰. Some *amhn legw soi/umin* sayings include conjunctions such as "for" (*gar*)³¹, but the *amhn legw soi/umin* form remains basically the same in its essence.

Jesus alone uses the *amhn legw soi/umin* phrase. He used it 74 times in the New Testament³² (see Appendix B to review each of these *amhn legw soi/umin* statements) and in each instance, the *amhn*

[27] Please see the Foreword, Bibles Consulted section for more information.

[28] *Jesus said to him, Truly I say to you today, you will be with me in Paradise.* (Peshita-Lamsa Translation – Emphasis mine); *And he said unto him – Verily, I say unto thee this day: With me, shalt thou be in Paradise.* (J.B. Rotherham Emphasized Bible – Emphasis mine).

[29] As seen in Matthew 5:26, *amhn legw soi*.

[30] As seen in Matthew 6:2, *amhn legw umin*.

[31] As seen in Matthew 5:18, which includes the conjunction "for" (transliterated Greek, *gar*), *amhn gar legw umin*. See also Matthew 10:23, 13:17, 17:20.

[32] Matthew 5:18, 26; 6:2, 5, 16; 8:10; 10:15, 23, 42; 11:11; 13:17; 16:28, 17:20; 18:3, 13, 18; 19:23, 28; 21:21, 31; 23:36; 24:2, 34, 47; 25:12, 40, 45; 26:13, 21, 34; Mark 3:28; 8:12; 9:1, 41; Mark 10:15, 29; 11:23; 12:43; 13:30; 14:9, 18, 25, 30; Luke 4:24; 12:37; 18:17, 29; 21:32; 23:43; John 1:51; 3:3, 5, 11; 5:19, 24, 25; 6:26, 32, 47, 53; 8:34, 51, 58; 10:1, 7; 12:24; 13:16, 20, 21, 38; 14:12; 16:20, 23; 21:18.

legw soi/umin saying is used as an introductory phrase independent of what follows it. These breaks from the subsequent text are initiated immediately after the *amhn legw soi/umin* phrases and are indicated by a comma or by following the phrase with the word "that" in all 74 *amhn legw soi/umin* statements in the NWT with only one exception – Luke 23:43.

Amhn legw soi Vs. Amhn soi legw

JW apologists protest that Luke 23:43 is not grammatically identical to the other 73 *amhn legw soi/umin* statements and this precludes Luke 23:43 from the *amhn legw soi/umin* subset. In a sense, they are correct. Luke 23:43 does differ from the other *amhn legw soi/umin* statements in that the Luke 23:43 construct is *amhn soi legw* while the others are *amhn legw soi*. The pronoun (*soi or umin*) **precedes** the verb in Luke 23:43 whereas in the other *amhn legw soi/umin* statements, the pronoun **follows** the verb.

I do not pretend to be a Greek scholar, but even I know, from my personal studies in Biblical languages, that words are frequently moved forward in a sentence to emphasize that particular word in Koine (Biblical) Greek. There were two thieves crucified with Jesus. One remained unrepentant while the other asked Jesus to remember him when Jesus came into his Kingdom. Jesus could have emphasized *soi* in this instance to single out the thief who had faith from the thief who remained unrepentant. Or maybe Jesus emphasized *soi* to indicate even somebody like the thief could and would be in Paradise. Whatever the case may be, the fact that *soi* comes before the verb in Luke 23:43 effects emphasis only. It doesn't change what the phrase means and therefore, does not preclude Luke 23:43 from the other 73 *amhn legw soi/umin* statements.³³

Emphasizing amhn legw soi/umin

One argument for the comma being placed after rather than before "today" in Luke 23:43 is that Jesus was emphasizing the very day of his statement (as opposed to emphasizing the thief above) because it was that very day that the thief exhibited great faith:

...It was a day when Jesus had been rejected and condemned by the highest-ranking religious leaders of his own people and was thereafter sentenced to die by Roman authority. He had become an object of scorn and ridicule. So the wrongdoer alongside him had shown a notable quality and commendable heart attitude in not going along with the crowd but, rather, speaking out in Jesus' behalf and expressing belief in his coming Kingship.³⁴

How did Jesus place emphasis on the other *amhn legw soi/umin* statements in the Gospels?

In the Gospel of John, Jesus places emphasis on *amhn legw soi/umin* statements 22 times by repeating *amhn*³⁵. (See Appendix B to review these statements.) In these instances, instead of reading *amhn legw soi/umin* ("verily I say unto you" in the KJV), you read *amhn amhn legw soi/umin* ("verily, verily, I say unto you" in the KJV). Emphasis is used by repeating *amhn*, **not** by using a time modifier such as "today."

[33] Paraphrased and summarized from an excellent debate between Rob Bowman and "GK" at <http://www.forananswer.org>. Click on Mars Hill. On the page that follows, look for "Robert Bowman and GK on Luke 23:43" under Jehovah's Witnesses. (Accessed January 2007.) I encourage readers to review the entire text for a detailed analysis of this issue.

[34] Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, Inc. "Entry for "PARADISE."" *Insight on the Scriptures, Volume 2*, 1989. P. 575

[35] See John 1:51, 3:3, 3:5, 3:11, 5:24, 5:25, 6:26, 6:32, 6:47, 6:53, 8:34, 8:51, 8:58, 10:1, 10:7, 12:24, 13:16, 13:20, 13:21, 13:38, 14:12, 16:20, and 21:18.

Jesus' other *legw soi/umin* statements³⁶

As previously stated, there are 74 *amhn legw soi/umin* statements in the New Testament. Jesus spoke an additional 63 *legw soi/umin* ("I say unto you" in the KJV) statements³⁷ as well. If we remove Luke 23:43 from the list of verses in this pool, we are left with a grand total of 136 *legw soi/umin* statements. None of these statements are modified by time. None. The burden of contextual proof rest with the WTBS to support its contention that Jesus broke the pattern he set in these 136 statements to use time to modify one particular *amhn legw soi/umin* saying in Luke 23:43.

JW apologists assert that "today" modifies *amhn legw soi/umin* in Luke 23:43 in the same way that "today" modifies and emphasizes speech verb phrases in the Old Testament, such as:

Deuteronomy 4:40

*Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which **I command thee this day**, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever. (KJV)*

*"So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which **I am giving you today**, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time." (NASB)*

*Keep his decrees and commands, which **I am giving you today**, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the LORD your God gives you for all time. (NIV)*

*And you must keep his regulations and his commandments that **I am commanding you today**, that it may go well with you and your sons after you, and in order that you may lengthen your days on the soil that Jehovah your God is giving you, always." (NWT)*

However, an examination of these Old Testament statements reveals a pattern quite different from the pattern in Luke 23:43. None of these Old Testament statements include either *amhn* or *legw* in the Greek translations from the original Hebrew. Not even one.

Both *amhn* and *legw* are specific to Jesus' statements, distinctive. They operate as a signature, separating the *amhn legw soi/umin* sayings from others in the New Testament. We cannot consider the *amhn legw soi/umin* statements without *amhn* and certainly not without *legw*. Yet, JWs insist that an Old Testament idiomatic use of "today" in statements that do not include Jesus' key words -- the

[36] Much of this section is summarized and paraphrased from an in-depth apologetics commentary on Luke 23:43 available at <http://www.forananswer.org>. Click on Apologetics Bible Commentary, then click on "Luke 23:43" on the page that follows. (Accessed January 2007.) I encourage all readers to review and study the entire commentary, as it also includes extensive discussion of an alleged placement of a comma after "today" in Luke 23:43 in Codex B.

[37] The debate between Rob Bowman and "GK" noted in footnote 33 indicates that there are 70 *legw soi/umin* statements in the New Testament, but does not provide a list of these statements. Searching myself, I was able to identify 63 of the 70. As such, I use only the 63 that I was able to identify in my comparisons and for the purpose of this study. The reader, however, should be aware that 7 other *legw soi/umin* statements are said to be contained in the New Testament by Greek scholars. Since I am not a Greek scholar, I place my trust in 70 rather than 63 *legw soi/umin* statements, though, lacking those 7 statements and unable to use them in my comparisons, I exclude them here. The 63 *legw soi/umin* statements I identified are as follows: Matthew 3:19, 5:20, 5:22, 5:28, 5:32, 5:34, 5:39, 5:44, 6:25, 6:29, 8:11, 11:19, 11:22, 11:24, 12:6, 12:31, 12:36, 16:18, 17:12, 18:10, 18:19, 18:22, 19:9, 19:24, 23:39, 26:29, 26:64; Mark 2:11, 5:41, 9:13, 11:24, 13:27; Luke 3:8, 5:24, 6:27, 7:9, 7:14, 7:26, 7:28, 7:47, 10:12, 11:8, 11:9, 12:4, 12:5, 12:8, 12:22, 12:27, 12:44, 13:24, 14:24, 15:7, 15:10, 16:9, 19:26, 21:3, 22:16, 22:18, 22:37; John 4:35, 13:33, 16:26; Revelation 2:24.

very words that define this unique subset – supersedes the pattern Jesus established in 73 statements that **do** include the words that define the subset. In effect, they demand that we ignore the very words we seek to study. Instead of studying the *legw* Jesus used in this unique subset, we must resort to studying generic speech verbs. From the Old Testament (whose canon was closed some 400 years before Jesus was born), no less.

JWs claim that using “today” as a modifier of speech verbs to place emphasis, per these Old Testament statements, was common in Jesus’ day. JWs frequently point to Acts 20:26 (also written by Luke):

Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.
(KJV)

"Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. (NASB)

Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. (NIV)

Hence I call YOU to witness this very day that I am clean from the blood of all men,
(NWT)

In Acts 20:26, “today” is said to modify and emphasize “testify” (NASB). But if the idiom was common, we would expect to find other examples in the Scriptures. We do not. I didn’t, at any rate. Claiming the idiom as common, when there is only one example of it in the New Testament, far overstates the Scriptural evidence. Perhaps idiomatic usage of “today” was common in New Testament times. I do not know. But it’s certainly not common in the New Testament writings, which is what we are concerned with here. Forcing an idiomatic usage of “today” on Luke 23:43 on the basis of one New Testament example in Acts 20:26 and generalizing the distinctive *legw* Jesus used in order to make the Old Testament pattern fit violates the very *amhn legw soi/umin* pattern we seek to study.

We must also consider the significance of *amhn*. What function does *amhn* perform? It emphasizes the *legw soi/umin* saying. As noted before, *amhn* is repeated to lend special emphasis to *legw soi/umin* sayings. Emphasis has already been stressed by using *amhn*. Another modifier would be superfluous and break the pattern of how Jesus emphasized these sayings in every other instance.

In summary, Jesus would not have used “today” to emphasize his *amhn legw soi/umin* saying because a pattern of repeating *amhn* to place emphasis on *amhn legw soi/umin* sayings is evident in the New Testament. Time is never used to modify any of the other 73 *amhn legw soi/umin* sayings in the New Testament, nor is time ever used to modify Jesus’ 63 other *legw soi/umin* (“I say unto you,” KJV) statements. Combined, these 136 statements form a pattern of an independent introductory phrase that requires convincing contextual evidence that Jesus, in one instance, would break his established pattern. Statements in the Old Testament in which “today” is used to modify a speech verb has been offered by JWs as this evidence, but the pattern in these statements is not the same unique *amhn legw soi/umin* pattern used in Luke 23:43 and other *legw soi/umin* statements.

Why JWs insist on the NWT’s comma placement

As previously stated, if “today” modifies Jesus’ *amhn legw soi/umin* statement in Luke 23:43, the effects on traditional Christian doctrine are negligible, but if “today” identifies when the thief will be in Paradise, the results on JW doctrine are disastrous. How so?

JWs teach that there is no immortal soul. When you die, you die. That’s it. End of story. You don’t go to Heaven or Hell. You cease to exist. *Finit*. Therefore, according to JW doctrine, Jesus couldn’t have told the thief that he would be in Paradise with Jesus that very day. The thief died so JWs believe the thief ceased to exist that very day, just as JWs believe we all cease to exist the moment we die. If Jesus told the thief he would be with him in Paradise that very day, it proves an immortal soul that

lives on after death and nullifies this JW doctrine. So JWs tend to be very dogmatic about the NWT's comma placement. The reader should be completely familiar with both the arguments for and against the NWT's comma placement before pursuing this debate with any JW.

Also, to be completely fair, I must admit that this argument with Chapter 1 of the KNOWLEDGE³⁸ book is a sidebar issue of that chapter. Paragraph 8 completely omits the *amhn legw soi/umin* saying that precedes Jesus' statement in Luke 23:43, as well as "today" (which JWs contend modifies the omitted *amhn legw soi/umin* saying) so the issue with comma placement isn't outright and immediately noticeable to the casual reader.

[38] Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, Inc. KNOWLEDGE that Leads to Everlasting Life, 1995.