

1070 Cannot serve two masters, divorce and remarry, and Lazarus the beggar - Jesus (23)
(Verses refer to those in NASB unless otherwise specified, and by Whirlwind.)

In this short article we discuss two potentially controversial topics that arise from the passages on divorce and Lazarus the beggar. The former is quite different from the common view, and the latter brings up the issue of the non-existence of four dimensional space in faith using this scripture. First, we see the scripture that says we cannot serve two masters and why it is not good to be greedy for money. And the kingdom of heaven is to be entered with forced effort. We shouldn't be of little faith. We also see that prayer has priority, and that there is a reference to a mind and prayer that will be accepted. We also discuss briefly one of David's prayer in Psalm 51 why we say that he is not only repent before God but also before men. Secondly, we see from the divorce and remarriage that one of the principles of God's work is to distinguish between the general situation and the special case. And we have given other examples to illustrate this point, and see what Jesus Himself said. Finally, when we look at the incident between Lazarus the beggar and the rich man, we can see that we cannot use the fact that there is a great chasm fixed between Abraham and the rich man to say that there is a four-dimensional space (not including time). If four-dimensional space exists, it will create a contradiction in addition to a conflict with faith.

1. Cannot serve two masters

"“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.” Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him. And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God. “The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail.”(Luke 16:13-17)

We see that Jesus knew the hearts of the Pharisees, and knew that they coveted money, "But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."(1 Timothy 6:9-10) Covetousness of money is really bad. This is not to say that there is something wrong with money per se, but rather that we should not be greedy for money, and we should look at where it comes from and how it is used. Someone testified that there was a sister who inherited a lot of money, and she wanted to give it all away, but she testified that God didn't tell her to do that, but to leave it behind, and she used the money and the interest to support a lot of missionary organizations. Look at Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, weren't they all rich because of God's blessings?

It is clear that God hates what considered as the honorable things of men, such as money,

fame, and good works on surface. It must come from the heart as Paul did, "They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do." (Galatians 2:10) We also see that the Law (the true meaning of the Law) cannot be abrogated, as Jesus did in His earthly life. The law is good as the scripture says, "So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good." (Romans 7:12) But "because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:20) So Paul would say, "Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law." (Romans 3:31) The law is naturally fulfilled by "Do not quench the Spirit." (1 Thessalonians 5:19)

We also see that the kingdom of heaven requires effort (G971) to enter as translated in the Chinese Union Bible. The word (G971) appears only twice in the Bible, and the other time it is unanimously stated, "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence (G971), and violent men take it by force." (Matthew 11:12) Thus this effort does not mean effort to do good deeds in general. If we look at the original text or the English text, it is very clear that the kingdom of heaven will be entered by those who suffer violence (G971), and those who become violent (G973) by force (G726). This refers to the spiritual warfare, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." (Ephesians 2:1-2) This was the case before we were baptized without faith, for from Adam and Eve onwards, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) When we were baptized by faith, "...He (God) rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:13-14)

From that time on, "...our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm." (Ephesians 6:12-13) As we mentioned before, the armor, except for the sword of the Holy Spirit, are all defensive weapons. Therefore, God wants us to stand firm first, and the best time to attack is when the Holy Spirit leads us to attack, and not to think that we can defeat Satan by our own strength. How can such a battle be peaceful if it is fought with strength?

In the Gospel of Matthew, it says, "“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’

or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."(Matthew 6:24-34)

Obviously, this scripture is mainly about worldly things. If we serve God and know that He will take care of everything, why should we worry? There are many testimonies that speak to this, so we will not go into that. These verses also tell us to prioritize our prayers, not to be men of little faith, but to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, as in the Lord's Prayer. We notice in this verse, "Give us this day our daily bread."(Matthew 6:11) Before this verse it is all about spiritual things, after this verse it is all about worldly things, and the Bible is very clear, "And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'""(Luke 4:4) We should indeed be thankful every day for the spiritual provision and the worldly food. This verse also explains the reason for not worrying about tomorrow.

Finally, we should mention that such a heart and prayer will be accepted, "Two things I asked of You, Do not refuse me before I die: Keep deception and lies far from me, Give me neither poverty nor riches; Feed me with the food that is my portion, That I not be full and deny You and say, "Who is the Lord?" Or that I not be in want and steal, And profane the name of my God."(Proverbs 30:7-9) Let's take a look at one of David's prayers. Psalm 51 is a psalm that David wrote after he had gone in to Bathsheba. We can see from this psalm that David repented completely before God. Someone told me that no one noticed that this was a song that was delivered to the director of the opera, and it was sung by a lot of people. He did not hide his sin and repented in front of people.

2. Divorce and remarry

"Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery."(Luke 16:18)

The Gospel according to Matthew also says, "It was said, 'Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce'; but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery."(Matthew 5:31-32) The Old Testament further states boldly, "For I hate divorce," says the Lord, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the Lord of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."(Malachi 2:16) Described in this way, it seems that the teaching that Christians should never divorce is absolutely correct.

To answer this question, we need to look at what the Bible says. First of all, we see that "He (the Lord) made known His ways to Moses, ..." (Psalm 103:7) We are to be like Moses in knowing His ways, so what does this passage mean from a Biblical perspective? Simply put, the issue is essentially the same as whether or not we should be baptized. When it comes to baptism, as we have shared before, we should be baptized in general. This is required by the

Great Commission (cf. Matthew 28:18-20), and Jesus is our example (cf. Matthew 3:13-17). However, we can be without baptism under special circumstances as the criminal case indicates (cf. Luke 23:39-43) We need to look at the Bible to clearly distinguish between general and special cases, and in special cases we should ask if we are in the same situation.

Let's look at the example of Rahab the prostitute (Joshua 2:1-22). She was a prostitute and a liar, but what does the Bible say about her! "By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace." (Hebrews 11:31) So God values her quite differently from man. Rahab was praised for her faith, not for being a prostitute, not for laying down her life to lie for God, and we see that she is even in Jesus' family tree (Matthew 1:5). In fact, we can see from this that she did not want to be a prostitute. The Bible does not say why she had to be a prostitute, so it is useless to guess. Does God want every man to lie and every woman to be a prostitute? Definitely not! This is a special case. God has absolute sovereignty, and He sees people's hearts differently from what the world sees. There are many more examples of this, so I won't go into them!

Lastly, let's look at what Jesus said about this issue, "Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." (Matthew 19:3-6) The first part of this passage is about the general situation of marriage, which cannot be divorced, and we can see this because He then says basically the same thing, "They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?" He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." (Matthew 19:7-9)

In fact, the latter part of this passage mentions the special circumstances that "...What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." (Matthew 19:6) The special case does not mean to open the door or an excuse for divorce and remarriage. Under these special circumstances, we have to ask, "Is this marriage really a marriage that God has joined together?" For example, if both the husband and wife are non-Christians to start with, I dare not say that the marriage is definitely a marriage of that God has joined rather than man's own choice. Therefore, the teaching that Christians should never get divorced is not absolutely correct, but it depends on the general situation or the special case. It is like someone saying, "I don't have to go to church, as long as I believe," but that is not what the Bible says. Just be very aware that the enemy, Satan, would love to see a marriage broken up, and we must be very careful to discern that, so that we don't fall for the enemy's schemes.

3. The matter of the beggar Lazarus

"Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.' And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'" (Luke 16:19-31)

The Bible is inspired by God. Let us not discount the words of the Bible, but look at the fruits in faith, for we know that "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?" (Matthew 7:16) This paragraph describes the life of Lazarus. The fruit of Lazarus was that he was in Abraham's bosom, the Bible does not say why, so it is impossible to guess. The life of the rich man was that he had already enjoyed the blessings of the world, and the fruit of his life was that he went down to the Hades to suffer, not to die like a lamp going out, as the Chinese saying goes. This does not mean that everyone who is rich will go down to Hades. For example, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were rich in the world because of God's blessings, and they definitely did not go down to Hades. We can also see that the rich man at least thought of his brothers, but thought that with the testimony of the resurrection from the dead, his brothers would believe? Is that so? Not everyone believes in Jesus' resurrection from the dead because of this account.

We have also seen Abraham's reaction to the idea that there is a chasm between him and the rich man. Some people think that the Hades and Abraham's spirit body were not in the same dimension, so there are at least four dimensions of space (not counting time). However, this requires the assumption that the spirit body can move freely in the same dimension. We cannot make such an assumption (axiom) just because the resurrected Jesus was unrestricted in the human world and went down to the Hades and up to the Heavens, which is illogical. Also, if four dimensions existed, some of the words of the Bible would be easy to explain and there would be no need to have faith that the Bible says so! And its existence is contrary to the logic of three dimensional space, in which we live.

To see this, we know that it would be impossible for God to create a rock in three dimensions that He could not lift, and we will use this as an example to illustrate one point. For those of you who are not familiar with the mathematical concept of space, we can see this with the analogy between one-dimensional space and two-dimensional space. If a rectangle in two-dimensional space intersects with one-dimensional space, what you see in one-dimensional space is the line segment that intersects this rectangle and one-dimensional space as shown in Fig. 1. However, it can also be seen from Fig. 1 that the orientation of the rectangles in two-dimensional space is different, which can produce the same line segment in one-dimensional space. That is, in two-dimensional space we lift the rectangle, while in one-dimensional space the line segment does not move and is not lifted up. If and when four-dimensional space exists, and the relationship between three-dimensional space and four-dimensional space is the same as this, we can see that there is a four-dimensional stone, which God has actually lifted, while in three-dimensional space the rock does not move and is not lifted. This is in contradiction to three dimensional logic.

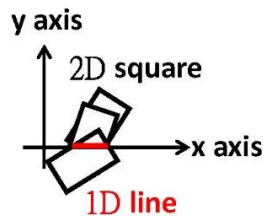


Fig. 1: Same line segments, but the rectangle is not unique

I'll conclude with a short testimony about four-dimensional space. I am now preparing a booklet, "God's Will in Genesis 1-3", and I thought its predecessor was logically sound, so I sent it out to be read. After a while, I didn't expect the Holy Spirit to tell me in my mind that I was wrong, and I couldn't figure out where the logic was wrong, and then I suddenly realized that I was wrong from the very beginning. In the beginning it says, "In the beginning God created the heavens (heaven, H8064, plural) and the earth." (Genesis 1:1) Since heaven is plural, it should be the heavens as translated. Before I thought that the heavens were viewed from the earth, and I could easily explain the heavens in terms of the existence of the four dimensions under the assumption that the spirit body is free to move in the same dimension. But this is wrong, because from Genesis 1:3 we begin to talk about the creation of the present world, and the heavens are mentioned in the first verse, which refers to the heavens in the beginning when God created time and space, which means that each planet had its own heaven in the beginning. That is, the fact that the heavens mentioned in the first verse makes us to see why the Bible says that the four dimensional space doesn't exist in faith, which is only briefly mentioned here, and will be discussed in detail in the Appendix of this booklet. Indeed, Holy Spirit knows the Bible best. If He wants, He can initialize the correction through revelation as Paul prayed, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him." (Ephesians 1:17)