

Luke 16:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Abraham explains the impossibility: '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.' The phrase 'beside all this' (ἐπὶ πάνσι τούτοις, *epi pasi toutois*) introduces an additional, decisive factor: 'a great gulf fixed' (χάσμα μέγα ἐστήρικται, *chasma mega estēriktai*). The gulf is 'great' (μέγα, *mega*) and 'fixed' (ἐστήρικται, perfect passive—established permanently). The impossibility is bidirectional: no one from paradise can descend to hell, and no one from hell can ascend to paradise. This destroys all hope of postmortem repentance, purgatory, or eventual universalism. Death fixes destiny eternally. The time for repentance is now.

Historical Context

This verse provides the clearest biblical refutation of several false doctrines:

1. Purgatory—Catholic teaching that postmortem purification is possible before entering heaven. The fixed gulf makes this impossible.
2. Universalism—the belief that all will eventually be saved. The permanence contradicts this hope.
3. Second chance—the idea that death provides opportunity to reconsider. The parable shows death ends opportunity.

4. Soul sleep or annihilation—the conscious, unchangeable existence in torment refutes both.

Once a person dies, their eternal destiny is fixed. This creates urgent imperative: respond to the gospel now, because death may come unexpectedly and will come irreversibly.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does the 'great gulf fixed' refute contemporary attempts to soften hell or provide postmortem opportunities for salvation?
2. What theological errors does this verse decisively contradict?
3. How should the finality of death shape Christian witness and evangelistic urgency?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἐπὶ πάσιν τούτοις μεταξὺ ἡμῶν καὶ ὑμῶν χάσμα
And beside all this between us And you gulf
G2532 G1909 G3956 G5125 G3342 G2257 G2532 G5216 G5490

μέγα ἐστήρικται ὅπως οἱ θέλοντες διαβῆναι
a great fixed so that they which would pass
G3173 G4741 G3704 G3588 G2309 G1224

ἐντεῦθεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς μὴ δύνωνται μηδὲ οἱ
from hence to you cannot neither
G1782 G4314 G5209 G3361 G1410 G3588 G3366

ἐκεῖθεν πρὸς ἡμᾶς διαπερῶσιν
that would come from thence to us can they pass
G1564 G4314 G2248 G1276

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 49:14 (Parallel theme): Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.

John 3:36 (Parallel theme): He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Psalms 50:22 (Parallel theme): Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.