



Daily Verse and Comment

[Luke 23:43](#)

(43) And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

New King James Version

Although interpreting [Luke 23:43](#) to say that [Jesus](#) and the criminal would both be in Paradise that very day contradicts many clear scriptures, some still hold onto this idea because of the unique construction of the sentence. They point out that, while there are many places where Jesus begins an important statement with "Assuredly, I say to you" or "Verily, I say unto thee" (KJV) or "I tell you the truth" (NIV), in no other place is the phrase accompanied by an explanatory clause relating to time—yesterday, today, etc.

Structurally, these critics say, Christ's important statements always follow a set pattern: "Assuredly, I say to you, [important statement]." In this view, to include the word "today" with the phrase "assuredly, I say to you" creates a structural anomaly. They do not argue that the structure is wrong, only that it is unlikely to have been what Jesus meant because His many other emphatic statements in the New Testament all follow the same pattern. They allege the word "today" would be superfluous if it were added to the phrase "I say to you" because "I say" is already in the present tense, which implies "today" or "now."

However, this objection overlooks a foundational and crucial point. The use of "today" or "this day" is a common idiom used by both [God](#) and man in both Testaments. This idiom adds tremendous emphasis and gravity to the statement it accompanies. Consider [Deuteronomy 4:26](#): "I call heaven and earth to witness against you *this day*, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong your days in it, but will be utterly destroyed" (emphasis ours).

The Hebrew behind "this day" is translated in other places simply as "today." When used in this way, it is not intended to draw attention to the 24-hour period during which it was spoken, but rather to convey the significance and solemnity of the declaration. The chapter's preceding verses reveal that God is not drawing our attention to a specific day but is demonstrating the *seriousness* of what He is saying by using the Hebrew idiom "this day."

This peculiar idiom appears throughout the Bible—literally hundreds of times. It is frequently used when God is speaking about the commandments He has given and when He tells His people what He expects of them. Occasionally, "this day" or "today" is not idiomatic, as when the speaker is actually drawing attention to a specific day, such as a [Sabbath](#) or other holy day. However, for the most part, this term is intended to add emphasis, solemnity, and importance.

Moreover, the words in [Luke 23:43](#) are spoken by the same Person who used this idiom repeatedly when addressing ancient Israel. When we understand this, we can see that the comma is misplaced, and to make His statement more easily understandable, the comma should *follow* the word "today": "Assuredly, *I say to you today*, you shall be [with Me in Paradise](#)." Jesus is adding solemn emphasis to His statement that at some point the criminal would be with Him in His [Kingdom on earth](#).

— David C. Grabbe

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[What Happened to the Thief on the Cross? \(Part Four\)](#)

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