

Arguing with Jesus – No. 3

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Did Jesus “argue” with Himself in some of His statements? Did Paul, Peter, and John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, contradict some of the things Jesus taught? Did these inspired men argue with each other (or with themselves) in their teachings? The doctrines of the Deity of Jesus and of Biblical inspiration make such suggestions nonsensical.

While these men of God never uttered doctrines that gainsaid their own teachings or those of others who were inspired, the doctrinal positions of many professed disciples do this very thing. Any interpretation of Scripture that causes a clash between the Lord’s own statements or between those of others who were inspired necessarily indicates erroneous exegesis, conclusions, and applications of Holy Writ.

One such doctrine that amounts to “arguing” with Jesus and other inspired men holds that, upon conversion, one immediately receives “eternal life.” By this they mean that God mystically transfers to the soul of the convert a spark of eternity that he cannot forfeit. They question, “If eternal life can be lost, how then is it eternal?” This doctrine parallels Calvin’s perseverance of the saints error.

Those holding this doctrine rely upon such words from the Lord as follows:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life” (John 5:24).

This statement is typical of others in the New Testament (e.g., John 6:47; 10:28; 1 John 5:11–13; et al.).

Admittedly, such words appear at first glance to teach the immediate granting of irrevocable eternal life. If they do, we then have the serious problem of Jesus arguing with Himself and His apostles. The same Jesus also said that “whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life” (John 3:15) (believeth indicates “keeps on believing”). Even the apostles would be saved only if, when persecuted, they “endured to the end” (Mat. 10:22). These and a plethora of other warning passages state the conditionality of eventual eternal life/salvation (e.g., John 8:51; 15:1–6; Rom. 2:6–10; Gal. 6:7–9; 2 Pet. 2:15–22; 1 John 1:6–10).

Additionally, Jesus told Peter that “in the world to come” those who sacrifice to serve Him will receive eternal life (Luke 10: 30). Saints have the hope and the promise of eternal life (Tit. 1:2; 3:7; 1 John 2:24–25).

The harmony of these passages suggests that eternal life is the Lord’s promise and our certain hope – if we remain faithful!

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