

LUKE 16:23-31 -- The Rich Man and Lazarus

6/4/16 Sat Morn Prayer

Luke 16:23-31 And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. [24] "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' [25] But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. [26] And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.' [27] "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, [28] for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' [29] Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' [30] And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' [31] But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.' "

Context/Biblical Background – This account in Luke 16, give us some unique insights regarding the world beyond as it existed in the past and as it exists now. From Jesus description, one may say that at that time – *before* the finished work of Jesus on the cross – that the spirit or soul of the human dead went to a place called Hades. Some in Hades rested in comfort; others suffered under torments of fire. We see that death does indeed interrupt the present physical body and its life, but from the spiritual standpoint, there is no interruption, but indeed a change as to our eternal destiny. It's clear that the decision that a person makes with regard to accepting Jesus Christ and Lord and Savior, prior to his last breath, determines, forever, ones eternal destiny, either in heaven with our Lord or apart from Him in outer darkness or Gehenna. Either to a place of indescribable joy with our Lord or to a place of eternal torment. Notice two things here: The lost go to a place of conscious torment. Also, people know each other after death. We do not lose our identities.

The story of Lazarus and the rich man.

Vs. (19-21) Lazarus (the Hebrew translated to Greek—and means “God is my help) and the rich man on earth.

- **There was a certain rich man:** Jesus did not present this story as a *parable*, and in no other parable did Jesus actually name an individual (as the poor man is here named). The rich man is unnamed, but was traditionally given the name *Dives*, which is simply Latin for *rich*. We have every reason to believe that Jesus gave us an actual case history, one He knew from His eternal perspective.
- **Clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day:** The rich man's wealth was evident by his *fine linen* clothing (luxurious and expensive), and by his excess with food (most people in that culture *fared sumptuously* only a few times a year).
- **A certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs:** Not far from the rich man – at *his gate* was a desperately poor and sick man. The rich man didn't *do* anything against Lazarus, except neglect and ignore him.

Vs. (22-23) Lazarus and the rich man in Hades.

- **So it was that the beggar died. The rich man also died and was buried:** Both men eventually died. Lazarus did not even have the honor of a burial in this life, yet heaven honored him, being *carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom*. Except for the angels carrying work, the same was true of the rich man. His body was *buried* and remained on earth, but *he was in torments in Hades*.
- **And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom:** The rich man was not far from Lazarus; yet he was a world apart. His place was full of torment and pain, while Lazarus enjoyed the comfort and care of Abraham.
- **Being in torments in Hades:** In this story Jesus described a place He called **Hades**, which seems to have been the common abode of the dead. The rich man and Lazarus were not in the same place, but they were not far from each other. It may be best to say that they were in two areas of the same place (Hades), one a place of torments and the other a place of comfort (*the bosom of Abraham*).
 - ✓ From this story of Jesus, we find some hints regarding the world beyond as it existed in the past and as it exists now. From Jesus description, one may say that at that time – *before* the finished work of Jesus on the cross – that the spirit or soul of the human dead went to a place called Hades. Some in Hades rested in comfort; others suffered under torments of fire.
 - ✓ **Hades** is a Greek word, but it seems to carry much the same idea as *Sheol*, a Hebrew word with the idea of the place of the dead. *Sheol* has no direct reference to either torment or eternal happiness. The idea of *Sheol* is often simply the grave and the understanding of the afterlife in the Old Testament is much less clear than in the New Testament.
 - ✓ **Hades** is technically not *hell*, or what is also known as the *Lake of Fire*. That place is called *Gehenna*, a Greek word borrowed from the Hebrew language. In Mark 9:43-44, Jesus spoke of *hell* (*Gehenna*), a Greek translation of the Hebrew Valley of Hinnom, a place outside Jerusalem's walls desecrated by Molech worship and human sacrifice (2 Chronicles 28:1-3; Jeremiah 32:35). It was also a garbage dump where rubbish and refuse were burned. The smoldering fires and festering worms of the Valley of Hinnom made

it a graphic and effective picture of the fate of the damned. This place is also called the lake of fire in Revelation 20:13-15, prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

- ✓ **Hades** is something of a waiting place until the day of final judgment (Revelation 20:11-13). Yet since Jesus finished work on the cross, there is no waiting for believers who die; they go directly to heaven, to the presence of the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:6-8). It is reasonable to think that when Jesus visited **Hades** as part of His redemptive work (Acts 2:24-27, Acts 2:31) and when Jesus preached in Hades (1 Peter 3:18-19), that Jesus set the captives in Hades free (Ephesians 4:8-9, Isaiah 61:1). Jesus work and preaching offered salvation for those like Lazarus, who in faith awaited it (**Hebrews 11:39-40**), and it also sealed the condemnation of the wicked and unbelieving.

Vs. (24-26) The rich man's plea.

- **Father Abraham, have mercy on me:** The rich man was definitely a descendant of Abraham, and the great father of faith did not disown him. Yet having Abraham as father was not enough to escape his torment in the life to come. The rich man was not in torment because he was rich; but because he lived a life apart from love and trust in God, and this was demonstrated by his life. Abraham himself was richer than the man in this story of Jesus. Now the rich man was the beggar, pleading with Abraham.
- **Send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finer in water and cool my tongue:** Even in the afterlife the rich man thought of himself as superior and as Lazarus as his servant. This shows that death did not take away his sense of entitlement and station in life.
- **Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things:** Through his earthly life the rich man enjoyed all the good things of life; yet did not share them or use them to prepare for the life to come.
- **Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot:** Though the rich man could see and speak with Abraham, he wasn't close to him at all. There was a **great gulf fixed** between them, and their destinies were fixed for all time.

Vs. (27-31) The rich man thinks of his brothers.

- **I beg you therefore, father:** It is again emphasized that now the *rich man* is the beggar, not Lazarus.
- **Send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them:** It is again seen that the rich man *still* thought of Lazarus as a servant to him. He asked Abraham to send Lazarus on another assignment (perhaps in a dream or vision), this time for the benefit of his **five brothers**.
- **Lest they also come to this place of torment:** Now the rich man cared about others not going to **torment**. He lived his life utterly unconcerned of this, either for himself or for others. If he himself could go to his brothers, he would; but he seemed to understand that this was also impossible, so much so that he did not even ask for it. Unfortunately, his concern for others came when it was too late to do any good.
- **They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them:** Abraham pointed out that the rich man's brothers had all the necessary information to escape the torment of Hades. Listening to **Moses and the prophets** and doing what they said to do was enough.
- **No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent:** The rich man immediately objected, knowing that his family did not take **Moses and the prophets** seriously. He desperately hoped that if someone came from the dead, it would be more convincing than the Word of God. Yet it would not be more convincing, because if they would not believe because of God's Word, **neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead**.

SUMMARY:

- The text tells us two things here: The lost go to a place of conscious torment. Also, people know each other after death. We do not lose our identities.
- This account should certainly exhort and inspire us to action with regard to our Lord's Great Commission – Preach the Gospel; Make Disciples!
- Heaven and Gehenna/Outer Darkness are forever and ever!
- That choice, which is ours, as to our eternal destiny, must be made now, while we still have breath!

Give Me Jesus – Jeremy Camp

*In the morning, when I rise, In the morning, when I rise
Give me Jesus, Give me Jesus, Give me Jesus
You can have all this world, Just give me Jesus*

*When I am alone, When I am alone, Oh, when I am alone
Give me Jesus, Give me Jesus, Give me Jesus
You can have all this world, Just give me Jesus, Jesus, Give me Jesus*

*When I come to die, When I come to die, Oh, when I come to die
Give me Jesus, Give me Jesus, Give me Jesus
You can have all this world, Just give me Jesus
Give me Jesus, Give me Jesus
You can have all this world, You can have all this world,
You can have all this world, Just give me Jesus, Jesus*

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