

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

A Message of Hope and Fulfillment For Those Longing For God

The Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16: 19-31

This is one of the most profound, and disturbing stories told by Jesus. Throughout church history it has been debated whether this is an actual event of which Jesus had supernatural knowledge or a specific kind of parable containing a variety of theological truths. I am not certain that we can answer the question in absolute terms, but I am inclined to believe that it is a story, whether historical or exemplary, describing a literal scenario of life after death (before the atonement) for believers and unbelievers.

I. Contrasting Outcomes in Life

- A. A very wealthy man enjoying the finest things of life, who lives only for himself and ignores the plight of others around him, even at the gate of his own mansion.
- B. A very poor man who is afflicted with illness and unable to work who lies at his gate hoping for some meager subsistence.
- C. Both of these men are Jews, of Abrahamic descent. Behavior flows from our value system which belies our true beliefs. Their eternal fate is proof of their inner life and relationship with God.

II. Observations Regarding the Nature of Eternal Destinies

- A. There is a place of conscious awareness for both believers and those who die in their sin (vv. 22-23). All people consciously exist forever somewhere.
- B. The place for those who die in sin is a place of conscious torment even before the final judgment and the Lake of Fire. It consists of memory and circumstantial awareness (vv. 23-26). The place for believer's before the cross was with Abraham (father of the believers) and now with Jesus in God's presence (2 Cor 5:8)
- C. At the time of death one's eternal destiny and fate are sealed, there is no opportunity for escape from hell or falling from heaven (Heb 9:27).
- D. Hell is filled with intercessors and missionaries...whose prayers go unanswered and whose missionary zeal cannot be expressed (vv.27-31).
- E. If a person is not persuaded by the revelation of God already given, neither clever arguments nor miracles nor one risen from the dead will induce them to repent and believe (v. 31).

III. Sobering Thoughts

- A. A father's greatest legacy to his family
- B. Even a marginal grasp of the reality of hell and eternal damnation will make and intercessor and an evangelist out of the most timid among us.
- C. Thoughts about the grief God holds in His heart: *Ez.33:11 "Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?'" (NASB)*

"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

