

Lazarus And The Rich Man

-31, Jesus tells the events of Lazarus and the rich man. This is not a parable, but it is a telling of the history of two men. These verses briefly tell of the lives of Lazarus and the rich man and then where they found themselves after they both died. From this we can learn what happens to all of us immediately after death. We can know what to expect when we die. The body can no longer sustain life but it is not the end of the human soul. Both Lazarus and the rich man continue to exist to this day but not here on the earth.

The life of the rich man is summed up with the following words of Luke 16:9, There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. The rich man lived with the best of everything. He wore the finest and most expensive clothing. He lived in luxury every day. He is not condemned for being rich but because the rich man had no compassion on Lazarus. He had no love for his fellow man. With his wealth, the rich man had the means to help Lazarus and many others like Lazarus, but he did not. By contrast Lazarus was a man in deep need. His life is summed up with the words of verses 20 and 21, But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. Lazarus is poor and physically incapable of working. He is full of sores and must be laid at the rich man's gate. He cannot walk. Lazarus must rely on the mercy, compassion and generosity of others. He does not ask for much. He only wants what falls from the rich man's table. He only wants what the rich man would have thrown away but the dogs had more compassion toward Lazarus than does the rich man. The poverty of Lazarus does not make him righteous. The wealth of the rich man is not sin. Both men die in verse 22 and both receive their reward for the things they have done in this life. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.

Death comes to all, the rich and the poor, the powerful and the helpless. Lazarus dies and is carried away by angels to a place called Abraham's bosom. This is also

referred to as paradise in Luke 23:43. This place is not heaven. Heaven is the final reward which comes after the judgment of all mankind on judgment day.

Abraham's bosom however is in Hades. Hades is a place where souls wait for final reward or punishment which will come at the end when Christ returns to judge all. Hades is divided into two areas: Abraham's bosom and torments. Angels carry the saved to Abraham's bosom (or paradise). The unrighteous are not carried but find themselves in torments. This can be seen by what the rich man finds in verse 23, And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. The rich man is found unrighteous. After his death the rich man lifts up his eyes and is aware of where he is. His body is left behind and he is now a soul in torments. The rich man can see Lazarus and recognize him. He can also see and recognize Abraham. The rich man is not with them. He is separated from them but is able to speak to Abraham. In verse 24 he calls to Abraham, 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.' He calls for mercy from Abraham and Lazarus. His soul is being tormented by flame. The rich man is no longer rich. The luxury of his life ended. He is in torments because of his actions in life. Now he sees immediately where his sins have led him. Death closed the door on his life but opened a new door into torments. His works or lack of works led him there.

Abraham speaks to the rich man. These are the words of Abraham centuries after Abraham's own death (Genesis 25:8). His response to the rich man is in verses 25 and 26, 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. 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.' There is only punishment for the rich man now. That is all he can expect. Even if Abraham wanted to pass from paradise into torments it could not be done. There is a great gulf or expanse between the two areas of Hades. The Greek words could also be translated a great chasm. There is no passing from one area to another. On one side are the protected righteous and on the other side are the unrighteous held in punishment. One side is comforted and the other is tormented. There is no passing between the two. No one can do what the rich man asks. The rich man then asks one more thing of Abraham. Once again it is something

Abraham does not have the power to do. We find this request in verses 27 and 28, Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' The rich man asks that Lazarus be sent back from the dead to teach his five brothers. The rich man knows his brothers will eventually die. He does not want his brothers to be punished like himself. He knows Lazarus had the truth in life. He knows that Lazarus was more than a beggar. He knows Lazarus was a righteous man. He knows the truth would help his brothers. Abraham answers him in verse 29, Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' This is spoken to a Jewish man whose brothers still lived under the Law of Moses. They were to live their lives under the laws found in the Old Testament. Abraham calls this Moses and the prophets. The word of God was enough.

The rich man pleads with Abraham in verse 30 and then in verse 31 Abraham gives his final response, And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' 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.' The word of God is all that is needed. If someone is not willing to believe God's word through the prophets then they will not believe even if someone came back from the dead to teach them. The message would be the same. The words of Abraham are true. In John chapter 11 Jesus raised a different Lazarus from the dead. Does this convince the Pharisees and the Sadducees to believe? No. In John 12:10 the chief priests plot to kill Jesus and the newly resurrected Lazarus.

Abraham, Lazarus continue to live in Paradise and the rich man continue to live in Hades to this day. Through the centuries Lazarus and Abraham are still comforted while the rich man remains in torment. All the dead are alive in Hades waiting for final judgment. In Mark 12:26-27 Jesus quotes Exodus 3:6 by saying of God, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. He continues to be the God of these men long after they died on the earth. All the dead continue to exist and live in Hades.