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The Parables of Jesus Christ: When Hades Petitioned Paradise

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THE PARABLES OF JESUS CHRIST

PARABLE THIRTY-THREE: When Hades Petitioned Paradise (Lk. 16:19-31)

SURVEY

This is the account of the life and afterlife of two men.

- Their lives
 1. First man: A rich and totally self-indulgent person who lived in the greatest possible luxury.
 2. Second man: A beggar named Lazarus, living in terrible poverty who longed for the scraps of food which fell from the rich man's table.
- Their afterlife
 1. The beggar: Upon death, he was carried by the angels to be with Abraham in paradise.
 2. The rich man: Upon death, he awakens in the flames of hell and earnestly begs two favors from Abraham, neither of which could be granted:
 - a. That Lazarus be sent to comfort him in his misery
 - b. That Abraham send Lazarus back to earth and warn the rich man's brothers, lest they also awaken in hell

SIGNIFICANCE

- This is, by far, Jesus' most extended parable on the horrors of hell.

SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

- Is this only a parable or was it rooted in an historical event? The answer is probably both! A well-known rich man may have recently died. If Lazarus had been at his gate for many years the people would have also been acquainted with him. On occasion Jesus would use current events as a spring board to launch spiritual truths. For another example, see the following:

"There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and

slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” (Lk. 13:1-5)

- Wealth itself is never presented as a vice in the Bible, nor is poverty looked upon as a virtue. God evaluates people by their attitudes and actions, not by their financial assets. The rich man went to hell because he was lost, and not because he was wealthy. The beggar went to heaven because he was saved, not because he was poor.

Observe that Lazarus was assisted by angels. This is in keeping with their assigned duties as seen in Hebrews:

“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Heb. 1:14)

Observe also the phrase, "Abraham's bosom".

1. It is held by a number of Bible students that before Jesus died, the souls of all men descended into an abode located somewhere in the earth, known as Hades in the New Testament, and Sheol in the Old Testament.
2. Originally, there were two sections of Hades, one for the saved and one for the lost. The saved section is sometimes called "paradise" (Lk. 23:43), and the other times referred to as "Abraham's bosom" (see Lk. 16:22). There is no name given for the unsaved section apart from the general designation of Hades.
3. In Luke 16:19-31 the Savior relates the account of a poor believer who died and went to the saved part of Hades, and of a rich believer who died and went to the unsaved section. However, many believe that all this changed after Christ had made full payment for the believer's sins on Calvary. The Scofield Bible suggests that during the time of His death and resurrection, our Lord descended into Hades, depopulated Paradise, and led a spiritual triumphal entry into the heavenlies with all the saved up to that time. Ephesians 4:8-10 is offered as proof of this.
4. In his book, *Revelation*, the late Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse wrote:

"When he ascended on High (Eph. 4:8) he emptied Hell of Paradise and took it straight to the presence of God. Captivity was taken captive ... from that moment onward there was to be no separation whatsoever for those who believe in Christ. The gates of hell would never more prevail against any believer (Mt. 16:18). But what of the lost? The state of the unsaved dead remained (and remains) unchanged after the cross. They remain in Hades awaiting the final Great White Judgment Throne (Rev. 20:11-15). But a glorious change has occurred concerning the state of those who fall asleep in Jesus."

Note the following Scripture verses: *"For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better"* (Phil. 1:21, 23).

"To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8).

- Note the rich man's prayer:

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Lk. 13:24).

At least three facts may be concluded from this statement concerning the state of the dead:

1. They are not annihilated. God does not destroy the wicked.
 2. They are not unconscious. The doctrine of soul sleep is unscriptural.
 3. They may be given temporary bodies, awaiting their final ones. If this is the case, it applies to both the saved and the lost (see Mt. 17:1-3; 2 Cor. 5:1; Rev. 6:9-11).
- As has been previously observed, the rich man desires that Lazarus be sent back to warn his unsaved brothers:

And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead (Lk. 16:30-31).

1. Concerning the words of the rich man—This statement has a prophetic ring to it, for a few months later Jesus would perform His greatest single miracle, the resurrection of a decaying corpse—the body of Lazarus (Jn. 11:43-44). But what was the result of this mighty miracle? Did it result in hundreds of conversions? To the contrary—the foes of Christ became even more vicious in their hatred and opposition.
 - a. They determined to kill Christ (Jn. 11:53).
 - b. They debated the possibility of killing Lazarus (Jn. 12:10). This is the reason why God does not do mighty miracles today. God's will is accomplished through faith and not through signs. After the rapture many miracles and signs will occur during the tribulation, but sinful people will not believe (see Rev. 9:20-21).
2. Concerning the words of Abraham—This verse (Lk. 16:31) indirectly answers a question asked by many, and that is, "Do the departed saints in glory know what is happening back on earth?" Apparently, up to a point, they do, for here Abraham speaks of a man (Moses) who would not even be born until some six centuries after the "father of the faithful" had departed this earth.