

**WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE?  
Luke 16:19-31**

**Introduction:**

1. What happens when we die?
  - a. Do we simply cease to exist when we stop breathing?
  - b. Has God revealed anything about life immediately after death?
2. The account of the Rich Man and Lazarus answers these questions.
3. Some dismiss its teachings by saying, “It is only a parable.”
  - a. The Bible never calls it a parable, nor is there anything to indicate it is (Luke 12:16; 13:6; 14:7; 15:3; 18:1;9).
  - b. Parables were always based on reality so if it is a parable, it does not change the truth taught by it.
  - c. If it is a parable, it was an exception because one of the persons in it is referred to by his personal name.
4. Jesus directed it to the Pharisees who were lovers of money and “they derided Him” (Luke 16:14).
5. In this account two men are contrasted:
  - a. In life.
  - b. In death.
  - c. After death.

**Discussion:**

- I. THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS ARE CONTRASTED IN LIFE.
  - A. The rich man was a “son of Abraham,” therefore a child of God under the old covenant.
  - B. He was a very wealthy man.
    1. “He was clothed in purple and fine linen,” which was  
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worn only by royalty and by the very wealthy.

2. "He fared sumptuously every day;" every meal was a feast.

C. Lazarus was also a "son of Abraham," therefore a child of God.

1. The beggar was the opposite extreme of the rich man.
2. His body was covered in sores, the result of disease, filth, and neglect.
3. He was "laid at the the rich man's gate" indicating he was unable to walk on his own.
4. Lazarus "desired the scraps which fell from the rich man's table" and competed with the dogs for them.

## II. THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS ARE CONTRASTED IN DEATH.

A. Lazarus died and "was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom."

1. The Psalmist wrote: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Psalm 116:15).
2. God sent His angels to carry Lazarus's spirit to the realm of the righteous dead (Hebrews 1:14).
3. His body was likely put in a pauper's grave with no funeral, mourning or regrets.

B. Jesus said: "The rich man also died and was buried."

1. No mention is made of the presence of angels.
2. The rich man no doubt had a big, expensive funeral, with hired mourners, eulogies by the leading rabbis, and burial in an ornate tomb carved out of the rock.

## III. THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS ARE CONTRASTED BEYOND THE GRAVE.

A. The positions of the two men have been reversed from what they were in life on earth (Matthew 19:30).

1. The rich man was no longer rich and living in luxury, but was “tormented in a flame.”
2. The beggar was no longer poor, but was “comforted” in a place called “Abraham’s bosom.”
3. “Abraham’s bosom” is also known as “Paradise,” an ancient Persian word meaning “a pleasure park.”
4. It is the place Jesus and the repentant thief went when they died on the cross (Luke 23:43; Acts 2:22-32).

**B. The formerly rich man “saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom.”**

1. He cried out, “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.”
2. He had taken no notice of Lazarus in earthly life, nor done anything to relieve his suffering, but now seeks his help.
3. Abraham reminded the formerly rich man of two things:
  - a. In life he had been greatly blessed while Lazarus had suffered greatly.
  - b. There was now a great gulf which separated the two and it could not be crossed!

**C. The formerly rich man became concerned for lost souls when it was too late.**

1. He remembered he had five brothers still living on earth.
2. He did not want them to join him in this place of suffering.
3. He begged Abraham to send Lazarus back to teach them.
4. Abraham said: “No, they have the Scriptures; if they will not hear Moses and the prophets, they will not listen even to one who has risen from the dead.”

**IV. THERE ARE MANY LESSONS WE CAN DRAW FROM THIS ACCOUNT.**

**A. Being rich is no more a sign of God’s approval than being poor is a sign of His disapproval.**

1. It is not the amount of wealth we have, but our attitude toward it that matters (Luke 12:15; Matthew 19:16-22).
  2. The rich man was lost, not because of his wealth, but because he was selfish (Matthew 25:31-46).
- B. One's destiny is sealed at death; there is no second chance.**
1. Mormons "baptize for the dead" (Hebrews 9:27).
  2. Universalists say all will be finally saved (Matthew 25:46).
- C. One goes into eternity in the condition he is in when he dies.**
1. Death cannot turn a sinner into a saint!
  2. "Son, go see if that is your father in the coffin."
- D. Consciousness continues after death.**
1. We are created in God's image (Gen. 1:27; 1 Thess. 5:23).
  2. Death occurs when the spirit leaves the body (Jam. 2:26).
  3. The body returns to dust and the spirit to God (Eccl. 12:7).
- E. Memory continues after death.**
1. The spirit is the thinking, conscious part of us.
  2. The formerly rich man remembered his five brothers.
  3. He remembered Lazarus from his life on earth.
  4. Those lost will remember lost opportunities with regret.
- F. The Scriptures are all we need to be prepared (2 Tim. 3:16,17).**
- G. There is no communication between the living and the dead.**
- H. We must not confuse Hades and Gehenna (Revelation 20:14).**

**Conclusion:**

1. In Nigeria we came upon a bus accident in which twelve were killed.
2. Ask yourself: "Where will I be five minutes after I die?"

