

THE BIBLE AND THE FUTURE: BETWEEN DEATH & RESURRECTION

Luke 16:19-31 (ESV) ¹⁹ There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰ And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹ who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, ²³ and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. ²⁴ And he called out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame." ²⁵ But Abraham said, "Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us." ²⁷ And he said, "Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house —²⁸ for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment." ²⁹ But Abraham said, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them." ³⁰ And he said, "No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." ³¹ He said to him, "If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead."

Introduction: Our Puritan ancestors commonly wrote about four "last things": *death, judgment, heaven, and hell*. Let's look closely at the intermediate state between death and the final resurrection using Jesus' parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31).

I. **Act One — Life on Earth** – vv. 19-21

A. Introduction of Main Characters — a rich man and a poor man.

1. Rich Man

- He was clothed in purple.
- He feasted sumptuously every day.
- He ignored God's law.
- His name is not given.

2. Lazarus ("God helps")

- He was laid at the rich man's gate (the verb means "to throw, put, or cast").
- He was covered with sores (poor hygiene, lack of medical care).
- He was content to eat table scraps.

B. The Death of the Two Characters

II. **Act Two — Life After Death** – vv. 22-31

Interpretive Difficulties:

- Are we to conclude that there will be prayer in hell?

- Will the unrighteous be able to see the righteous and talk with them?
- Is a journey from Hades to Paradise possible?
- Will Abraham speak for God on the other side?
- Both the Rich Man and Lazarus are described as having bodies subsequent to death.
- Does this mean we will have bodies in the intermediate state?

What are some things we can learn? (1) There is *consciousness* after death. (2) There is *fixity*. The destinies of these two men were fixed or sealed at death.

A. Two Destinies — vv. 22-23

B. Two Environments — vv. 24-25

Lazarus: “Abraham’s Side (ESV)/Bosom (NASB, KJV)” — It suggests an intimate relationship like the disciple who reclined near Jesus at the Last Supper (Jn 13:23). It is the place of ultimate comfort (cf. Psalm 16:8). Abraham represents the presence of God.

Rich Man: “Hades/Hell” – It is a place of ultimate torment.

- *Agony & Pain*. There is extreme thirst (“send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue”).
- *Endless Suffering*. There is unquenchable fire (“I am in anguish in this flame”). This represents the wrath of God – Hebrews 12:29 says, “Our God is a consuming fire.”
- *Absolute Poverty and Misery*. It is a place of judgment and separation from God (“there is a great chasm fixed between us and none may cross from there to us”). God will not be absent in hell, but present in wrath and judgment.

C. Two Prayers — vv. 24-31

Conclusions:

- Hell is real. Make sure you are trusting in the redeeming work of Christ on the cross.
- Proper love to God is demonstrated through love to neighbor.
- Never underestimate the power of the Scriptures.

Resources for further study:

Boekestein, William. *The Future of Everything*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2019.

Thomas, Derek. *Heaven on Earth*. Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2018.