

After Death, What?

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The way many people live, I wonder if they ever give serious thought to death and what will follow death. Man's physical body was made out of dust, and unto dust shall it return (Gen. 3:19). The soul (spirit) of man shall never die. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). Every person who dies shall come forth from the grave. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (Jn. 5:28-29).

When a person dies, his body is returned to the ground but the soul goes either to "Abraham's bosom," a place of paradise, or to "hell," a place to torment. The place man's soul goes after death is determined by the kind of life he lived on earth. From the gospel of Luke, we list the following facts. A beggar, Lazarus, died, and was carried to Abraham's bosom. A certain rich man died and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment. The rich man cried to Abraham to have mercy on him and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue, for he was tormented in flames. Abraham reminded him that in his life time he had lived in abundance while he refused help to the beggar.

The hades world (place of departed spirits) is divided into two divisions. Between these divisions is a fixed gulf which permits no one to pass from one division to the other. The rich man further asked Abraham to send Lazarus back to his house on earth to warn his brothers . about "hell." The rich man did not desire that his brothers come to the place where he was. Abraham informed him that his brothers had Moses and the prophets; to them they should turn to avoid coming to torment. The rich man cried out to Abraham that if one rose from the dead and warned them they would repent. Abraham replied, if they would not hear Moses and the prophets, neither would they alter their lives if one rose from the dead. You may read this in Lk. 16:19-31.

Man has no control of his soul once he has died. No power on earth can change or alter the destiny of a departed one. We sometimes hear denominational preachers attempt to preach a soul into heaven. Beware of such preaching for they do not have such power. The person, while he lived on the earth, had to prepare his soul for either "Abraham's bosom" or else he will not arrive there. This preparation is done through gospel obedience. Hear the words of Jesus as He informs the sinner what is required to be saved from his sins: "Except ye believe that I am he ye shall die in your sins" (Jn. 8:24). "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Lk. 13:3). "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk. 16:16).

After a sinner has obeyed the above commandments of the gospel of Jesus Christ, he then is commanded to remain faithful to the Lord until death (Rev. 2:10). God's word is to serve as his pattern to govern his life. When this has been done he is prepared for

death.

Which division of the hades world the soul enters after death is based upon the life one lives while on earth. Everyone will receive a just sentence. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it: and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:12-15).

Jesus Christ will judge each person on the basis of his own life while on earth. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (Jno. 5:22). Paul gives us some additional information pertaining to Christians who have died and, also, concerning those who shall have died before His coming in the clouds. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

Eternity is divided into two divisions, heaven and hell. Each soul will go to one of these places. Again, the place one goes will be determined upon the kind of life one lives while on earth. Those who obey the gospel of Jesus Christ shall enter heaven; those who disobey the gospel shall enter hell. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment (the disobedient): but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. 25:46). "And there shall in no wise enter into it (heaven) any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27).

Those people who know not God and/or refuse to obey the gospel of Jesus Christ will not be permitted to enter "Abraham's bosom," nor to enter heaven in the hereafter. "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

There are many questions of interest concerning death and what follows thereafter. The story of the rich man and Lazarus, recorded in Luke 16, answers many questions that are often asked. The rich man was subject to the law of Moses, as was Lazarus. Though he was God's child by birth, yet he was spiritually lost. There is no evidence that the rich man was aware of his being lost while he lived. This should prove to all of us that it is possible for a child of God to be lost. Many today believe that once a person is saved he cannot become lost. This surely is not true.

The rich man learned, after it was too late, that God's word must be obeyed to be saved. We who now live must hear and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ to be saved (Mk. 16:15-16). The Corinthians were saved by obeying the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-4). It will be too late to recognize the need to obey Jesus after one dies. Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to all who will obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9).

The rich man learned too late that his request to Abraham was fruitless. He cried for water to cool his tongue and for Lazarus to be sent to warn his brothers of the torment. It was past time for petitions to be granted. In this life one must bow to God's will, confess Christ in his daily living, and follow Him as He commands. Those who refuse to do this will find out too late that the Lord blesses only the obedient.

The rich man learned too late that death was not the end of all things. He learned that there really is life beyond the grave. The soul of man does not die. He also learned after death that he was able to recall his life while on earth, and to be concerned about others; yet, he was totally unable to do make any corrections, or to influence others. How much he must have wished his life had been different!

The rich man learned that he could not take his riches with him. The very things which he trusted most in life were left behind. What he would have given for another chance, but it was too late. Some people have the idea that God will grant them a second chance after death. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The rich man learned too late that his sins were the cause of his being in torment. Sin will bar the door of heaven to any man (Isa. 59:2). I believe if you will take the time to read and meditate upon Luke 16:19-31, that you will realize the importance of obeying God while still living. Remember it will be too late after death to reflect upon this. In this life only do we have opportunity to learn and to obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul declared: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).