

Restoration of the Kingdom of God – 18

Involvement in good personal relationships is trust, which we can see in the life of Abraham - *"The LORD said to Abram... 'all the land which you see I give to you and your offspring forever.... 17 Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you'" - Genesis 13:14.*

- On this, James commented, *"Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness and he was called the friend of God" - James 2:23.*

What greater friendship could one have than with God! Not only did Abraham believe that the land was God's to give, but he believed God's promise to give it to him. Abraham showed his belief by abandoning his comfortable and settled life in familiar surroundings, and becoming a nomad in a foreign country. He was confident that in God's good time, even if it was after Abraham died, he would still inherit that land.

- **Genesis 22** tells how Abraham accepted God's command to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac. **Hebrews 11:17** comments, *"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac... 19 accounting that God was able to raise him up."* This shows that Abraham did not believe that he had an immortal soul. After his death, the only way he could live again would be by his **resurrection** by the power of God.

Abraham was called the friend of God because he **believed what God had promised**. God promised that he would inherit the land, and he believed that promise. God did not promise that Abraham would go to heaven, and the Scriptures say nothing about him believing such an idea. But some take from what Jesus says about the rich man and Lazarus in **Luke 16**, that Abraham did go to heaven.

- Jesus began in **verse 19** by saying, *"There was a certain rich man...and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus..."* In a similar way, Jesus began his Parable of the Dishonest Manager in **verse 1**, *"There was a certain rich man."* A parable has been defined as "short fictitious narrative that illustrates a moral attitude, a doctrine, a standard of conduct, or a religious principle."

Jesus made large use of parables - **Mark 4:33** *"With many such parables he spoke the word to them... 34 He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything."* Jesus further explained to them, **11** *"To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables."*

- Jesus was interested in those prepared to commit their lives to him, and to be fully taught his doctrine, and so gain *"the secret of the kingdom of God."* *"Those outside" would 12 "...not perceive, and...not understand"* because they had not decided to *"turn"* [repent] *"and be forgiven."*

Those who read the parables of Jesus in our times cannot go to Jesus and ask what he means. But we have the advantage of *"the whole counsel of God"* in the completed 66 books of the Scriptures. These are all *"given by inspiration of God, and...profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" - 2 Timothy 3:16.*

- We can therefore come to a correct understanding of The Rich Man and Lazarus by consulting the *"the whole counsel of God"* to see whether Jesus was teaching that Abraham went to heaven, and whether believers can now expect the same. More next time, God willing.