

Restoration of the Kingdom of God – 19

Some read from what Jesus says about the rich man and Lazarus in **Luke 16**, that after Abraham died, he did not actually lose consciousness. They believe that his immortal soul went to heaven, and endless joy. They picture him able to converse both with new arrivals in heaven, like Lazarus, and with the souls of those suffering eternal torments.

- Is that what Jesus was teaching? He is not physically present for us to ask him about this, but we do have *“the whole counsel of God”* to consult, to see whether these ideas are true. The book of **Psalms** teaches -

6:5 *“In death there is no remembrance of You; in the grave who will give You thanks?”*

- **146:3** *“Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. 4 When his breath departs, he”* (that person) *“returns to the earth; on that very day his plans”* (Hebrew, `eshtonah = “thoughts”) *“perish.”*

These divinely inspired statements are straightforward and unmistakable - when a person **dies**, he **loses consciousness**. This accords with **the facts**, which were not understood by the ancient pagans who believed that an immaterial soul was the conscious entity which dwelt in the body. The **first fact** is that the seat of consciousness is actually one of the bodily organs, **the brain**.

- **Second**, consciousness can be **temporarily interrupted** by a shock to the brain, for example a blow to the head. A more violent blow can result in **immediate loss of consciousness** followed by death. **Third**, during sleep there is **no awareness** of passing events.

Now if there was in fact a separate immaterial entity associated with the living human body, then our experience should be different than what actually occurs. First, there should be no loss of consciousness when the person falls asleep, since a separate immortal entity has no need of sleep, see **Psalm 121:4; Revelation 7:15**. Falling asleep would not interrupt its consciousness.

- Also, a non-lethal blow to the head ought not to break the continuity of consciousness, since an immaterial and immortal part of the person could not be affected by such an event. So from both Scripture and human experience we can confidently conclude that during death, **when the brain has ceased to function**, there is no conscious existence. So the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus is not a literal event, but a parable. Abraham is unconscious in the grave, waiting for the resurrection, which is the **only way** to experience life after death -

The apostle Paul proclaimed, *“If there is no resurrection of the dead ... 18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.”* Heaven-going at death is shown to be a fiction, since apart from resurrection, all we have is this brief mortal life - **19 “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.” - 1 Corinthians 15:13.**

- Paul, who wrote this, had no hope of going to heaven, instead expressing his desire in **Philippians 3:11**, *“if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”*

Paul’s hope was firmly based on what Jesus promised his disciples in **John 6:40** *“This is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life”* - not by going to heaven at death - *“and I will raise him up at the last day,”* when they will be made immortal after the judgement. More next time, God willing.