

Restoration of the Kingdom of God – 20

The parable of **the Rich Man and Lazarus** has been taken by some to show that Abraham's immortal soul went to heaven when he died. We have seen previously that this idea contradicts both the promises of God and His general teaching in Scripture concerning the state of death.

- In addition, Jesus shows that *"the Son of Man will come"* (return from heaven) *"in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then"* (at that time) *"He will reward each according to his works"* - **Matthew 16:27**. For a person to receive his reward when he dies - before Jesus returns - would be like an accused person being declared innocent before his scheduled trial in a court of law.

Jesus taught in **Matthew 25:31**, *"When the Son of Man comes in His glory ... 33 ...He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left..."* the disobedient **46** *"will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life"*. This makes it impossible for the righteous to have already received their reward when they died.

- It can be helpful to look at the context of Jesus' parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus in **Luke 16**. Was this parable designed by Jesus to teach that people go immediately to a place of reward or punishment when they die? In answer to this question, we note that the parable was a reply to the Pharisees, who had heard Jesus give the parable of **the Dishonest Manager**, in which he concluded in **verse 13**, *"You cannot serve God and mammon"* (riches).

Their reaction was to sneer and scoff at Jesus - **14** *"Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him."* Jesus' immediate reply was, **15** *"You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God."* So the real issue was whether those claiming to serve God could also be acceptable to God while actively pursuing riches.

- Such men were fools, who had derided Jesus, and a natural human response would have been some angry and heated words. But Jesus determined to *"not answer a fool according to his folly, lest he also be like him"* - **Proverbs 26:4**. Instead, he left *"us an example, that we should follow his steps 22 and committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth 23 when He was reviled, did not revile in return"* - **1 Peter 2:21**.

Jesus instead determined, as disciples were later encouraged, to *"...be tenderhearted, be courteous... 14 ...not afraid of their threats, nor be troubled."* He had **15** *"sanctified the Lord God in his heart, and was ready to give a defence...with meekness and fear"* of God - **1 Peter 3:8**.

- So the reply of Jesus was instead to *"answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes"* - **Proverbs 26:5**. Accordingly, Jesus showed the foolishness of their love of money by putting his answer in terms of one of their own fables. Jesus had warned his disciples to beware of the corrupted religious beliefs around them - *"Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees... 12 Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees"* - **Matthew 16:6**, which Paul said also included *"fables"* - **Titus 1:14**.

Edersheim, in *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, book 4, pages 280-281, shows that the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus was based on the current Pharisee beliefs concerning "the bosom of Abraham" in the afterlife. More next time, God willing.