

Light and Truth

ARE YOU SAVED? * PART 5

What if We are Not Saved?

Peter the fisherman was one of the twelve apostles chosen and taught by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Peter wrote, “If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (1 Peter 4:18). The Lord Jesus made it very plain to all of us where we will appear after death, in the Gospel of Luke chapter 16.

A Certain Rich Man

“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:19-22).

On the one hand we see the beggar, who in his lifetime was paralysed and had to be carried to the rich man’s gate. There he was left to sit, helpless, unable even to keep the dogs from licking the sores which covered

his body. To him, the only hope in this world was to be fed with some scraps which might fall from the rich man's table and be thrown to the dogs.

Though in this world he had no one to take care of him, the beggar had a treasure which no money could buy, and that was the hope of eternal life. His faith was in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He knew God and trusted in Him. When he died, his Father in heaven sent His angels to carry him to Abraham's bosom, a place which is also called Paradise.

Paradise

Before Jesus Christ rose from the dead, when a person died in faith his spirit went to Paradise. While Jesus the Son of God was hanging on the cross, one of the two thieves crucified beside Him repented of his cursing and blasphemy as he was looking at his Saviour. The Lord Jesus said to that thief, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

God reveals to us what happened to Jesus after He died on the cross of Calvary: "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." (Ephesians 4:9-10).

Paradise was under the earth. When Jesus rose from the dead, triumphantly He led into heaven a great company of the spirits of Old Testament men and women

of faith; including Abraham, David, the prophets and all who lived by faith in the promises of God, as well as the repentant thief. The Lord knows them that are His, and He waits to receive their spirits when they die (2 Timothy 2:19; Psalm 73:24).

Today paradise is in heaven, in the presence of God (Ephesians 4:8; 2 Corinthians 12:2-4). Since the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, all who die in Christ go straight to be with Him, which is far better (Philippians 1:23). To die in Christ means to be washed from all sin in His Blood and to live by faith in Him to the end, not continuing in sin.

The Place of Torment

On the other hand, Jesus spoke also of a place of torment which was separated from paradise by a great gulf across which no man could pass. Into this place of torment the rich man went after death. Though he was rich, proud and self-satisfied, the rich man also had to die. The Scriptures tell us, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

"It came to pass ... that the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." While his body decayed in the grave and returned to dust, the spirit of this rich man was wide awake, conscious and in torments, in the place of torment under the earth.

There was no more vain show; no more feasting and merrymaking. There was no more sin and uncleanness for the rich man. He was shut up in this prison under the earth to await the day of judgment. "Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it" (Isaiah 5:14).

Now the rich man's only desire was for mercy. He cried, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." But the reply came, "Son, remember" (Luke 16:24-25).

What About You?

Dear Reader, what will it be for you, imprisoned in that place of torment, to remember how you neglected God? What will it be to remember your failure to heed the loving pleas of those who called you to turn from sin and unbelief, to come to Jesus Christ and accept the free offer of salvation which cost Him so much?

This tormented man could remember how he had despised that beggar Lazarus at his gate, and how he took no thought for him. Now he was pleading for Lazarus to come to his relief; but there was a great gulf between paradise and the place of torment. In his lifetime he had neglected his opportunity to receive mercy. After death it was too late. Multitudes are dying without

salvation and going to hell. “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God” (Psalm 9:17). The Scriptures warn us of the days of judgment which are to come, and already we can see their partial fulfilment. But the worst is yet to come, as men, women and nations despise God’s laws and exalt sin.

God revealed much to the apostle John about things which will soon come to pass. He wrote, “I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him” (Revelation 6:8). He went on to write of one quarter of the earth’s population being killed through wars, famine, plagues and ravaging beasts. These multitudes will die and go to hell because they have refused God’s infinite love in sending His own Son to be a sacrifice for their sins.

They, and all who have not obeyed the gospel of God, will remain in that place of torment until they are raised from the dead. Then in resurrection bodies they will stand before Jesus Christ for judgment. “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28-29). When the apostle Paul came to Athens, he saw the temples and the gods of “gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device.”

He told the people that in times past God had overlooked their idolatrous worship and had not judged

them for worshipping images made by human hands. “But now” Paul continued, God “commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.” That Man is the Lord Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners (Acts 17:29-31; I Timothy 1:15).

The Great Judgment Day

Everyone will have to stand before the great white throne of judgment. There will be no respect of persons on that day. All will have to give account to Jesus Christ, whether they are small or great. All will have to be present; no one can escape it. None can hide his sins, for they are written in the books that God Himself has kept. His record is faithful.

John the apostle wrote, “I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 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” (Revelation 20:11-12).

Those who have not repented of their sins will stand before God guilty and condemned. For eternity they will suffer the wrath of God for their sins. “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into

the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:15).

Is your name written in the book of life? Do not neglect your eternal salvation. Will you not believe on the Son of God and come to Him for salvation, that God may blot out your sins from His books? (Isaiah 43:25). You have only to call upon the Lord Jesus Christ with your mouth, believing in your heart that He has borne the judgment of all your sins in your place, as the Scripture declares, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6).

God’s promises cannot fail. In His Word He promises “that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed” (Romans 10:9-11).

We invite you and earnestly plead with you not to delay; but to come to Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, your Creator, who came into the world to be your Saviour. Turn to Him now in true repentance and call upon His name so that He can have mercy upon you and forgive all your past sins. He will blot out from His books the record of all your past sins, as the apostle Peter preached, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19).

Ask the Lord Jesus Christ to cleanse you in His precious Blood that you may be free from all the guilt and stain of your past life of sin. Receive Him as your Saviour; welcome Him to come and live His life in you. His love gift to you is the Holy Spirit whom He will send into you to dwell in you and be your life. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

If you have believed from the heart that the Lord has heard you calling on Him for salvation, do not be ashamed to confess Him. Tell others you are rejoicing that your name is written in heaven and the Lord has forgiven all your past sins (Luke 10:20).

You have obtained mercy because you did those things ignorantly in unbelief (1 Timothy 1:13). You have been washed and made white in the Blood of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Through His abundant mercy God will not cast you into hell for all the sins you committed in the past. You have the blessed assurance that God will receive you into His presence for eternity.

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