

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE?

Have you ever wondered what happens immediately following death? Most of us have thought about this at some time or other. There is an account in the New Testament which supplies us with much information about what happens to our souls immediately following death. This account was given by Jesus. It is recorded in Luke 16:19-31.

Jesus told about two men. One man was very rich. He had everything he desired. The other man, Lazarus, was very poor. He was also sick. He lay at the gate of the rich man's house and begged for the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table.

After a time Lazarus died. The rich man also died. Just as there was a great difference in life between the two men, so there is also a great difference in death. However, the situation is now reversed. Lazarus was ***"carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom."*** But the rich man ***"lifted up his eyes in torment."***

There are many very valuable lessons which we can learn from this account. One lesson is that wealth, power, and social position do not extend beyond life on earth. The rich man had all of these, but he went to a place of torment. Lazarus had none of these things in this life, but he was in a place of happiness after death.

Another lesson is that consciousness continues beyond the grave. Some think that when one dies, he is simply unconscious until the resurrection. This is not true! The body sleeps in the grave. The soul does not. Memory also continues beyond the grave. The rich man was fully conscious. He recognized Lazarus. He remembered he had five brothers back on the earth. He was concerned about them, and begged Abraham to send Lazarus back to preach to them, so that they would not come to the place of torment where he was.

Many fathers and mothers after death will remember their children and how they failed to teach them about God when they had the opportunity. They will long for someone to teach them so that they will not come to be with them in torment. Many will remember with deep regret the opportunities they had to prepare for death while on earth, but did not take advantage of them.

Still another lesson that Jesus taught in this account is that after death, there is no second chance. The rich man begged for Abraham to ***"send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue,"*** but Abraham refused. He pointed out that ***"there is a great gulf fixed"*** and that none could cross over it.

God has given us the time that we have on this earth so that we can prepare for death: ***"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"*** (2 Peter 3:9). Once death comes, it is too late! There are only two possible places to go when we die. There is the place of the blessed where Lazarus went. This is the place where God's faithful children go to await the resurrection and the Judgment. There is also the place of torment where the rich man went. This is the place where people go at death who have taken no thought for God and for doing His will during their lifetime on earth.

What about you? Are you prepared for death? Life on earth is uncertain! We have no assurance that we will live to see tomorrow. Death is certain! The Bible

warns: ***“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’ whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away”*** (James 4:13,14).

The Bible also says, ***“Behold now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation”*** (2 Corinthians 6:2). Begin today while there is time. Believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God (John 8:24). He alone is ***“the way, the truth, and the life”*** (John 14:6). Only through Christ can we be saved eternally (Acts 4:11,12). Repent of all your past sins (Acts 17:30,31). Confess your faith in Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:37). Be buried with Him in baptism to have your sins washed away (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). Then serve Christ faithfully in His church for the rest of your life, and you will be blessed throughout all eternity. ***“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. . . . Be faithful until death, and I will give you a crown of life”*** (Revelation 2:10). A place of peace and rest awaits faithful children of God at death.