



Easter 2011 "A Prayer in Hell" (Luke 16:19-31)

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Read the text... The Bible records many prayers, but this is the only prayer I am aware of recorded that took place in hell. This is not a parable, but a story of two very real people... the rich man is not in hell because he was rich, but rather because he lived for the things of this life rather than the things of eternity. And Lazarus is not in Abraham's bosom simply because he was poor. Abraham's side = Abraham's bosom was the place all OT saints went when they died. Why Abraham's bosom? Because they died in the faith of Abraham, specifically faith in a miracle child that fulfilled God's promise to Abraham (see Gen. 15:2-6; Gal. 3:16; Gen. 3:15). No one is in Abraham's bosom today, because the NT makes it very clear that at death the believer goes immediately to be with the Lord (Phil. 1:23; II Cor. 5:6-8; Eph. 4:8/Ps. 68:18). Jesus Christ's shed blood on the cross paid the price for sin, and once that price had been paid, all OT saints could now gain access to the very throne of God in heaven. What a marvelous truth!

This is a fascinating story! And what practical things we learn from this story...

1. The certainty of life after death.

- Each one of us is going to live for eternity somewhere (Eccl. 3:11)...

2. People are recognizable when they leave this life.

- * Peter, James and John recognized Moses and Elijah on The Mt. of Transfiguration...

3. Hell is a real place of fire.

- * Talk Tuesday caller several weeks ago who no longer believes in a literal fiery hell. After I finished the program that morning I thought of this story. Why couldn't I think of it when I was on the air?

- * Jesus believed in a fiery hell (Matt. 7:19; Mark 9:48; John 15:6).

- * See Matthew 25:31-34, 41; hell was not created for people. And God has done everything He can do so that no one has to go to hell.

- * Rev. 20:14-15 refers to the lake of fire, which is the second death

4. People are not annihilated in hell. This is what the JW's (and others) teach.

* Rev.20:13-14

5. There is no escape from hell, nor an entrance from Abraham's bosom into hell (v.26).

* Interesting statement "So that those who want to go from here to you cannot." Who would want to go from Abraham's bosom to hell? Have you ever seen a person attempt to go into a burning building because someone they love is in the building? I think that's the idea here (see Rom.9:3).

6. You can love people in hell vv.27-28.

* This guy loves his five brothers and does not want them to experience his fate.

* Is there someone in hell right now who does not want you to experience their fate? A father, mother, brother or sister, friend?

* Note: This man is convinced that if someone appears to his brothers from the grave, they will repent and escape hell. But listen to Abraham's response. v.29 They have the Word of God, They have prophetic truth. Now v.30 Once again this man is convinced that the Word of God is not enough, and if there could only be a witness from the dead, his brothers will surely repent. v.31 This is an amazing statement, and one that people still struggle with today. And that brings me to my final point of what we learn from this incredible story...

7. If I do not repent in response to the Word of God, I will not repent even if someone rises from the dead.

* Jesus raised people from the dead (The widow's son at Nain, Luke 7:11-17; Jairus the synagogue ruler's daughter, Matthew.9:18-26; Lazarus, John 11). And despite Jesus raising people from the dead, there were many who refused to follow Him, who would not believe in Him.

* If I asked you if you believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, my guess is that perhaps everyone listening to my voice would say yes. The evidence for Jesus' resurrection is overwhelming...Stone rolled away by angels, not to let Jesus out (He walked through walls), but to let witnesses in; the numerous documented eyewitness accounts; the willingness of the saints to suffer and even die for their belief in Jesus' resurrection; the inability of the Jewish authorities to produce Jesus' body and uncover what they believed was a hoax; the OT prophecies regarding the resurrection (esp.Isa.53); Jesus' repeated predictions of His death, burial and resurrection. The question is, what difference has this truth made in my life?

* Note: it is very interesting to me that the rich man lived in luxury/comfort during this earthly life. The rich young ruler was not granted eternal life because he too was a man of wealth, and of course Jesus said it is hard for the rich to enter the

kingdom of God. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God” (Matt.5:3). Sometimes poverty in spirit is produced by tough times in life. Isn't it interesting the contrast of the two men in our story. The one who died in faith was a beggar. I have no doubt there is a spiritual lesson in this. Hard times causes us to take a fresh look at life...that's what happened to Ernesto and Melissa Diaz. That's what happened to Reese White. Don't get me wrong, people can come to Christ regardless of life's circumstances. But it seems many who come to Christ come because of struggles in this life that God uses to drive them to Himself...people who are comfortable in this life are many times the most difficult people for God to reach.

CONCLUSION

* God wants to save your marriage, but first He wants to save you. God wants to free you of that addiction, but first He has to free you of yourself. God wants to purify your life, but first He has to purify your heart...And no matter what circumstance you find yourself in today, God does not want you to end up in hell. There may be someone in hell right now praying for you, asking God to send someone from the dead so that you will repent and not go there. Guess what, God has provided a witness from the dead for all of us. But that witness will do us no good if we do not respond to the Word of God.