

A Story of Stubborn Rejection

Luke 16.19-31

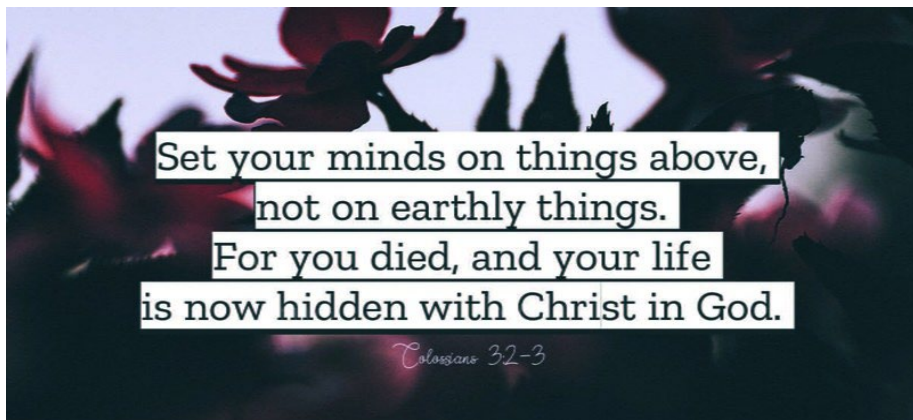
Jesus' story of Lazarus and the rich man graphically exposed the Jews' stubborn rejection of Christ, and the results of their lack of belief. This story exposes the error of putting stock in the possessions and comforts of this life, instead of looking toward the wealth of the world to come.

Trading Places: Lazarus and the Rich Man

- Setting: God knows the Pharisees' hearts (14-18)
- A Reversal of Fortunes (19-25)
 - A contrast in this life: Great possessions vs. abject poverty
 - A contrast in destinies: Torment vs. Blessing
- Stubborn Rejection leads to Eternal Judgment (26-31)

Sobering Lessons for This Life (and the Next)

- Everything we need to know is contained in Scripture.
- Once this life is over, your final destiny is unalterable.
- What you *believe* now matters forever!



1. Luke was a historian, so it makes sense for us to follow his account as the narrative unfolds. The verses leading up to Jesus telling the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man are important (Lk. 16.14-18). In the parable in vv.1-13, Jesus spoke to His disciples (16.1), but now He speaks to the Pharisees. What do we learn about them in v14? What was their attitude toward money? toward Jesus? What does Jesus say God looks at in v15? The Jews focused their good deeds, but God detested their piety. Scripture and the preaching of John pointed to the kingdom of God (and the Messiah), but instead of believing in Jesus, they tried to 'force their way into the kingdom' by their own righteousness (16)! Instead of obeying the Law, they sidestepped it: The Law said divorce and remarriage was the same as adultery, but if a man wanted a different wife, the Jewish rabbis allowed him to divorce his wife for no reason (17-18). Their focus was entirely on their possessions and pleasure in this life. Now can you see why Jesus told the parable of Lazarus and the rich man?
2. This is the only parable Jesus told in which a character is named. It may be that Jesus chose Lazarus because it comes from a Hebrew name (Eliezer, cf. Gen 15.2) meaning 'God the Helper.' Or it may be because Jesus knew He would raise a man named Lazarus from the dead a short time later (Jn. 11.38-44). Or perhaps it shows God's special concern for each poor person. What do you think?
3. What message was Jesus giving to these unbelieving Jews? What were they focused on? The five brothers who the rich man wants Abraham to send Lazarus to warn probably represent Jews who do not believe in Jesus. Jesus says they won't even believe if someone rises from the dead. Read Jn 11.43-53; 12.10-11; and Mt 28.11-15 to see how true Jesus' words were!
4. Of all men who ever lived, Jesus knew more about heaven and hell than anyone else. In this parable, what truths about life after death do we learn? Notice the evangelical fervor of the unbelieving rich man (27-28)! Do we have that kind of zeal to share Christ?