

# Lazarus and the Rich Man



By Randall Ricker April 18, 2020  
Sabbath Church of God

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# Carried by angels

Luke 16:19-21

19 There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. 20 But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus [2976 Eleazar, the name of a son of Aaron], full of sores, who was laid at his gate, 21 desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 So it was that the beggar died, and was **carried by the angels** to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.

Of the **Pharisees**, Josephus says: "They also **believe that souls have an immortal vigor** in them, and that, under the earth, there will be rewards and punishments, according as they lived virtuously or viciously in this life; and the latter are to be detained in an everlasting prison, but that the former shall have power to revive and live again." (Antiquities, B. 18, Ch. 1, §3. Whiston's Tr.).

# Carried by angels

Matthew 24:30-31

30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see **the Son of Man coming** on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And **He will send His angels** with a great sound of a trumpet, and they **will gather together His elect** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

# Lazarus was not in heaven

Acts 2:29, 34

29 "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day... 34 For **David did not ascend into the heavens**, but he says himself: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand,

1 Corinthians 15:22-23

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward **those who are Christ's at His coming**.

# Lazarus was not in heaven

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. **And thus we shall always be with the Lord.**

Acts 1:9-12

9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same **Jesus**, who was taken up from you into heaven, **will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.**" 12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the **mount called Olivet**, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey.

# To Abraham

Luke 16:22

So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels **to Abraham's bosom**. The rich man also died and was buried.

Jesus uses various phrases (such as "the Bosom of Abraham") and images (such as the chasm separating the underworld in two) which are only found outside the Bible. These terms are only found in 1st Century Jewish mythology. Mentions of "the bosom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" have been found in burial papyri (cf. papyrus Preisigke Sb 2034:11). In early Rabbinical legends "the Bosom of Abraham" was where the righteous went. (cf. Kiddushin 72b, Ekah 1:85). It is not in the Bible. While the NIV has "to Abraham's side", the literal AV rendering "to the bosom of Abraham" is better as the 'Bosom of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob', a specific concept in contemporary popular belief.

Another source showing what Jews of Jesus' day believed is 4 Maccabees, which was probably written by Jews in Egypt about a generation after Christ. In this book, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob receive and welcome Jewish martyrs into the world of the dead: "After our death in this fashion Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will receive us and all our forefathers will praise us" (4 Maccabees 13:17).

# To Abraham

Galatians 3:29

And if you are Christ's, then **you are Abraham's seed**, and heirs according to the promise.

Matthew 8:11-12

And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and **sit down with Abraham**, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

# Pharisees concept of goodness

Luke 16:23-24

23 And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 Then he cried and said, '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.'

Luke 16:13-15

13 " No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."  
14 Now the **Pharisees, who were lovers of money**, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. 15 And He said to them, "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.



# The Biblical concept of goodness

Luke 10:33-37

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' 36 So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" 37 And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

# The Biblical concept of goodness

Matthew 25:31-36, 40

31 When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. 33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' ...40 And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

# The Pharisees concept of torment

The Apocalypse of Zephaniah has nothing to do with the Zephaniah who wrote the book of that name in the Bible. The real Zephaniah lived in the days of King Josiah about 620BC. The Apocalypse of Zephaniah was written by an unknown Jewish author, and probably a Pharisee, sometime around 150AD.

The book shows us what many Jews in Jesus' day believed. The details are not exactly the same as in Luke 16:23-24; for example in the Apocalypse of Zephaniah the chasm between the **fiery part of Hades** and the part given to Abraham has a giant river running through it. In fact the author recounts the fictional Zephaniah's journey across the river in a boat steered by an angel: "You have escaped from the abyss and Hades, you will now cross over the crossing place... then he ran to all the righteous ones, namely Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Enoch, Elijah and David" (Apoc. Zeph. 9:2).

# The Biblical resurrections

Revelation 20:4-6, 11-12

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. **This is the first resurrection.** 6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years... 11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw **the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened.** And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

# The Biblical resurrections

Revelation 20:13-15

13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the **lake of fire**.

# Asking Abraham for water

Luke 16:24

Then he cried and said, '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.'

Jesus takes the Pharisees' beliefs and contradicts them. The first contradiction has already been mentioned: in the Jewish myth, Zephaniah was able to cross by angelic boat from one side of Hades to another. Another contradiction is that **in the myth Abraham, Isaac and Jacob intercede for those in torment in Hades.** "As they looked at all the torments they called out, praying before the Lord Almighty saying, 'We pray you on behalf of those who are in all these torments so you might have mercy on all of them.' And when I saw them, I said to the angel who spoke with me, 'Who are they?' He said 'Those who beseech the Lord are Abraham and Isaac and Jacob". (Apoc. Zeph. 11:1-2). But Jesus contradicts this. Instead he has Abraham refusing to help relieve the Rich Man's suffering: "now he is comforted and you are in agony" (v.25)

In the Jewish myths, Abraham is credited with the ability to do what the Rich Man asks (v.27) and resurrect the dead. For example in the 1st Century Jewish work The Testament of Abraham the patriarch Abraham pleads for the dead and returns 7,000 to the living. "Then Abraham arose and fell upon the earth, and [the Angel of] Death with him, and God sent a spirit of life into the dead and they were made alive again." (Testament of Abraham 'A' 18:11). But Jesus again contradicts the myths, and has Abraham refusing to raise Lazarus.

# Asking Abraham for water

Bible language expert Dr. Lawrence Richards, in discussing this passage in The Victor Bible Background Commentary, New Testament, further explains how Jesus used contemporary Jewish thought about the afterlife (which by this time was influenced by pagan mythology) to point out a spiritual lesson about how we view and treat others.

In this view of the afterlife, Hades, the abode of the dead, was "thought to be divided into two compartments" and "conversations could be held between persons" in the abode of the righteous and those in the abode of the unrighteous. "Jewish writings also picture the first as a verdant land with sweet waters welling up from numerous springs," separated from the second, which was described as **a parched and dry land**. These elements show up in Christ's allegory.

Luke 16:25-26

25 But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. 26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that **those who want to pass from here to you cannot**, nor can those from there pass to us.'

# The time between death and resurrection

Luke 16:27-28

27 Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house,  
28 for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'

Psalm 146:4

His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; In that very day his plans [6250 thinking] perish.

Ecclesiastes 9:5

For the living know that they will die; But the dead know nothing, And they have no more reward, For the memory of them is forgotten.



# The testimony from which to learn

Luke 16:29-31

29 Abraham said to him, **'They have Moses and the prophets;** let them hear them.' 30 And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31 But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded **though one rise from the dead.**'