

## Lesson 12 – Where Will You Be Five Minutes After Death?

(Read Matthew 16:24-26) (Ask the student to explain in their own words what this text means.) Spiritual matters are the most important part of life. Although it is true that we have to pay a lot of attention to the things of our present physical life, in the end it is the spiritual that is of the utmost importance. Eternity is much more important than the few years we live in this world. It is possible to gain a lot in this world and lose our soul.

But what happens after death? Certainly no human being can answer this question for us on their own. Only God knows and has revealed some details for us in the Bible. Although the Bible is not going to clarify all our doubts, let's see some of the things that are revealed.

### This Life Is a Test

There are people who believe in reincarnation, the theory that after death the soul returns to inhabit a new body as many times as necessary to purify itself. However, the Bible says otherwise. (Read Hebrews 9:27) (Ask the student how this verse destroys the theory of reincarnation.) If we die only once, as this Scripture says, then we can live in this world only once. After death comes the judgment of God. We will not have many lives to improve little by little. As someone has said: "Only one life, will soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last." One day we will stand face to face before our Creator to give an account of what we have done during life.

On the other hand, Rome teaches that after death there is a purgatory. It says that only those who die in mortal sin (very serious sin) go to hell, while the few who live as "saints" go directly to heaven. It teaches that most people are not bad enough to go to hell nor good enough to go straight to heaven, which is why they go to purgatory. The word "purgatory" comes from the verb to purge: to purify or clean. The belief is that suffering for a limited time in the fire of purgatory purifies the soul of its guilt for venial sins. Rome also teaches that those who are still alive can help the dead in purgatory through prayers, almsgiving, fasting, indulgences, and masses conducted on their behalf. At the end of the world, according to this belief, those who have purged their sins through suffering are received in eternal heaven and thus escape eternal hell. With this belief, one does not have to be concerned with their life on earth because, in the end, in eternity, everything will work out. However, Hebrews 9:27 says "it is appointed for men to die once, and after this, judgment." At death, one's eternal destiny is sealed. No one and nothing can change it.

### The Rich Man and Lazarus

The text that gives us more details of what happens after death is the account about Lazarus and the rich man. (Read Luke 16:19-31.) (Ask the student to tell in their own words what happens in this text.) It tells us nothing about Lazarus's spiritual life, only that he was suffering greatly. We know something about the rich man's spiritual life because we see that he had a luxurious life and that he did not care about the needs of others. In time, they both died – yet their souls lived on. **The first lesson** here is that there is life after death – that death is not our end.

**The second lesson** here is that conditions after death can be the opposite of conditions in this life. Lazarus is now enjoying himself, while the rich man is suffering. Why? Well, we have already seen in Hebrews that after death comes the judgment of God. One's eternal destiny is

sealed with death. For those who in this life follow the will of God, blessings come. For those who in this life follow the will of Satan, suffering comes.

**The third lesson** here is that after death, there are only two options. Abraham said to the rich man, "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, that those who want to pass from here to you are not able, and that no one may cross over from there to us" (ver. 26). In death, there is a place of torment and a place of happiness. Between these two there is a great chasm that no one can cross. Only two places.

(Ask the student: When the rich man understood that there was no way for him to improve his bad situation, what was his request to Abraham?) The rich man asked that someone from the dead be sent to testify to his brothers so that they would not come to the place of torment. (Ask the student: What was Abraham's response?) If they don't hear and believe Moses and the prophets (the Scriptures), they won't believe a resurrected man. **The fourth lesson** is that we don't need miracles; the Scriptures are sufficient to warn us of the coming judgment. God revealed in the Old Testament that there is a judgment after death, but now it is much clearer in the New Testament. We have no excuse.

### **The Final Judgment**

(Read Revelation 20:10 to 21:2) (Ask the student what they learn from this text.) All the dead of all time will rise to appear before the throne of God to be judged. They will either be thrown into the lake of fire or enter the New Jerusalem. Putting together the texts we have seen, we grasp that one's fate is decided at the moment of death, and that one enters either the state of suffering or the state of happiness, awaiting the day of judgement. Then the final judgment will be like a formal pronouncement of the judgment that had already been decided, and those who are in the state of happiness will enter heaven while those who are already in torment will go to hell.

### **Questions**

1. What comes after death? (the judgment)
2. What four lessons can we learn from the account of the rich man and Lazarus? (there is life after death, the conditions after death can be the opposite of the conditions in this life, after death there are only two options, and that we do not need miracles because the Scriptures are enough to warn us.)
3. Is there anything more important to you than preparing for life after death? (\_\_\_\_\_)
4. What is lacking for you to be prepared for eternity? (\_\_\_\_\_ ) (Help the student reflect honestly in order to come to a positive decision.)