

We Don't Believe It!

by Wayne Goff

Please take the time to read Bill Crews' article on page 3 which contrasts the differences between heaven and hell. His article reminded me of something I ponder often when I read Jesus' account of **the eternal fate** of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16. **The point that is so obvious to me is that our present physical state is no indicator of our coming eternal state.**

The rich man was clothed in purple and fine linen and ate sumptuously every day (v. 19). As we might say today, he had it made. He was wealthy, satisfied, and happy. Every indication from this life was that he would blissfully go from this state to the next.

By contrast, there is poor ol' Lazarus, full of sores, begging for bread, laid at the gate of the community by others, and even the dogs came and licked his sores (v. 21). As we would say today, he was a *loser* – big time! He was counted as nothing in this life, and certainly he would have nothing to look forward to in the next one.

The amazing thing about Jesus' account is that while man looks on appearances, God looks on the heart. There is more to the story of "*the certain rich man*" and Lazarus! The rich man was an impenitent sinner, and in the eyes of God would one day receive his condemnation. Poor Lazarus was a righteous man, though without much opportunity or ability in this life, who would one day receive his blessings.

Now picture this. Both men died. "*The beggar ... was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom*" (v. 22). He is comforted (v. 25). His eternal security is certain. But the rich man "*died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham...*" (v. 23). He is now "*tormented in this flame*" (v. 24). He asks for the very mercy he was unwilling to give to Lazarus (v. 24)! His eternal fate is sealed, and once he realizes it, his mind turns back to his father's house where he has five brothers who are headed in the same direction (vv. 27-28). He wants Lazarus – of all people – to go back to earth to warn them! Abraham's answer is no, they have the Bible (v. 29). If they won't hear it, they wouldn't believe Lazarus if he came back from the dead! Even if Lazarus had gone back, his five brothers would have said – "**We don't believe it!**"

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