

CONVINCED?

“If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead” (Luke 16:31).

You know the story. There was a rich man who lived in luxury “every day”. At his gate was a beggar who lived in misery every day. They both died and the rich man was “buried”. Some have assumed that the beggar wasn’t buried. At any rate, in the afterlife, their roles were reversed. The beggar was rewarded and the rich man punished.

Please consider! We were born without being consulted. No one asked us “if” we wanted to be born. Our present existence did not result from any conscious decision on our part. It was God who decided when and where we would be born. In this story Jesus told, both the rich man and the beggar were conscious and aware of their circumstances in the next life.. While they did not choose to be conscious, they were. They did have the ability, however, to make choices before they died. Apparently, the rich man chose not to follow God and now he was suffering the consequences of that decision. In the midst of his torment, he became concerned about his five brothers who also didn’t have time for God. He wanted someone to go and preach to them. Abraham responded that they could listen to Moses and the Prophets. The rich man apparently knew that his brothers didn’t care about Moses and the Prophets, and wanted someone to come back from the dead and preach to them. Abraham said no! If his brothers were so disinterested in God that they didn’t care about Moses and the Prophets, they would also disregard the testimony of someone who came back from the dead. Jesus came back from the dead, and most still don’t believe. The key to conversion in this story was listening to Moses and the Prophets. If you had time for Moses and the Prophets there was hope!

It seems that there are some who really want to follow God, and others who really don’t. Most are somewhere in between. Perhaps this story of the rich man and Lazarus will help convince you to prepare for eternity while you can still choose to do so.

Remember Hamlet’s famous soliloquy which begins “To be or not to be”. He was contemplating suicide. His uncle had killed his father, the late King, and married the king’s wife, his mother. Hamlet wanted to escape his misery and death seemed a welcome alternative. Then he began to think! “For in that sleep of death what dreams may come, When we have shuffled off this mortal coil, Must give us pause.” Think! Just what if you wake up on the other side of death like the rich man Jesus told us about?

Understanding the rich man’s fate ought to be a wake up call. He had lots of choices while he was still alive. He chose to buy expensive clothing and live in luxury every day. Every time he left home he chose to ignore that miserable beggar lying at his gate. Further, the rich man chose not to invite the beggar into his house or provide him with medical attention. Jesus said that the poor man was longing to eat the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table, but apparently the rich man chose not to give him anything.

So the rich man died, and was buried. He had no choice in this matter for it is appointed unto everyone once to die. Then the haunting question of Hamlet became a reality in his life. If God had asked him what we wanted to be or not to be, he probably would have chosen “not to be”, but God didn’t ask him. Neither will God ask you or me whether we want to be or not. When we die the time for making decisions is over.

Jesus does not say that this story was a parable. The fact that the beggar’s name was given lends credence to the idea that this was a true story about two real people. Abraham said to the man in torment: “son, remember”. How sad! The rich man could reflect on the choices he made regarding Lazarus, but could not return to rectify the wrongs he had done.

Apparently, those five unbelieving brothers would not even be convinced by the resurrection of Jesus. What about you? Are you convinced? Will you choose to ignore Christ and continue focusing only on this life, or will you like Lazarus, make God the most important person in your life?

Now is the time to be convinced, for on the other side of death it will be too late!