



forgiveness of sins Jesus earned, will partake of the judgment on the Last Day, along with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the departed saints who precede and come after us!

Thus, Abraham as the Father-figure of true faith could very well be the literal Father Abraham of our text today. We have to be OK with that. The Bible doesn't always give us the exact answers to questions we may have. Remember that's not the purpose of Scripture anyways. The purpose of Scripture is, as John writes, "**...that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name**" (Jn 20:31). We trust God's Word for what it out rightly says and also what it teaches.

So what about the conversation between Abraham and the Rich Man – our last question to consider today? On the one hand we learned that once someone is in heaven or hell, it's final. As Father Abraham said, "**...a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us**" (Lk 16:26). The idea of someone in heaven talking to, let alone seeing, someone in hell goes completely contrary to our typical pious views of paradise. I think most of us all assume in heaven there will be blissful *ignorance*. Certainly there will be *bliss*, but there will be no ignorance. In fact, quite the contrary; we will have fuller understanding in heaven than we ever could have here on earth. So when Scripture promises that in heaven, "**God will wipe away every tear from their eyes**" as we read in Revelation 7:17, for example, we cannot use our limited human understanding of how things operate on earth and assume that's how it will be in heaven. To give an example, while it would absolutely devastate us here on earth to know that one of our loved ones was in hell, we cannot and would not be devastated knowing such truth in heaven; in heaven there are no tears of sadness! Here on earth, we know God's righteousness only by faith – Christ's righteousness is ours through faith as we've already heard! But here on earth we are also still sinners. Our worldview is tainted by sin. In heaven, though, we will fully understand God's righteousness. The reality of one of our loved one not being with us in heaven will not be able to make us sad, because God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. We will rejoice knowing in fullness that God is holy, righteous, and good. Mark 16:16, "**Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.**" We will rejoice knowing God is faithful to His Word. That is not to say that God or we will rejoice that people are in hell. No, Ezekiel 33:11 makes that clear. God says, "**I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.**" God desires nothing more than "**all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth**" as we read in 1 Timothy 2:4.

When the Rich Man accepts that it is too late for anyone to comfort him in hell, he begs Father Abraham to send Lazarus to his brothers to "**warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment. But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead'**" (Lk 16:28b-31).

Even today, we have the Scriptures. Listen to them. Whereas in our text, the Scriptures composed only of Moses and the Prophets, a reference to the Old Testament, we today have the fullness of the Scriptures; both Old and New Testaments. And all point to and are fulfilled in Jesus. Trust God's Word. All of it. Trusting God's Word is not necessarily trusting that God will deliver us from all our earthly afflictions or suffering in this life. Look at Lazarus! Lazarus died a poor man with dogs licking his sores (Lk 16:21). Instead, faith trusts that God delivers us in the life to come; that we will have our reward in heaven. When we pray for God to deliver us from the things of this life, that's hope! And we do hope that God answers those prayers! For example, when one of our loved ones is in the hospital with a life or death situation. We hope that they come through it just fine on this side of glory; but, we trust that even if they don't come out fine here on earth that God is going to safely bring them to Abraham's side in heaven, just as He did with Lazarus.

God is faithful. He will surely bring all His children safely to Him; from Christian Philip, our newest baptized child of God to our oldest baptized child of God who is no longer physically able to make it to Church anymore. God is merciful. He declares us righteous because of Jesus. You have the Scriptures. Hear them, read them, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them. By the patience and comfort of the Holy Word, you will be brought to eternal life with Christ Jesus our Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.