

Luke 16:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And 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.

Analysis

The first request: 'And 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.' The rich man addresses 'Father Abraham' (Πάτερ Αβραάμ, Pater Abraam), claiming covenant relationship, but Abraham cannot help. His plea 'have mercy on me' (ἐλέησόν με, eleēson me) comes too late—mercy's day has passed. The request is modest—just 'the tip of his finger' (τὸ ἄκρον τοῦ δακτύλου αὐτοῦ, to akron tou daktylou autou) dipped in water to cool his tongue. This minimal request highlights his desperation and the severity of 'this flame' (τῇ φλογὶ ταύτῃ, tē phlogi tautē). Hell's torment is literally fiery, not merely metaphorical discomfort.

Historical Context

The rich man's address to Abraham exposes the futility of trusting ethnic or religious heritage for salvation. Being Abraham's descendant provided no advantage in eternity. His request for Lazarus to serve him—even in hell!—reveals unrepentant pride and presumption. He still sees Lazarus as inferior, suitable only for menial service. This demonstrates that hell doesn't reform character but reveals it. The modest request (just a fingertip of water) emphasizes hell's intensity—even minimal relief would be treasured. Jesus' description of literal flames contradicts attempts to spiritualize hell as merely separation from God. It's both relational estrangement and physical torment.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does the rich man's continued presumption (expecting Lazarus to serve him even in hell) teach about unrepentant character?
2. How does the request for minimal relief emphasize hell's severity?
3. What does trusting religious heritage ('Father Abraham') rather than personal faith reveal about false security?

Interlinear Text

καὶ αὐτὸς φωνήσας εἶπεν Πάτερ Ἀβραάμ ἐλέησόν με
And G846 he cried and said Father Abraham have mercy on me
G2532 G5455 G2036 G3962 G11 G1653 G3165

καὶ πέμψον Λάζαρον ἵνα βάψῃ τὸ ἄκρον τοῦ
And send Lazarus that he may dip G3588 the tip G3588
G2532 G3992 G2976 G2443 G911 G206

δακτύλου αὐτοῦ ὕδατος καὶ καταψύξῃ τὴν γλῶσσάν
finger G846 in water And cool G3588 tongue G1100
G1147 G5204 G2532 G2711

μου ὅτι ὀδυνῶμαι ἐν τῇ φλογὶ ταύτῃ
my for I am tormented in flame G3778
G3450 G3754 G3600 G1722 G5395

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 22:1 (Parallel theme): And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

John 4:10 (Parallel theme): Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewst the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

Matthew 25:41 (Parallel theme): Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

John 4:14 (Parallel theme): But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

Revelation 20:15 (Parallel theme): And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Luke 3:8 (References Abraham): Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

Luke 16:30 (References Abraham): And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

James 3:6 (Parallel theme): And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

Zechariah 14:12 (Parallel theme): And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.

James 2:13 (Grace): For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

