

THE GREAT GULF

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This article is not about the Gulf of Mexico, though it is a great big body of water. I am thinking of another great gulf, and a more important one. This gulf is the one that Abraham described to the rich man who was in *Hades*, the place that held the spirits of dead people. The story of the rich man and Lazarus is found in Luke 16:19-31. Both the rich man and Lazarus died, but their condition after death could not have been more different. The rich man was tormented in a flame, and he saw Lazarus afar off being comforted in Abraham's bosom (vv. 23-25). There was also a "great gulf" fixed between them. Abraham explained the purpose of this "great gulf":

"And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us." (v. 26).

This great gulf made a *permanent* separation between the righteous and the wicked after death. There were no bridges that could be constructed quickly to move anyone from one side to the other. It was not possible for anyone to leap across this great gulf. Its purpose was to keep the two sides permanently separated. How tragic for the rich man to be on the wrong side of this great gulf!

In this life the righteous must live around the wicked, constantly trying to keep themselves separate from worldly influences and sins (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). But, after death, a separation takes place that will continue on into eternity. There will be no purgatory, reincarnation, or any other type of second chance. After men die, they will face the final judgment where again the separation of good and evil will take place (Matt. 25:31-33). In hell the wicked will be "punished with everlasting destruction" forever separated "from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (2 Thess. 1:9). Your eternal destiny cannot be changed after death – that is why you must correct the course of your life now. This, my friend, is the most important decision you will ever make