

## THE PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

Luke 16:19-31

Most people today believe in the *existence of heaven*. But *hell is denied* by many...and *preached by few*. Many who profess to *believe in a real heaven*, *express doubt* in *both* the *reality of hell* and its *eternal duration*. They think that the *idea of hell* is cruel, unkind, and unfair. They seem to always defend their belief by asking the question, “*What kind of God would send people into eternal punishment?*” Yet, Jesus said more about hell than anyone else...and *affirmed its existence* as the place of *eternal, conscious torment* for most people.

*Heaven* is real...*hell* is real...and both are *eternal*.

The *biblical revelation* regarding hell should *motivate* every believer to have a *sense of urgency* in sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ...to *warn sinners* of the fearful fate that awaits them.

The tragic truth is that *most people who end up in hell* will actually be *shocked to find themselves there*.

“*Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness’.*”

~Matthew 7:22-23

“*And someone said to Him, ‘Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?’ And He said to them, ‘Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, ‘Lord, open up to us!’ then He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from.’ Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in*

*Your presence, and You taught in our streets’; and He will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from Me, all you evildoers’.*’ *In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out.*”

~Luke 13:23-28

Such is the case with the **rich man** in this story. He is the main character in the story. The **poor man** never speaks...his role is primarily to serve as the contrast to the rich man. The rich man’s words give the *only testimony from hell* found anywhere in the Bible.

### I. Begin with the description of **THE DIFFERENT LIVES:** (vs. 19-21)

The story of these *two men* is marked by extreme contrasts in life...*one rich (enormously wealthy)...**the other poor (an impoverished beggar)*.

Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day (vs. 19)...

**Habitually**...means *on a daily basis*.

**Dressed in purple**...means that his *outer garment* had been dyed with a *Tyrian purple dye*...which was *extracted from sea snails* from the region of *Tyre*. Because it was *very labor intensive* to produce, the *purple dye* was *extremely expensive*...and only the *very rich* could afford fabrics or garments dyed with it.

**Lydia**, the wealthy woman in whose home the believers in **Philippi** met (**Acts 16:40**)...she was a dealer in such fabrics (**Acts 16:14**).

**Fine linen**...this describes an *expensive Egyptian cotton* that would have been used to make his *inner garment*. This *cotton* further demonstrates the extent of his wealth.

**Joyously living in splendor every day**...Similar to *another rich man* in one of Jesus' parables (**Luke 12:19**), this man's lifestyle was a *lavish one of self-indulgence and ostentatious display*.

**And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. (vs. 20-21)**...

**Poor man**...describes a person in the *most extreme state of poverty* (**Mark 12:42-44**)...he was *destitute*.

**Lazarus**...the fact that Jesus names him makes him *significant*...and it makes this parable *personal*. Lazarus is the **Greek** translation of the common **Hebrew** name **Eleazar**...which means, *whom God has helped*.

**Was laid at his gate**...he had been *abandoned* (laid... means *thrown* or *cast out*) at the rich man's gate by those *who could no longer care for him* in hopes that the rich man would. Unfortunately, the rich man consumed with his *opulent, self-satisfying lifestyle*, took no notice of him.

**Sores**...*ulcerous, oozing, open lesions* (**Revelation 16:2, 11**...*Bowl judgments*).

**Crumbs**...*pieces of stale bread* used by dinner guests to *clean their hands*. They would then *toss the crumbs under the table for dogs to eat*.

**Even the dogs were coming and licking his sores**...Dogs in biblical times *weren't domesticated pets* but *semi-wild scavengers*...and are consistently presented in Scripture in *a negative light*.

- The rich man was *inside the house*...the poor man *outside*.
- The poor man had *no food*...the rich man had *all the food he could eat*.
- The poor man had *needs*...the rich man had *none*.
- The poor man *desired everything*...the rich man *desired nothing*.
- The poor man *suffered*...the rich man was *satisfied*.
- The poor man was *anguished*...the rich man was *happy*.
- The poor man was *humiliated*...the rich man was *honored*.
- The poor man *sought crumbs*...the rich man *feasted*.
- The poor man *needed help*...the rich man *gave him none*.
- The poor man *was a nobody*...the rich man *was well-known*.
- The poor man *had no dignity in death*, not even a burial...the rich man was *honored with a lavished funeral*.
- The poor man *possessed no hope*...the rich man *possessed all hope*.

## II. Notice the description of **THE DEATHS**: (**vs. 22**)

**Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried (vs. 22)**...

**Carried away by the angels**...that angels would minister to a person the *Pharisees* viewed as *an outcast* would have shocked them. The belief that *disease* and *poverty* signified God's *curse on a person* was deeply ingrained in

their thinking. (Remember...**Job's three friends** insisted that his suffering was the *result of his sin*).

**Abraham's bosom**...this phrase appears only here in the Bible...and is used as figurative language for *paradise, heaven, or the presence of God*.

*“And he was saying, ‘Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!’ And He said to him, ‘Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.’”*

~Luke 23:42-43

**The rich man also died and was buried**...the rich man was *honorably buried* with *full treatment given to his corpse*. His eternal soul, however, went to **Hades**.

The *dissimilarity* between the **rich man** and **Lazarus in life** continued through the *transition of death* and became *magnified to the extreme in eternity*. After death, the situations of the two were *completely reversed*...one was *comforted*...the other was in *torment*.

- The rich man *became poorer* than the poor man had ever been...while the poor man *became richer* than the rich man could have ever imagined.
- The poor man was *on the inside (heaven)*...while the rich man was *on the outside (hell)*.
- The poor man enjoyed the *great heavenly banquet*... while the rich man was *totally deprived*.
- The poor man had *no need of anything*...while the rich man *lacked everything*.
- The poor man had *all his desires fulfilled*...while the rich man's *desires would go eternally unfulfilled*.
- The poor man was *satisfied*...while the rich man *suffered*.

- The poor man was *filled with joy*...while the rich man was *tormented*.
- The poor man was *honored*...while the rich man was *humiliated*.
- The poor man *enjoyed a lavish feast*...while the rich man *longed for a drop of water*.
- The rich man *desperately sought help*...while the poor man was *unable to provide it*.
- The poor man *had a name (Lazarus)*...while the rich man *was unknown*.
- All the poor man's *hopes were realized* beyond what he could have imagined...while the rich man's *hopes vanished forever*.

### III. Notice the description of **THEIR DESTINY: (vs. 23-25)**

One **heaven**...the other **hell**.

**In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom (vs. 23)**...

**Hades**...refers to *the abode of the damned* prior to one's *final judgment* and *sentencing* to the *final phase of hell*... **the lake of fire**.

**He lifted up his eyes**...indicates that he was fully aware of his surroundings.

**Being in torment**...a *conscious state of pain and torture*.

**Saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom**...he saw the contrast between *heaven* and *hell*.

**And he cried out and said, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.” (vs. 24)**...

Cried out...describes *a continual plea for mercy*.

Father Abraham...a *plea* based on his *Jewish heritage and descent*. His *nationalistic* and *religious birthright*.

So that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue...he sought any *temporary relief* that he could get. He was desperate for just *the briefest moment of relief* he could get in the *unending horror of hell*.

In agony in this flame...this is the *description* given throughout Scripture of *hell*.

But Abraham said, “Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.” (vs. 25)...

Child...Abraham acknowledged that *in a heritage sense* the rich man was *one on his descendants*. But his *Abrahamic* heritage didn't *keep him out of hell*, nor would it *alleviate hell's torment* for him.

Remember that during your life you received your good things...he had chosen a life of *self-righteousness*, including *materialistic pleasures* and *comfort* apart from the *true righteousness* of God. And now, he was *enduring the eternal consequences* of his choice.

And likewise Lazarus bad things...but now, death *completely reversed* their situations.

But now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony...

#### IV. Notice the description of **THE DIVIDE:** (vs. 26)

And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over

from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us (vs. 26)...

Jesus was revealing that *death permanently fixes everyone's destiny*. There are *no second chances*. No one will escape hell once there, nor will anyone in heaven visit hell.

The rich man's experience of **torment** and **agony** typifies the sinner's experience in hell. Hell's torment is frequently described in Scripture with the words *fire, fiery, flame*, or *darkness*.

“...*The sons of the kingdom (of the devil) will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*”

~Matthew 8:12

“*These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.*”

~II Thessalonians 1:9

Worst of all...there is *no hope of relief* for hell's inhabitants. Their *sentence is eternal* and their *punishment never ending*. The fire of hell is *unquenchable* and will *never cease* to burn.

#### V. Notice the rich man's...**THE DESIRE:** (vs. 27-28, 30)

And he said, “Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment (vs. 27-28)...

This revealed his *lack of belief* in the *sufficiency of Scripture*...the rich man *pleaded for a supernatural sign*.

But he said, “No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!” (vs. 30)...



The implication is that he and his brothers *had insufficient data*...that they *lacked a sufficiently convincing sign*. This is exactly what the *Pharisees* did...they would repeatedly *demand a sign* from Jesus.

*“The Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Jesus, they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven.”*

~Matthew 16:1

But Jesus always *refused* to give them a sign.

*“An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah. And He left them and went away.”*

~Matthew 16:4

For the **rich man** and all who arrive in hell...the issue *isn't lack of information*...it's the *rejection of truth*.

*“This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.”*

~John 3:19

## VI. Finally, notice **THE DECLARATION: (vs. 29, 31)**

**But Abraham said, “They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.” (vs. 29)...**

Since *unbelief* is at the heart of all *faith* and *moral* issues *...no amount of evidence can turn unbelief into faith*.

Only the Word of God has the *power* to do so.

*“You have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.”*

~I Peter 1:23

**But he said to him, “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.” (vs. 31)...**

*Abraham* emphatically confirmed the *absolute sufficiency* of Scripture to bring sinners to *salvation*.

## LESSONS WE NEED TO LEARN:

- Heaven and hell are both **REAL** and **ETERNAL**.
- There is a **CONSCIOUS AWARENESS** in heaven and hell.
- Almost everyone expects to go to heaven when they die. Unfortunately, that isn't the reality. Many individuals who **EXPECT** to go to heaven when they die, are going to be surprised when they **END UP** in hell.  
  
In the end, there is only *one reason* that the **rich man** (along with all the *unredeemed*) ended up in hell...*failing to believe in and respond to the truth of Scripture*.
- Even if the **rich man** had been gracious and generous to **Lazarus**, those *acts of charity and compassion* would not have *atoned for his sin*. Salvation throughout redemptive history has always been solely by God's **GRACE** through **FAITH**.

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