



The Parable of the
Rich Man & Lazarus
Luke 16:19-31

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In the previous parable, the unjust steward thought about his future. Now, in this parable, the Lord takes us from life to death to life after death, presenting a wealth of information that we would never otherwise know.

Before Death

19 "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.

20 "But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate,

21 "desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

What is the relative significance of riches and poverty? None. There is no relative significance. Both are tests. A man can be good or bad, regardless of his material wealth.

Not every rich man is bad, and vice versa. Father Abraham was one of the richest men in his age, and he left all and followed the Lord. He took 318 servants to go save Lot. He had his own army! Abraham was one of the richest men of the east at the time. The Bible tells us that God considered him to be a righteous man. Likewise, not every poor man is good. Some poor men easily become bitter, judgmental, jealous.

How does the rich man fare in this parable? He was a sinner. He thought that his riches were only for his own daily pleasures. He did not think about tomorrow, about eternity.

What's the big deal—the rich man didn't do anything wrong? Well, there are two types of sin, sin by *commission* and sin by *omission*. This parable teaches us that *positive action is required* and that omitting it is *equally as sinful* as the sins of commission (kill, fornicate, steal, lie, covet).

Clothed with purple and fine linen, not thinking about eternity, that is about others of God's children (our brethren) and their needs? There is a person who needs to eat and I do not give him? What is that? He is full of sores, and I didn't do anything? Recall the parable of the Levite who ignored and the Samaritan who anointed the victim. It appears in this parable that the beggar did not ask anything, but it is obvious. I see the beggar by my gate.

God gave me gifts (unrighteous mammon). There are many, many sins of the rich man, self-centeredness, not feeling the needs of the poor. The poor are at the door of my palace, and I have a lot; every day I have pleasure.

What about the poor man—how did he fare in this parable? He is virtuous. He is long-suffering. He never grumbled against God, comparing himself with the rich man, wondering, “Why this lot?” He was not jealous; he never said, “Oh, he is a rich man; I need a crumb.” No matter how hungry and sick (dogs nursing his wounds), he remained patient.

Anything else notable about the poor man? He is the the only person mentioned by name in all the parables of the Lord, “There was a certain beggar named Lazarus.” The Lord meant something huge. Every person, no matter how insignificant to man, God knows by name. Incidentally, Lazarus (Eliazar in Hebrew) means “God is Helper.”

In this case, it appears that Lazarus won the prize and the rich man lost.

At Death

22 “So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.

Lazarus's death was not important enough to mention that he was buried (i.e., had a funeral), but he was important to God, so much so that God sent angels (“angels” not “an angel”) to carry him up to Abraham's bosom. Someone who has no human help; God is his help. He is not mentioned by the people, but the Lord mentioned him by name and treated him like royalty.

After Death

23 “And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

After death, we find both of them living, talking, aware of each other and perhaps seeing and hearing each other! (Jehovah's Witnesses believe that

bad people die, never to be raised, with no eternal torment.) God tells us that both of them are there, after their death. The rich person cannot stop death. Death is for all. Both of them ended this stage of their life. After death, both of them are living.

What can we conclude about life after death, from this vision? They are living, and they know and remember each other! To some extent, they seem to be able to see and hear each other!

*What do we know from the Bible about what will happen to you after death?*¹

1. Our souls are separated from our bodies. They go to a waiting place (both good and bad spirits). The bad spirits are in “Hades” (Greek) or “Gehenna” (Semitic). The good spirits are in “Abraham’s bosom,” “Paradise,” “Third Heaven.” Hades is the waiting place for bad spirits, and Paradise is the waiting place for the good spirits.
2. At the last day, all spirits will return to their bodies again (resurrection), and there will be the final judgment. At that time, some people will be at the right hand of the Lord and others at his left. Those at the right will be the faithful, the left the unfaithful.
3. The faithful will then go to eternal heaven. The unfaithful will go to eternal fire. Eternal heaven and eternal fire will be the final resting places for all souls, rejoined with their bodies.

Now, feeling his torment and seeing Father Abraham there with Lazarus in his bosom, three times the rich man beseeches him—each time to be rejoindered.

Request 1: Mercy

The rich man cries, “Have mercy on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue.” (Crumbs...)

24 “Then 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.’

¹In in a subsequent presentation, I will give all the the Biblical references to support this interpretation.

25 "But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.

26 '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.'

What additional conclusions can we clearly draw at this point?

- They are now aware that they were good or bad.
- There is a huge gulf between them.
- They learn there are no more chances to change one's lot.
- No mercy (even the tip of Lazarus's finger) for those who showed no mercy.

What is this "torment" in verse 25?

- "He is comforted, and you are tormented." Between the two men, there is a hopeless gulf—with no way to bridge it.
- "Remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things." The fathers of the Church say that the main torment is this word, "Remember."
- The memory of my sins, the memory of plenty and not feeding the hungry, the memory of all missed opportunities is a torment, "for there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor anything secret that should not come to light."
- He remembers all in his life—a huge torment. However, the Lord Christ abolished all despair and converted it into joy—for believers. "Don't miss your chance; keep your eye on eternity. I prepare a place for you and write your name in the Book of Life. Do not erase it." Alas, the hopeless think these promises are imaginations.

Lazarus on the other hand, must be thinking...

"So insignificant is what I suffered on earth! Now I am in eternal joy and comfort!

Request 2: Mercy for my brethren

From the torrent of hades the rich man thinks of his brethren who are in the same position now that he was before his death. “Have mercy on my brothers still on the earth.”

27 “Then he said, ‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house,

28 ‘for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’

29 “Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’

It appears as if he is thinking of his brothers. However, he is here because he did not hear Moses and the prophets, who revealed the One who will die and be raised.

Abraham chronologically preceded Moses by 500 years and the prophets by 1,000 years. Abraham passed away before the first writings of the Bible. This means Father Abraham is following up with everything that is going on on Earth. When we talk with Virgin Mary or St. George, they are living!²

What more can we conclude?

The saints talk, understand, and have knowledge of history after their time on earth.

Request 3: Witness from the dead

The rich man makes yet another last-ditch attempt, “Let someone rise from the dead and warn my brethren.”

²“But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? “He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You [Sadducees and Jehovah’s Witnesses] are therefore greatly mistaken [to think there is no resurrection].” (Mark 12:26-27)

30 "And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'

31 "But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"

Moses and prophets reveal the One who will die and be raised. If they did not believe Moses and the prophets, Father Abraham tells us, then they will not believe even One who rises from the dead.

What else do we conclude from this parable about the afterlife, specifically with respect to Paradise and Gehenna (or Hades in Greek)?

- This is a huge, impassable, gulf.
- No change of state is possible.
- There is no "purgatory."