

Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)

Jewish religious authorities, who were “lovers of money,” were scoffing at Jesus’ choice of sitting with tax collectors and other social outcasts who were socially perceived as sinners. Against this backdrop, Jesus tells the Parable of the Rich Man and Poor Man. It is a parable that is about heaven and hell and is directed towards everyone listening. As you carefully examine each section of the parable, consider what the point of the parable is.

“Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. 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. 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. (Luke 16:19-22, NASB)

1. What is Jesus saying about Lazarus by stating that he is on the chest within the arms of Abraham?

In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. 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.’ 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. 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.’ (Luke 16:23-26, NASB)

2. What is Hades? How would you research this? What does the Rich Man tell you about this place?

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.’ But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ But he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’ 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.’” (Luke 16:27-31, NASB)

3. What does the Rich Man hope for his family?

4. What is Moses and the Prophets? What does the Rich Man realize?

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Teacher Notes

Jewish religious authorities, who were “lovers of money,” were scoffing at Jesus’ choice of sitting with tax collectors and other social outcasts who were socially perceived as sinners. Against this backdrop, Jesus tells the Parable of the Rich Man and Poor Man. It is a parable that is about heaven and hell and is directed towards everyone listening. As you carefully examine each section of the parable, consider what the point of the parable is.

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1. What is Jesus saying about Lazarus by stating that he is on the chest within the arms of Abraham?

Ask the student: did you notice that heaven is never mentioned? How do you know Lazarus is without question a Believer?

When Jesus describes Lazarus within the arms of Abraham, it is a portrayal of a child within the arms of a parent. Lazarus is a descendant of Abraham; even the Rich Man recognizes “Father Abraham.”

Believers are seen as the genuine descendant of Abraham:

And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise. (Gal 3:29, NASB)

In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. 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.’ 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. 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.’ (Luke 16:23-26, NASB)

2. What is Hades? How would you research this? What does the Rich Man tell you about this place?

Ask the student: what resources could you use to help you understand a biblical passage? What is the difference between Hades and Hell?

If the student is unaware, introduce him to Bible dictionaries and concordances. Commentaries are omitted here, because they can be more subjective and reflect the commentator’s bias.

If a concordance is used in this instance, these verses help distinguish the difference between Hades and Hell:

Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Rev 20:14-15, NASB)

Hades appears to be a place non-Believers go to after death but before their resurrection. Hell appears to be the non-Believer’s final destination after their resurrection and Final Judgment.

Ask the student: what observations do you make of the Rich Man’s description of Hades? Circle the significant words of description.

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.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' 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.'" (Luke 16:27-31, NASB)

3. What does the Rich Man hope for his family?

Ask the student: what does the Rich Man know about his family that prevents them from repenting?

4. What is Moses and the Prophets? What does the Rich Man realize?

If a concordance is used to search for "Moses prophets," this would be one of the results:

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all the things that are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, (Luke 24:44-45, NASB)

The verse, "if they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets," is a reference to the Old Testament.

Ask the student: what does the Rich Man realize about his family's heart and also his own? After some discussion, have the student write these points on their question sheet:

1. One's wealth and outward appearance says nothing about one's faith in God.
2. After death, there is no second chance at salvation and mercy.
3. There is no testimony more powerful than the word of God.
4. Faith is a matter of listening and obeying God's word (Ex 19:4-6).