

# “Missionary Minded From Hades”

## Luke 16:19-31

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**Teaching Aim:** To explore the story of Lazarus and the rich man to see how our choices today determine whether we spend eternity in Heaven or Hell. To realize wealth, in and of itself, is not a sin and neither is poverty, what matters is our relationship with Jesus Christ. To recognize salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, there is no other way. To understand the choices we make today count forever.

### DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (*BIBLE STUDY*)

#### Part I: The story of a rich man and a beggar in desperate need of his help (Luke 16:19-24)

1. **Luke 16:19-31** is often called “*The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus*,” but is it a parable? A parable is an earthly story with a spiritual meaning. If this story is a parable, it is the only parable in the Bible in which Jesus uses an individual’s name. In your opinion, is this a parable or historical narrative?
  
2. What can we learn about the lifestyle of the rich man from **verse 19**? What does the Bible mean when it says that he, “*fared sumptuously*” every day? Who do many scholars believe the rich man represented? Do you think this pleased the Pharisees?
  
3. What can we learn about the second man in this story from **verse 20**? What is the meaning of the man’s name? (Hint: Search it online) Is this the same Lazarus mentioned in **John chapter 11**?
  
4. The rich man had all the food he wanted and the best of life on earth. Would you say the same thing about Lazarus (**vs. 21**)? What do we learn about the physical state of Lazarus? Though the rich man refused to pay attention to the physical needs of Lazarus, something else did? What? What danger did this put Lazarus in physically? Were these dogs household pets or something far worse? (See Commentaries)

5. **Verse 20** says, “Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate.” What does this tell us about Lazarus’ ability to walk? Sadly, many of the Pharisees came to believe being poor was a sign of God’s disfavor, as a result, they didn’t want anything to do with the poor. Were they right in looking down on the poor? Why or why not? What can we learn from the Bible about how we should treat the poor? (See **Prov. 19:17; 21:13**)
  
6. After our brief introduction to the two men, we find that both died and went to different places (**vs. 22**). What do we learn about each place from this section of Scripture? What can we learn from **verse 22** about the role of angels at the death of a believer? The Bible says the rich man died and went to Hades. What was the experience like for him? Lazarus died and went to the place of honor at Abraham’s bosom. What is Abraham’s bosom? (See Commentaries) Note: Many Bible commentators believe there were two compartments in Hades, one for the righteous and one for the wicked. (See **Dan. 12:1-2; Luke 16:19-31**)
  
7. According to **verse 23**, which compartment of Hades was the rich man in? Where did Lazarus go? Some denominations in Christianity believe in “soul sleep.” Soul sleep is the belief that at the time of death, the soul goes to sleep and remains unconscious until it is awakened on Judgment Day. Does **verse 23** agree with or refute this teaching?
  
8. The destination of the righteous seems to have changed after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Rather than going to Hades at death, Jesus told the repentant thief on the cross that He would be with him in a different place (See **Luke 23:40-43**) Where did Jesus say He would take the repentant thief? Is it possible **Eph. 4:7-10** refers to this very moment?
  
9. Have you ever heard the saying, “*What goes around, comes around?*” Is it true in this story? Lazarus desperately needed mercy from the rich man, but the rich man would have none of it. What do we find the rich man doing in **verse 24**? Question: Was the rich man conscious in Hades? Did he have access to both his emotions and what seemed to be physical sensations of thirst and pain? Is Hades the kind of place that you would want to go to?

10. The punishment of the wicked begins in Hades, but the worst is yet to come in Hell. In what way are the two locations different? (See **Rev. 20:11-19**) The Bible speaks of Heaven and Hell in anthropomorphic terms (the language of man). What can we learn about the reality of these destinations if Scripture can only describe them in the most beautiful and horrific terms man can understand?

## **Part II: The afterlife: two men with two very different destinies (Luke 16:25-26)**

1. How did Abraham respond to the rich man's plea for mercy (**vs. 25**)? Did he get it? Why? The rich man could have chosen to love and serve God in this world. Did he? What did he choose to love and serve? (See **Matt. 6:24**) What is the most important thing in your life? The rich man lacked compassion, and now it was his turn to suffer the consequences.
  
2. What additional fact do we learn about death in **verse 26**? Once we die, our final decision on what we do with Jesus has been made and our fate is irreversibly sealed. Who spoke more in the Bible about the terrors of Hell than anyone else? (See **Matt. 25:41**) Why do you think Jesus spoke so intensely about the topic? (See **Acts 4:12; 16:31**)

## **Part III: Missionary minded and desperate to reach family and friends (Luke 16:27-31)**

1. In **verse 27**, the rich man's request for mercy in **verse 24** moves from requesting to begging Abraham. What was the rich man asking for in **verses 27-28**? Did the rich man try to convince Abraham that he shouldn't be punished with the wicked in Hades? Did he realize at that moment that his fate had been sealed and there was no turning back? What was foremost on the man's mind? Notice: The rich man suddenly became missionary minded from Hades. Have you ever wondered what your unbelieving loved ones would say from Hades today if only they could?
  
2. Did Abraham agree to the man's request (**vs. 29**)? What did he agree to? Note: The reference to Moses and the prophets indicates the man and his family were Jews. What did C.S. Lewis mean when he said, *"The safest road to hell, is the gradual one – the gentle slope, so underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts"*?

3. Did the rich man agree with Abraham's decision (**vs. 30**)? What did the man assume? Was he right in this assumption? How did Abraham respond in **verse 31**? Ironically, Jesus would later raise another Lazarus from the dead in **John chapter 11**. Rather than celebrating the man's resurrection, the Jewish religious leaders wanted to kill him again. (See **John 11:46-53; 12:9-11**) Who would the Jews ultimately reject after He came back from the dead? (See **Luke 24:1-12**) Note: Unless God does a miraculous work by first changing the disposition of the human heart – no unbeliever would come to faith in the Biblical Jesus.
  
4. Which of the following principles found in Erwin W. Lutzer's book, "*One Minute After You Die*" makes you feel the most uneasy? Why?
  - 1) The rich man in hades was fully conscious since the time of death?
  - 2) Man's eternal destiny is irrevocably fixed at death.
  - 3) The rich man knew himself well enough to know that what he was experiencing was fair and just, it was exactly what he deserved.
  - 4) Hades is not purgatory; purgatory is a fictional place Roman Catholics believe in.
  - 5) Hades and Hell are not the same place, as seen in **Rev. 11:11-19**.
  
5. How is the experience of the believer when he or she dies different from that of the unbeliever? (See **2 Cor. 5:1-5, 6-8; 1 Thess. 4:16-18**) How does the funeral of a believer differ from that of an unbeliever? Have you received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord? If not, why not repent of your sin and do so right now in prayer?

#### **MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!***

- Being rich, in and of itself, is not a sin, it's what we do with our wealth that counts.
- God promises to bless His people when they help the poor.
- Hades was divided into two sections, one for the righteous and one for the wicked.
- When an unbeliever dies, they suffer in Hades as they await final judgment in Hell.
- Since Christ's death on the cross, the souls of believers go immediately into the presence of the Lord while their bodies sleep in the grave awaiting the great Resurrection Day.
- Both believers and unbelievers are fully conscious after death.
- Once a person dies, his or her eternal destiny is irrevocably set; there is no turning back.
- What we do with Jesus Christ right now counts forever.
- Death for the unbeliever is utter terror; but for the born-again Christian, it is graduation day to the presence of the Lord and eternal blessedness.