

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

January 22, 2020

The Gospel of Luke

The Rich Man and Lazarus – Two Different Lives, Deaths, and Destinies

Topics – Luke 16; hell; the rich man; Lazarus

Text – Luke 16:19 - 31

Introduction

The first portion of Luke 16 dealt primarily with the parable of the unjust steward. Though there was certainly many principles and applications to consider from that parable and the verses that followed, including the verse that discussed divorce, I believe the primary interpretation of the passage was directed toward the Pharisees who had been unjust stewards of the Word of God. They even twisted the Scriptures in order to benefit those that could benefit them, especially rich men.

Here in verses 16ff., there is a contrast made between a rich man who ends up in Hell, and a poor beggar named Lazarus who dies and is comforted in a place known as Abraham's bosom. This story is not a parable, as parables never use proper names. The rich man in this story was in Hell 2,000 years ago, and he is still in torment in Hell today.

Before we examine this passage, I would like to point out that this rich man is not in Hell today because he was rich. Neither is Lazarus in Heaven because he was poor. It is more difficult for rich people to get saved because they often trust in their riches rather than trust in God. Read Mark 10:17 – 27.

Read Luke 12:15 – 21.

Examination of Passage

The Disparity Between the Two Men (vs. 19 – 21)

Verse 19 – He wore purple, which was something only rich people wore. Lydia was a seller of purple, and I am sure that she wore it as well. Lydia was rich, but she was saved. She opened her home to Paul and Silas.

This verse is the beginning of a contrast between the rich man who had everything – a nice home, the best clothes, plenty of food; he fared sumptuously, meaning he enjoyed his life very much; and Lazarus – who had nothing.

Verse 20 - 21 – Lazarus had no home, no food of his own; he was probably dressed in rags. His health was very bad, which was probably caused by his lack of proper nutrition.

In life, the rich man had much enjoyment and Lazarus was very miserable.

The rich man's spiritual condition is alluded to in these verses as he appears to have known this poor man Lazarus; yet, he did nothing to help him. Later, he will call him by name.

Another curious thing about this passage is that the rich man is not named, but the beggar is.

The Death of the Two Men (v. 22)

Verse 22 indicates that both men died. Whether you are poor or rich, you cannot escape death. The rich man's money could not extend his life indefinitely. We do not know how far apart their deaths were. The rich man may have lived much longer because of the better existence that he enjoyed. But the rich man and Lazarus each had an appointment with death, and all the money in the world would not change that.

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" (Hebrews 9:27)

The Eternal Destiny of the Two Men (vs. 23 – 26)

The Rich man went to Hell.

The Poor man went to Abraham's Bosom.

Abraham's bosom was believed by some to be the place where saved people went before the debt for sins was paid for by Christ. It is thought to have been in the heart of the earth, and was an upper chamber, opposite Hell, which was separated by a great gulf. When Jesus died on the cross, he told the thief on the cross:

"And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43)

When he died and then poured his blood on the mercy seat, the debt of sin was paid for:

"Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)" (Ephesians 4:8-10)

Paul later spoke about Paradise as being in the third Heaven:

"I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." (2 Corinthians 12:2-4)

Today, the souls of saved people go directly to the third Heaven into Paradise.

"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5:8)

The bodies, however, go into the ground until the rapture.

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to

meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

The lost go into Hell and await their final judgment where they will be thrown permanently into the Lake of Fire.

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:11-15)

Hell is a place of eternal torment; Heaven is a place of comfort.

Eternal destination is determined before death and is sealed after death.

Note – remember the overall context of this chapter. The Pharisees placed a great emphasis on the apparent blessing of God upon the rich. The Pharisees often perverted judgment to help the rich. Here Jesus shows them that this poor man Lazarus was really much richer than the rich man.

The Distress of the Rich Men in Hell (vs. 27 – 31)

In Hell, the rich man was now concerned about the eternal destiny of his family. He wanted Abraham to send Lazarus up from the grave and give the gospel to his five brothers. Abraham states that the brothers have all of the information that they need in the Bible in order to make a decision regarding eternity. The rich man states that they will repent if they saw Lazarus risen from the dead. Abraham corrects him and declares if the brothers don't believe the Bible, neither will they believe the testimony of Lazarus.

The underlying principle is that you cannot believe in the resurrection of Christ if you do not believe the Bible.

Conclusion

Be concerned about your own eternal destiny while you are still alive.

Be concerned about others eternal destiny while you are still alive.