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Lazarus and The Rich Man.

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Lazarus and the Rich Man.

Topics.

- A rich man is tormented in flames and in hades.
- Lazarus is comforted and the rich man is tormented.
- There is a great gulf between Lazarus and the rich man.
- The rich man sees Abraham afar off.
- Isaiah talks of kings speaking in hell.

A RICH MAN IS TORMENTED IN FLAMES

- **Luke 16:19-26:** 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. 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. ²³“And being in *torments in hades* (hell in KJV) he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 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*. 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.’

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Hades: (hell in KJV) is from the Greek word (haidēs) and means grave. From Strong’s Concordance hades carries the idea of something unseen and refers to the place of the dead (i.e., the grave).

The opening words of this parable: “Now there was a certain man,” reminds us of the story of the Prodigal Son and the parable of the Unjust Steward, both of which begin with the same expression which makes the reader aware that they are dealing with a story with a moral rather than a doctrinal teaching on eschatology.

- In the parable of the Prodigal Son Jesus said, “*A certain man* had two sons” (Luke 15:11).
- In the parable of the Steward Jesus said, “There was *a certain rich man* who had a steward” (Luke 16:1).
- In the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus Jesus said, “There was *a certain rich man* (Luke 16:19).

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS A BEGGAR

- **Luke 16:19-21:** “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.

Jesus in this parable is telling a story to teach a moral, he is not teaching doctrinal truth, he is using lofty language in the parable to make the point the poor man will be blessed in the next life, but the rich man will suffer loss. The story is a parable of comfort to every Christian living in a third

world country or poverty and a warning to every wealthy church, government or person who is not generous toward the poor when they have opportunity to help.

LAZARUS IS CARRIED BY ANGELS INTO ABRAHAM'S BOSOM

- **Luke 16:22-23:** 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. ²³and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.

The expression, "Abrahams Bosom" carries the idea of the beggar being as close to Abraham in love as he could possibly be. Jesus is talking to the Pharisees who were lovers of money and who ridiculed him. He told them that they loved to justify themselves before men, but God knows their hearts and that what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God (Luke 16:14-15). Then he tells them this parable because the Pharisees were descendants of Abraham and therefore not only believed they were children of Abraham and right with God, but also looked upon the beggar as being unclean and certainly not worthy of Abraham their father let alone being in Abraham's bosom. Jesus in this parable is brilliantly showing the extremely prideful, self-righteous and self-exalting religious leaders of his generation that rather than being right with God they will be cast out of God's Kingdom and at the same time comforting and exalting those they looked down upon as being unclean and certainly not worthy of their time or their money. Since every Jew highly exalted Abraham they would have clearly understood Jesus was referring to them in the character of the rich man and to those they looked upon with disdain in the character of Lazarus the beggar.

NOTICE: both the rich man and the beggar are buried so they are in graves.

THE BIBLE TEACHES TWO RESURRECTIONS

1. The resurrection when the Lord Jesus Christ returns, this is called the first resurrection (Rev 20:5), this resurrection is all about those who died in Christ and who are alive when he returns in glory.
2. When Death the Grave and the Sea give up all the dead at the Great White Throne judgment (this is also called the Second Death), this raising of the dead is all about God, judging those who died outside of Christ (Rev. 20:3-14).

John is given specific details from the Angel of the Lord, regarding the judgment of the dead. The angel tells John that at the end of the Lord Jesus Christ's glorious millennial reign ruling as King of kings and Lord of lords on earth God descends to earth on a great White Throne and the sea, death and the grave give up the dead that are in them to stand before God's Throne. The Book of Life is opened, if a person's name has been blotted out of the Book of Life they are cast into the Lake of Fire. For the people whose name is found in the Book of Life other heavenly books are opened that have kept a record of their life and their deeds. These other books are opened and the person's name is looked up in these books and they are judged according to what is written in these books and according to their works and deeds. Though it does not specifically say that some who stand before the Great White Throne are counted worthy the fact it says that if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, they were thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15) obviously implies that not all are thrown into the Lake of Fire, but it does not give us any detail of the type of life those who are counted worthy at the Great White Throne judgment will have or mention any blessings they might be granted except to say that they are judged according to what is written in the books according to what they had done (Rev. 20:12-13) (Rev 20:12-13). At the end of this judgment death and hades and those counted unworthy

are thrown into the Lake of Fire this is called the Second Death. This Second Death is not the resurrection of the dead who belong to Christ that glorious resurrection took place at the beginning of Christ's reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. The Great White Throne judgement is not about Jesus he is not even mentioned in this Judgment. This judgment is all about God Himself and the dead who died without Christ standing before God's throne and being judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books and according to their works and deeds (Rev. 20:3-7) (Rev. 20:11-15).

NOTE: there maybe literal books in heaven, but it is more likely that the use of books is a simple way in which God is able to communicate to our minds that He not only sees everything, but also remembers everything in His eternal mind and everyone will be judged accordingly.

THE RICH MAN TORMENTED IN HADES

In this parable the rich man is in hades meaning the grave we know this is a story and not a doctrinal teaching because it says, the rich man lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, yet the Bible teaches that there is no activity in the grave and that the dead in them know nothing as the following verses show:

- There is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave (Eccl. 9:10).
- The dead know nothing, and the memory of them is forgotten (Eccl. 9:5).
- Those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:2).

The Old Testament pictures the grave (sheol and hades) as a place where there is no work, device, knowledge, or wisdom it is pictured as a place that the dead go down to in silence and know nothing while they sleep in the dust (we only have to dig up a dead body to find that this is a true statement).

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THE RICH MAN, IS TORMENTED IN FLAMES

- **Luke 16:24:** Then he (the rich man) 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*.

NOTICE: the mention of eyes, fingers, and a tongue in the parable, shows that in Jesus mind there is no thought of the dead surviving as disembodied conscious ghost like spirits. Lazarus and the rich man are pictured as whole people and not seen as disembodied spirits that have gone to heaven while their body remains in the grave.

LAZARUS IS COMFORTED AND THE RICH MAN IS TORMENTED

- **Luke 16:25:** 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*."

This is the moral of what Jesus is teaching in this parable he is using the parable story to encourage all the poor and suffering who follow Him in this life.

IN THIS PARABLE JESUS IS TEACHING TWO THINGS

1. Whoever follows him in this present age may suffer now in this lifetime, but in the eternal Kingdom of God they will not only be comforted and receive great blessing, but also be resurrected to eternal life and everlasting glory.
2. The wealthy and rich who are selfish and greedy with their riches and do not help the poor when they have opportunity will suffer loss and not be granted entry into the eternal Kingdom of God.

THERE IS A GREAT GULF FIXED BETWEEN LAZARUS AND THE RICH MAN

- **Luke 16:26:** 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.'

This is the reality of the Second Death at the Great White Throne judgment, once a person is cast into the Lake of Fire it is final, total extinction gone forever. Everlasting punishment in the Bible carries the idea that death is final, there is no coming back it is permanent that is why it is called everlasting it is total extinction. An exact program of events should never be expected in a parable, as parables have another purpose. The Scriptures do not teach that a brother or sister in Christ will receive immortality before Jesus returns neither does it teach that the dead receives any punishment or judgment before the coming of Christ. Furthermore, *hades* is the grave the place of the dead and is never seen as a place of consciousness.

THE RICH MAN SEES ABRAHAM AFAR OFF

- **Luke 16:23:** And being in torments in *hades* (hell in the KJV) he (the rich man) lifted up his eyes and *saw Abraham* afar off and Lazarus at his side.

The rich man lifts up his eyes and sees Abraham a long way off, perhaps this is a veiled reference to the descent of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. In the book of Matthew Jesus said:

- I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with *Abraham*, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 8:11).

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus it is quite possible to understand the entire conversation between the deceased as poetic imagery similar to the following passage in Isaiah, especially since no-one takes literally the statement that the slain move and speak!

Isaiah talks of kings speaking in hell:

- Isaiah wrote: "Hell (*sheol*) from beneath is excited about you (the king of Babylon) To meet you at your coming; It stirs up the *dead* for you, All the chief ones of the earth; It has raised up from their thrones All the kings of the nations. They all shall speak and say to you: 'Have you also become as weak as we? Have you become like us? Your pomp is brought down to *sheol*, And the sound of your stringed instruments; The maggot is spread under you, And worms cover you' (Isaiah 14:9-11).

Hell: is in this verse is from the Hebrew word *sheol* which means grave. From Strong's Concordance *sheol* means the pit as the place of the dead (i.e. the grave).

THE GRAVE IS PERSONIFIED

Isaiah is personifying dead in their graves as being excited about receiving the king of Babylon, all the dead kings of the nations in their graves are spoken of as sitting up on their thrones. These dead kings are pictured as ready to speak to the king of Babylon when he descends to the grave. The kings are going to tell him, that maggots and worms are going to cover

him. This is biblical poetic lofty language to show how pathetic man's pride is. The king of Babylon had tremendous pride since his kingdom had more glory than all the kingdoms of the world. His extreme pride was manifested by the following words he spoke in his heart:

- I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High (Isaiah 14:13-14).

The Bible often uses lofty poetic language for the following two reasons:

1. To colour, highlight and emphasis the magnitude the awesomeness and the glory of a particular event.
2. To colour and highlight the horror of a particular event or a particular human attitude (especially pride).

A LITERAL READING OF THE PARABLE

A thoroughly literal reading of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus proves too much! Does anyone, really, believe that the rich man in hell (the grave) could literally communicate with Abraham in heaven? That would mean that resurrected brothers and sisters will be able to peer out of heaven and watch fellow humans in agony and great pain being tormented. No Bible scholar with a clear understanding of the biblical doctrine of hades (hell in the KJV) as presented by the apostle John and others believe that those who are counted worthy and after having every tear wiped away by God Himself are literally going to be able to walk over to a vast cliff face, look down and have a chat with those being tormented in a Lake of Fire this theory is more like something you would see in a Stephen King horror movie and certainly not what Jesus is teaching in this parable.

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THE PURPOSE OF A PARABLE

Parables are stories that teach a moral or principal not exact doctrinal theology. Jesus is using a story to illustrate the fact that it is not money or status that determines where a person's eternal future will be. In this parable he is brilliantly doing the following two things:

1. Encouraging those that follow him who are poor and those suffering in this world not to despair while here on earth since they will be exalted in the life to come.
2. Warning those that are rich and wealthy not to be greedy or selfish with what they have, but to help the poor when they have opportunity to do so.

If this was a literal story it is certain the rich man would have asked Abraham for a glass of water and not just one drop on the tip of his finger. This clearly shows that Jesus is using graphic lofty language to highlight the principal and moral he is teaching in this parable. It is dangerous to establish doctrine from a story or parable since their purpose is not to teach doctrine, but highlight a moral. Do Christians, when in their resurrected glorified eternal bodies, really believe they will be able to see and recognize those being tormented in the Lake of Fire? Some of who may be family and friends, what kind of heaven would that be?

THE MEANING OF HELL

From the Strong's Concordance refers to the place where the wicked are sent it means the grave; the pit; the abode of the dead and a place of no return. Figuratively it carries the idea of extreme degradation in sin. The

word hell is the English translation of the Hebrew word sheol which means grave and in the New Testament hell is the English translation of the Greek word hades which also means the grave. Sadly because the Hebrew word sheol and the Greek word hades meaning the grave has been translated to the English word hell many have been taught that it means those outside of Christ will exist in some form of conscious spirit state and be painfully and cruelly tortured by eternal evil spirit creatures called demons in a place full of fiery flames which will forever burn their bodies for all eternity so that they will never be free of the most extreme agony. This is a gross misunderstanding of the Hebrew word sheol and the Greek word hades and a gross miss-representation of the nature and character of God. Following are four reasons this theory of hell (the grave) may have come about:

1. In the 325 A.D. when the Roman papal church had power over the state and certain bishops at the Council of Nicaea determined what the official doctrines of the Christian faith would be they then set about aggressively enforcing them onto society by torturing, imprisoning and burning at the stake those who held a different view to the doctrines they had officially stamped to be the only true doctrines of the Christian faith. One of these doctrines is the traditional teaching of hell that many believe today (i.e., eternal torture in hell for all eternity).
2. This sadistic teaching of hell that proclaims all who die outside of Christ will in some form of conscious spirit state suffer eternal torture, pain and extreme agony in a place full demons and fiery flames for all eternity may have been introduced to scare people into the church. It is almost certain this is one of the reasons it has continued throughout history and very rarely been questioned by ministers and leaders of certain churches.
3. Those who formed this inhuman brutal and extremely violent teaching of eternal agony in flaming fire not only had a total lack of the meaning of the Hebrew word sheol and the Greek word hades, but also had a total lack of understanding the nature and character of God.
4. When the bishops of the Roman papal church established the doctrine of eternal torment, they were influenced by the teachings of pagan religions that existed amongst them at that time.

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Whatever the reason and there are no-doubt many other possible scenarios both the Hebrew word sheol and the Greek word hades refer to mortal death in the grave. When the word eternal is added to the word hell it carries the idea of eternal death (i.e., total extinction) for all who are cast into the Lake of Fire (a symbol of eternal death) also called the Second Death. (Rev. 2:11) (Rev. 20:6) (Rev. 20:14) (Rev. 21:8). (This is the only mention of this parable in the Bible).

For further information see the titles:

- Torment and Tormented in, Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment.

In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
