Research on: Lazarus the beggar and the rich man

Luke 16:19-21, 22-26

“The parable of Dives and Lazarus which Christ Jesus expounded, teaches a fundamental lesson of scientific Christianity.. . At first thought the parable may seem merciless, but one must see in it an important scientific lesson. It points to the impassable gulf between the physical senses and the spiritual senses, the contrary elements in the so-called human mind. Dives had catered to the corporeal senses. Lazarus had suffered only pain and distress from them, hence his ability to abandon them and find heaven, or reality, typified in the parable by Abraham's bosom.

Christian Science shows that sensuous living drives an individual more and more deeply into the false belief of pleasure and sensation in matter. This mesmeric state of satisfaction in materialism is one means whereby mortal mind intensifies its claim to reality—a state of thought not easily shaken off by humanity. The lesson is plain: do not be deceived by the physical senses” (the ‘great gulf’ by Helen Wood Bauman, March 6, 1965, CSS)

19¶ There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

“This, the sternest of Christ’s parables,. . . It is meant to rebuke, not the possession of [wealth](http://d.7769domain.com/r/rd.html#http%3A%2F%2F7769domain.com%2FAd%2FGoIEx2%2F%3Ftoken%3DVGsvTlZGbFg3VzVXV2c2SlFERWhpQmtnWnIwY2V6RVhGMGlhWEptQ1ByMWI5dmRxcWQ4Z0pyaUs1ZUlqMnRsRkxob2pDZmQxbjkvek5KdlNwanVHSktXcjZNMmpHRldacSs0QjhQbjM2WGRnamx3R3BGa0xKTngvNFNlWmtsTElJejV3VUtVWS9qV3FrMURXYldqTFZu), but its heartless, selfish use. Christ never treats outward conditions as having the power of determining either character or destiny. What a man does with his conditions settles what he is and what becomes of him. Nor does the parable teach that the use of wealth is the only determining factor, but, as every parable must do, it has to isolate the lesson it teaches in order to burn it into the hearers.

“There are three parts in the story-the conduct of the rich man, his fate, and the sufficiency of existing warnings to keep us from his sin and his end. . .

“The fact that the rich man does nothing is His condemnation. He was not damned because he had a purple robe and fine linen undergarments, nor because he had lived in abundance, and every meal had been a festival, but because, while so living, he utterly ignored Lazarus, and used his wealth only for his own gratification. Nothing more needs to be said about his character; the facts sufficiently show it.

“Still less needs to be said about that of Lazarus. In this part of the narrative he comes into [view](http://biblehub.com/commentaries/luke/16-19.htm) simply as the means of bringing out the rich man’s heartlessness and self-indulgence.

 (MacLaren’s Expositions, www.biblehub.com).

“Dives is simply the Latin for ‘a rich man.’ Our Lord in the parable continues the subject of his discourse against the Pharisees, by shewing that wealth and respectability are very differently estimated on earth and in the world beyond. The parable illustrates each step of the previous discourse:—Dives regards all he has as his very own; uses it selfishly, which even Moses and the Prophets might have taught him not to do; and however lofty in his own eyes is an abomination before God

*“in purple and fine linen*] The two words express extreme luxury. Robes dyed in the blood of the *murex purpurarius* were very costly and were only worn by the greatest men—(Cambridge Bible, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

“Fine linen - This linen was chiefly produced of the flax that grew on the banks of the Nile, in Egypt. It was especially soft and white, and was, therefore, much sought as an article of luxury, and was so expensive that it could be worn only by princes, by priests, or by those who were very rich.

“Fared sumptuously - Feasted or lived in a splendid manner.

“Every day - Not merely occasionally, but constantly. This was a mark of great wealth, and, in the view of the world, evidence of great happiness” (Barnes’ Notes, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

20And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

“Beggar - Poor man. The original word does not mean "beggar," but simply that he was poor. It should have been so translated to keep up the contrast with the "rich man."

“Named Lazarus - The word Lazarus is Hebrew, and means a man destitute of help, a needy, poor man. It is a name given, therefore, to denote his needy condition.

“Laid at his gate - At the door of the rich man, in order that he might obtain aid.

“Full of sores - Covered with ulcers; afflicted not only with poverty, but with loathsome and offensive ulcers, such as often are the accompaniments of poverty and want. These circumstances are designed to show how different was his condition from that of the rich man. "He" was clothed in purple; the poor man was covered with sores; "he" fared sumptuously; the poor man was dependent even for the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. (Barnes’ Notes, www.biblehub.com).

21And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

“The dogs came - Such was his miserable condition that even the dogs, as if moved by pity, came and licked his sores in kindness to him. These circumstances of his misery are very touching, and his condition, contrasted with that of the rich man, is very striking. It is not affirmed that the rich man was unkind to him, or drove him away, or refused to aid him. The narrative is designed simply to show that the possession of wealth, and all the blessings of this life, could not exempt from death and misery, and that the lowest condition among mortals may be connected with life and happiness beyond the grave. There was no provision made for the helpless poor in those days, and consequently they were often laid at the gates of the rich, and in places of public resort, for charity” (Barnes’ Notes, www.biblehub.com).

22And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

“ **Was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.**—Of the three terms in [common](http://d.7769domain.com/r/rd.html#http%3A%2F%2F7769domain.com%2FAd%2FGoIEx2%2F%3Ftoken%3DVGsvTlZGbFg3VzVXV2c2SlFERWhpQmtnWnIwY2V6RVhGMGlhWEptQ1ByMENoMWpZLzNIZURUNzZwTDFyeWN2MnF3RWdWbSttTHpqNkowVitoNVpSQW9lcHMxUWlHZXZHc3ZRWHlmUWN3a2JScWJ3NHRQZWtvOWRyaGZVUWJJZXZNMVF1dytmcWowSEwrOWorZGtFL2dx) use among the Jews to express the future state of blessedness—(1) the Garden of Eden, or Paradise; (2) the Throne of Glory; (3) the bosom of Abraham—this was the most widely popular. It rested on the idea of a great feast, in which Abraham was the host. To lie in his bosom, as St. John in that of our Lord’s ([John 13:23](http://biblehub.com/john/13-23.htm)), was to be there as the most favored guest.”

“**The rich man also died, and was buried.**—As no mention is made of the burial of the beggar, it is obvious that there is something specially distinctive in the word. It had been, we may imagine, a stately burial, with hired mourners and all the pageantry of woe. such as within a few weeks, or even days, was to be the portion of the historic Lazarus of Bethany.” (Ellicott’s Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

23And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

“**In torments.**—The Greek word was applied originally to the [test](http://d.7769domain.com/r/rd.html#http%3A%2F%2F7769domain.com%2FAd%2FGoIEx2%2F%3Ftoken%3DKzNMUmhuZlFIWDI1QWN2SENER29lL1hjVlk0WW14ekk3UkVsMnhheHJBYUk3amVDTEtoSXNJZkJ1Uk8zaUpKTjZhNGZUcFZOa25MODVxNU9nNEtsa1RvaU90Q25SR0M5Tm1tVzZGVkV2cGZhWVo1NDFhNFdJMXkxQy9TWml5Y3FOdG8zYzgzTWQ2a29LUXNRM3BhWm5B)or touchstone of metals, then to the torture to which men had recourse as the one sure test of the veracity of witnesses, than to torments generally. The nature of the “torments” here is suggested by the “flame” of the next verse, but that word has to be taken with all its symbolic associations, and does not necessarily imply the material element of fire. What is meant is that there shall be for the soul of the evil-doer, when brought face to face with that holiness of God which is as a consuming fire an anguish as intolerable as the touch of earthly flame is to the nerves of the mortal body” (Ellicott’s Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

24And 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.

“Send Lazarus - This shows how low he was reduced, and how the circumstances of people change when they die. Just before, Lazarus was laid at his gate full of sores; now he is happy in heaven. Just before, he had nothing to give, and the rich man could expect to derive no benefit from him; now he asks, as the highest favor, that he might come and render him relief. Soon the poorest man on earth, if he is a friend of God, will have mercies which the rich, if unprepared to die, can never obtain. The rich will no longer despise such people; they would "then" be glad of their friendship, and would beg for the slightest favor at their hands.

“Dip the tip ... - This was a small favor to ask, and it shows the greatness of his distress when so small a thing would be considered a great relief.

“Cool my tongue - The effect of great "heat" on the body is to produce almost insupportable thirst.

“I am tormented - I am in anguish - in insupportable distress.” (Barnes’ Notes, www.biblehub.com).

25But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

“Abraham here simply bids the tortured man to call to his memory the circumstances of the life he had lived on earth, telling him that in these circumstances he would find the reason for his present woeful state. It was no startling record of vice and crime, or even of folly, that the father of the faithful calls attention to. He quietly recalls to the rich man's memory that on earth he had lived a life of princely splendor and luxury, and that Lazarus, sick and utterly destitute, lay at his palace gate, and was allowed to lie there unpitied and unhelped. And because of the studied moderation of its language, and the everyday character of its hero Dives - for he, the rich man, not Lazarus, is the real hero, the central character of the great parable-lesson - the lesson of the parable goes home necessarily to many more hearts than it would have done had the hero been a monster of wickedness, a cold calculating or else a plausible villain, a man who shrank not from sacrificing the lives and happiness of his fellow-men if their lives or happiness stood in his way. Dives was merely a commonplace wealthy man of the world, with self-centred alms, and the sin for which he was condemned to outer darkness was only that everyday sin of neglecting out of the mammon of unrighteousness - in other words, out of his money - to make for himself friends who should receive him into the eternal tents” (Pulpit Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

26And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence.

“A great gulf - The word translated "gulf" means chasm, or the broad, yawning space between two elevated objects. In this place it means that there is no way of passing from one to the other.

“Fixed - Strengthened - made firm or immovable. It is so established that it will never be movable or passable. It will forever divide heaven and hell.”

“The simple meaning of the statement is, that there can be no communication between the one and the other - there can be no passing from one to the other. It is impossible to conceive that the righteous would desire to leave their abodes in glory to go and dwell in the world of woe; nor can we suppose that they would wish to go for any reason unless it were possible to furnish relief. That will be out of the question” (Barnes Notes, www.biblehub.com).