

Lazarus & the Rich Man

Where Are They?

Do you have an immortal soul? Is Lazarus in heaven this very moment waiting for you? Millions claim that you do and he is! Can you prove it from your Bible?

Millions of people turn to Luke 16, the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, to substantiate their belief that we have an immortal soul and that Lazarus is in heaven right now waiting for our arrival...unless, of course, you go to “the other place” where the rich man is.

Is it true? Can you prove it from your own Bible? We should have a *Bible* reason for everything we believe, and take no man’s word for it, nor any church organization’s word for it—no matter *how* sincere and trusted they may be—until we have proven it for ourselves out of our own Bibles. Why is this? Are we to be paranoid and doubt everything we were taught? Could we be mistaken in some of our cherished beliefs? Just because a man or an organization is considered “holy” and sincere, does that make them *right*? Friends, you need to blow the dust off your Bible and check these things out for yourself. If you are correct, you have nothing to fear—but what if you are mistaken?

Prove All Things

The Bible itself admonishes us to “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). The implication here is that if something is *not* good—if you have been misled into believing a false doctrine—do *not* hold on to it. Cast it *away* in favor of sound biblical truth. Jesus Christ Himself warned repeatedly, “Take heed lest any man *deceive* you” (Matthew 24:4; Mark 13:5). We are warned in Jude 3–4: “[E]arnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This brings up the question, “Why would anyone want to deceive *me*?” Glad you asked. Turn over to Matthew 24:11 and read Christ’s own answer: “And many false prophets shall rise, and shall *deceive* many.” He goes on to say in verse 24, “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall *deceive* the very elect.” The apostle Paul warns, “Let no man *deceive* you by any means” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). The apostle John warns likewise, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). The apostle Peter said the same thing in different words: “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as *there shall be false teachers among you*, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1). We are cautioned in 2 Corinthians 11:14–15: “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if *his ministers* [yes, Satan has ministers!] also be transformed *as* the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.” First John 4:1 warns, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but *try the spirits* whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” Second John 10 goes so far as to warn, “If there come *any* unto you, and bring not *this doctrine*, receive him *not* into your house [i.e., do not allow him into your *mind*, either in person or by media, such as TV, radio, or the printed word], neither bid him God speed!” In other words, we do not even need to be “nice” to false ministers! Strong words, these! With all these warnings, why do we not *heed* them? Back in the book of Revelation, the church at Ephesus was commended for trying or testing certain teachers. “I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast *tried* them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them *liars*” (Revelation 2:2–3).

How does one “try” Bible teachers? By comparing what they say with what the Bible says! Let no one intimidate or lay a “guilt trip” on *you* for doing what the Bible says! We *are* to make evaluations, judgments, and determinations of those things we are being taught. “Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?” (1 Corinthians 6:3). “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?” (1 Corinthians 6:2). Those who hide behind the passage, “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matthew 7:1), may be trying to justify their own personal preferences, opinions, and prejudices, rather than having them exposed to the clear light of the Scriptures. Paul said, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed!” (Galatians 1:8).

But what about this matter of Lazarus and the rich man? Could some be deceived into believing this account is saying something it does not say? Let us see what it plainly says...and does *not* say.

Lazarus and the Rich Man

The story of Lazarus and the rich man is found in Luke 16:19–31. For your convenience, here it is in its entirety:

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And 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; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And 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.” But 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. And 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.” Then he said, “I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.” Abraham saith unto him, “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.” And he said, “Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.” And he said unto him, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

A Parable or a Historic Event?

Many take hold upon this parable in Luke 16:19–31, claiming that it proves that we have an immortal soul that either goes up to heaven or down to hell immediately upon our death. But does it? Does it *really*? Or could some well-meaning but misinformed person be reading preconceived ideas *into* the text?

Some claim that the account of Lazarus and the rich man is not a parable at all, but an actual account of happenings then and there. Remember all the cautions stated above about deception. Know this: a *text* without a *context* is only a *pretext*. “Let God be true, but every man a liar” (Romans 3:4). Let us look more closely into this account...and believe your own Bible.

First, contextually, to *whom* was Jesus Christ speaking when He related this account of Lazarus and the rich man? If you have a red-letter Bible that displays the first-person sayings of Jesus in red, you will see that this account is one of a series of many parables given in a single hearing. Tracing it back to chapter fifteen, verse one, we read, “Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him.” Notice, *all the publicans and sinner were there*. Now moving on to Luke 16:1, we read, “And He said *also* unto His disciples....” The disciples were there *also*, among the others. Let us move on to verse 14: “And *the Pharisees also*, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.” So we see that in His hearing were all the publicans, sinners, Pharisees, and His disciples, all together in a sizable group. Now turn quickly to Matthew 13:34: “All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude *in parables*; and without a parable spake He *not* unto them” Did you catch that? Christ did not speak to the

public *except in parables*. This was done so that the sense and the very words of Psalm 78:2–3 might be fulfilled concerning Christ. See Christ’s own answer as to why He spoke in parables in Matthew 13:10–15. Beginning in verse 13, Christ says to His inner circle of disciples, “Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see *not*; and hearing they hear *not*, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall *not* understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall *not* perceive.” Why? “For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes *they* have closed; *lest* at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them” (Matthew 13:14–15). Here is another biblical statement that is diametrically the opposite of what most people have been taught! In other words, Christ deliberately clouded the meanings of the parables He gave to the public. The carnal-minded Pharisees, publicans, and sinners in His audience were not privileged to understand. Only His chosen, personal disciples received the later, fuller explanations of His parables. And yet many have been told that He spoke in parables to make the meaning clearer to all!

So we have established by your very own Bible that the account of Lazarus and the rich man *must* be a parable!

What *is* a parable? A parable is an allegory, a short narrative making a moral or religious point by comparing it with natural things or a situation at hand. A parable is a story that illustrates a lesson. It is made to make one understand one thing by comparing it with another of the same nature. Simply put, it is a story with a moral pointing to a truth. It is a rule of Bible study that one should take the Bible literally where it is at all possible. If symbolic, figurative, or typical language is used—as in the case of parables—then look for the literal truth it intends to convey. (Be sure to send for our FREE booklet, *How to Study Your Bible*.)

What, then, is the truth the illustration of Lazarus and the rich man is trying to convey? Is it that man has an immortal soul that goes either to heaven or hell at death? Or is there a much deeper meaning? Let us not read our own ideas INTO the parable. We need to be honest with the Scriptures.

The Pharisees often ridiculed and made jest of Christ’s warnings against greed, hard-heartedness, and worldliness. The name “Lazarus” was a very common name and doubtless many of the hearers of this story supplied the name of the rich man in their own minds. Seeing that the Pharisees were present in the group He was speaking to, Jesus addressed a notable example of one of the traditions they had inherited originally from Babylon: the immortality of the soul.

Josephus provides the following information regarding the then-current view of the Pharisees in this regard: “They [the Pharisees] believe that the souls have the power to survive death and that there are rewards and punishments under the earth for those who have led lives of virtue or vice: eternal imprisonment is the lot of evil souls, while the good souls receive easy passage to a new life” (*Jewish Antiquities*, XVIII, 14, [i, 3]).

This tradition was diametrically contrary to what God’s Word says as to the state of the dead. Jesus told the story of a “certain rich man”—the same terminology He used in verse 1 of the same chapter—who lived a lavish lifestyle. His name is not given. “Dives,” sometimes said to be his name, is simply the Latin word for “rich man.” There was also a certain beggar named Lazarus who lay at his gate, desiring to be fed even the crumbs that fell from the rich man’s table. Lazarus, a common Talmudic name from the Hebrew name Eleazar, was in such a deplorable state that the dogs that also gathered around the gate licked his sores. It is apparent that the rich man had no compassion upon him. It is stated that the beggar finally died and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom (Luke 16:22).

Was Lazarus Taken to Heaven?

Many claim that when the beggar died and was carried by the angels into *Abraham’s bosom*, it means he was taken immediately to heaven at death. What does this expression mean? What *is* a “bosom”? The dictionary definition of a bosom is the human chest, or breast, considered as an enclosure in embracing. This is a place comparable to that occupied by a person in ancient times when he

reclined in front of another on the same couch during a meal. It is figurative language for heart-felt emotions of togetherness or endearment. But where is Abraham *now*? In heaven? Or in the grave awaiting a resurrection? In Hebrews 11, often called the faith chapter, we see Abraham's name mentioned amongst many others (Hebrews 11:8). But we are told in verse 13, "*These all died in faith, NOT having received the promises.*" Again, for double emphasis, verse 39 repeats, "*And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received NOT the promise.*" Why? "God having provided some better thing for us, that they *without us* should not be made perfect" (Hebrews 11:40). This is telling us that those who died in faith before us will not inherit the promises until we join them in the resurrection at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The Greek word *anastasis* literally means a "rising, or standing up." Those who are resurrected will arise once again, from the dead.

There was nothing in the Greek culture to lead the new converts to believe in the resurrection (Acts 23:8). As a whole, they believed in the immortality of the soul, not the resurrection of the dead. Christ, in this parable, dispelled this notion.

Here is another astounding "Bible opposite" of what is commonly taught in contemporary "churchianity"! Millions, even today, firmly believe that the dead go immediately up to heaven or down to an ever-burning hell, and yet your Bible claims they remain in their graves until they are resurrected—made alive once again—by Jesus Christ. There will be a resurrection of the righteous dead at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and then another at the end of the Millennium, 1,000 years later (compare 1 Corinthians 15:23 with Revelation 20:5).

John 3:16 is the most quoted and memorized verse in the entire Bible, and yet three verses earlier, in verse 13, is a first-person quotation from Jesus Christ Himself as to the state of the dead. "And *NO man,*" says Jesus Christ, "hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13). How did Jesus know? Why, He just came down from there!

And what of David, a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22)? Surely David is in heaven, isn't he? No, "For David is *not* ascended into the heavens" (Acts 2:34). In verse 29 we read, "David...is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day." The resurrected David will reign and rule in the soon-coming Kingdom of God, but he is not in heaven now (see Ezekiel 34:23; 37:24–25).

But, many will ask, what of man's immortal soul? Since the Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35)—since the Bible does not contradict itself—how do these scriptures fit with the doctrine of the immortality of the soul? Let the Scriptures speak!

Does Man Have an "Immortal Soul"?

Once again, let us turn to the Scriptures—the only source of truth in these matters. Turn to 1 Timothy 6:16 and read what your *Bible*—not men—says about immortality. Speaking of God Himself, we read, "Who *only* [alone] hath immortality...." Read that again! *Who* alone has immortality? Men? No! *GOD alone* has immortality! Reading on, the verse continues, "dwelling in the light *which no man can approach unto*; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen."

We read in Genesis 2:7 that "the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man *became* a living soul." Notice what this verse does *not* say. It does not say man *had* a living soul or that a soul was imparted to him. It says man *became* a living soul. That's what man *is*! The Hebrew word rendered "soul" here is *nephesh* and means, properly, a living, breathing creature. The same Hebrew word, *nephesh*, is translated in Genesis as "creature" (Genesis 1:21, 24; 2:19; 9:10, 12). In other words, man has the same self-conscious life as the animals.

Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived next to Christ, stated in Ecclesiastes 3:19, "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: *as the one dieth, so dieth the other*; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath *no* preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." And then he asks, "*Who knoweth* the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth

downward to the earth?” The obvious answer is: *no* one. Men only assume it. Your Bible goes on to say, “For the living know that they shall die: *but the dead know not any thing*” (Ecclesiastes 9:5); and confirms, “[F]or there is *no* work, *nor* device, *nor* knowledge, *nor* wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest” (verse 10).

What Is Death?

Death, to most, is a mystery. To some it is the cessation of life. Others believe it is the beginning of eternity. Some insist that only the fleshly body of man dies, but his immortal soul wafts up to heaven. But where is the Bible *proof* for such beliefs? Let us investigate what the Bible plainly *says*. The Bible is very clear as to what death is if we take it for what it consistently says and don't cloud it with the ideas and traditions of men. Death may be defined in at least five different ways.

Death is a return

“In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till *thou [the whole, conscious man] return* unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and *unto dust shalt thou return*” (Genesis 3:19).

“All flesh shall perish together, *and man shall turn again unto dust*” (Job 34:15). Notice it is the *man*, not part of the man, who returns to the dust.

“Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled: Thou takest away their breath, they die, *and return to their dust*” (Psalm 104:29).

“For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; *all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again*” (Ecclesiastes 3:19–20).

Death is the opposite of life

Death is the opposite of life, not the continuance of life in some other form or place.

“In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, ‘Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; *for thou shalt die, and not live*’” (2 Kings 20:1).

“But thus do unto them, that they may live, and not die...” (Numbers 4:19).

“*But the rest of the dead lived not again* until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection” (Revelation 20:5).

Death is the cessation of all thoughts and bodily functions

“For in death there is *no* remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?” (Psalm 6:5).

“The dead praise *not* the LORD, neither any that go down into silence” (Psalm 115:17).

“His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; *in that very day his thoughts perish*” (Psalm 146:4).

“For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth” (Isaiah 38:18).

Death is a sleep

“Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep *the sleep of death*” (Psalm 13:3).

“And many of *them that sleep in the dust of the earth* shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2).

“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” (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

Death is an enemy

“*The last enemy* that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:26).

“Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that *perish*” (Psalm 49:12).

“What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah” (Psalm 89:48).

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Corinthians 15:55).

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

With these things firmly entrenched in mind, we see clearly that according to your Bible, Lazarus and the rich man do *not* have immortal souls, nor are they now in heaven. Let us now go on to Christ’s parable of Lazarus and the rich man to see what He had in mind.

From the foregoing, we see that Lazarus and the rich man both died and were buried (Luke 16:23). Then, in verse 22, we read that Lazarus the beggar was carried by the angels into “Abraham’s bosom.” *When* do the angels come down from heaven and carry off those who are resurrected? Turn to Matthew 24:31: “And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Read the entire context, beginning with verse 29: “Immediately *after the tribulation* of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And *then* shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, *and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a *trumpet*, and they shall gather *together His elect* from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” There! Did you catch it? The angels gather God’s elect AT THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST, not a minute sooner! Then, at that time, Lazarus will embrace righteous Abraham who will be resurrected at that same time.

The Rich Man’s Fate

Thus far, we have seen that the story of Lazarus and the rich man is a parable, and that they both died and will remain dead until they are resurrected sometime in the future. This parable shows that some, the righteous—and Lazarus was obviously counted as one of the righteous in this parable—will be in the Kingdom of God. Now let us see what happened to the rich man...and when.

Jesus said of the rich man, “The rich man also died, *and was buried*.” Jesus does *not* say that only the rich man’s body died while his immortal soul was taken immediately down to an ever-burning hell. He said, simply, “The rich man also died, and was buried.” To be buried means to be placed in the earth and covered with dirt. It never refers to the imaginary torturous hellfire depicted by Dante Alighieri and adopted by the Catholic Church, and later by most Protestants.

But then, according to Jesus’ parable, what happened? Let us read this account carefully so that we do not read into the account what is not there. We see in verse 22, “And in hell....”

Stop right there! *Where* was the rich man? “In hell,” it says. *Where* was that hell and what *kind* of hell was it? There are three Greek words translated “hell” in your Bible. The “hell” used here—where the rich man found himself—is translated from the Greek word *hades*, and is the equivalent of the Hebrew Old Testament word *sheol*. These words have the same meaning: the grave, or pit. The other common word translated “hell” is *gehenna*, meaning “the Valley of Hinnom,” which was another name for the city garbage dump of ancient Jerusalem—a type of the lake of fire that will be the agent for the destruction of the incorrigibly wicked. The third word translated “hell,” *tartaroo*, is used only once in the entire Bible, in 2 Peter 2:4, and means a condition of restraint for fallen angels or demons. The meanings of these three different Greek words have been confused because the one English word “hell” covers all three meanings. (For a more detailed study of “hell,” see the appendix at the end of this booklet. Also, be sure to send for our FREE booklet, *Hell, You Say?*)

“And in hell he lifted up his eyes....” Stop again! *When* do dead men lift up their eyes? Why, in a resurrection, of course, as we have seen above. So the rich man was in the pit, or grave, and, being brought back to physical life, he lifted up his eyes...and what he saw *terrified* him! He saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus safe in his bosom, or embrace, and realized that *he* was not. Jesus had warned that there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth “when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves

thrust out” (Luke 13:28). This is that time. He also saw, off in the distance, a wall of flame coming his way. This was the *gehenna* fire that shall devour the wicked. He knew his doom was sealed. We read in Malachi 4, “For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.”

Continuing in Luke 16:23, that seeing this, the rich man was “in torments.” Who wouldn’t be? He was facing divine execution! The Greek word for “torments” here is *odunao*, meaning to grieve, pain, sorrow, or distress. He was suffering mental anguish. Have you ever been badly frightened or terrified? If you have, you have probably found that your mouth is suddenly dry and parched, your tongue cleaving to the roof of your mouth. Seeing his doom, the rich man cries out for mercy when he sees Lazarus, someone he recognized, and asks that he might so much as dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue. This is a request comparable in the parable to when Lazarus desired to be fed with the crumbs off his table (Luke 16:21). If he had been already burning, he would have called for bucketsful of water to douse his entire body!

“But 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’” (Luke 16:25).

“And beside all this,” Abraham went on, “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.” What *was* this “great gulf”? Nothing less than *immortality*! Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the saints were now immortal—having been in the first resurrection at Christ’s Second Coming—and the rich man was later raised as he was: mortal, subject to death. And that flame was getting closer!

In desperation—perhaps a ploy to show that he was indeed merciful—the rich man cried out, “I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment” (Luke 16:27).

The rich man, having been dead, had no idea how much time had passed—thousands of years. We read in Psalm 146:4 that when a man dies “his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; *in that very day his thoughts perish.*”

But Abraham answered, “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them” (Luke 16:29). Moses and the prophets also pointed the way to salvation.

And the rich man said, “Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent” (Luke 16:30). Not realizing the passage of time and that his family was now long since dead, he obviously thought that if Lazarus—the poor beggar whom they *knew* had died—returned from the grave to warn them of their wicked ways—then they would repent and be spared the same death penalty that was awaiting him.

And Abraham answered, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luke 16:31). Memorable words! Christ rose from the grave, yet how many believe His words today?

More Than One Resurrection!

Acts 24:15 tells us “that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”

In John 5:25, Jesus warns, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when *the dead* [not those living in heaven or hell] shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear *shall live*. For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which *all that are in the graves* shall hear His voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, *unto the resurrection of life*; and they that have done evil, *unto the resurrection of damnation.*”

First Corinthians 15 is often referred to as the “Resurrection Chapter” because it gives more information about the resurrection in one place than any other chapter in the Bible. Turn to it in your own Bible and read the entire chapter. Notice in verses 22 and 23, where it says, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the

firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's *at His coming*." Christ— not Abraham, not Lazarus or the rich man—was the first to be resurrected to spirit life—an immortal God being composed not of flesh, but of spirit. Afterwards those who have been true Christians down through history—those who have followed and are following God's Holy Spirit (Acts 5:32; Romans 8:9)—will be resurrected from death to spirit life at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. But when?

"But every man *in his own order*" (verse 23). Notice that *not* everyone is resurrected at the same time, but in a preselected order. Why is this? Because there are three categories of resurrected beings.

The first group consists of those *who knew the truth and obeyed*. These are the true Christians down through history and up to the Second Coming of Christ who remained true and faithful and endured to the end (Matthew 24:13). These will be resurrected to life as spirit-composed beings at the Second Coming of Christ. These will reign and rule with Christ as kings and priests (Revelation 5:10) during the Millennium—that one-thousand-year period of time between the first and second resurrections. This is called the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4–6).

There is a much larger group who never knew the truth, and consequently, did not and *could not obey*. These were never converted and have *not* committed the unpardonable sin of rejecting God's way of life. This will include the vast majority of mankind who never knew, or even heard of, Jesus Christ, "the only name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). These will be resurrected to physical life at the end of the Millennium and, at that time, be given their *first* opportunity for salvation.

The last group to be resurrected will be those who knew the truth but *would not obey*. These *have* committed the unpardonable sin and will be resurrected to physical life and be burned up in a lake of fire (Malachi 4:1–3). This is called "the second death" (Revelation 20:14–15). This is also called "the resurrection of damnation" in John 5:29. This is the death from which there will be no resurrection. Once burned up, they shall be as though they had never been. "Into smoke shall they consume away" (Psalm 37:20). This is the resurrection in which the rich man "lifted up his eyes." (Be sure to send for our FREE booklet, *What Is the Unpardonable Sin?* for further clarification on this subject.)

What Is the Real Lesson?

Finally, what is the real lesson—what was Jesus trying to convey by the parable of Lazarus and the rich man? What is the lesson for us *today*?

The context and the wording of this illustration by Jesus Christ show clearly that it is a parable and not an actual historical event. Poverty is not being praised; nor are riches being condemned. Rather, mercy, commiseration, and benevolence are being extolled. The principle is this: "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink" (Proverbs 25:21; Romans 12:20). The parable illustrates that the scribes and Pharisees had corrupted the law, not only in the commandment of loving our enemies, but even that of loving our brethren. This was not a new, but an old commandment. The lesson is, when you are in your comfort zone, take heed. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). The parable illustrates the warning given earlier: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out" (Luke 13:28). The example here teaches the value of good works, final rewards, and a reversal in the spiritual status, or condition, of those who fall into the categories represented by Lazarus and the rich man.

The disclosure that the rich man's brothers rejected Moses and the prophets also shows the illustration has a much deeper meaning and purpose than that of contrasting poverty and the possession of riches. Timothy was told, in 2 Timothy 3:15, "And that *from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures*, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." *What Scriptures* had Timothy known from a child? Why, the part of the Bible we call today "the Old Testament"! The New Testament had not even been written yet! And the Scriptures he knew were able to do *what*? To make him wise unto salvation!

Christ came magnifying the law (Isaiah 42:1) and preaching the gospel of the

Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14). He was showing that salvation—the resurrection into the Kingdom of God on this earth—is a *free gift* of God. We cannot “earn” it. But once we are saved—or converted by a metabolic change into a spirit being—we are rewarded according to our works (Matthew 16:27; Revelation 2:23).

Jesus here teaches us that if one refuses to hear Moses and the prophets—the Old Testament as well as the New—we are in imminent spiritual danger. The Scriptures—the *entire* Bible, not just part of it—are able to make us wise unto salvation (2 Timothy 3:15).

Those who teach that God’s Ten Commandments are “done away” or “nailed to the cross” are teaching a false gospel. These are false ministers who are out to deceive you. Those who would have you believe the false doctrine of the immortality of the soul, reincarnation, of flitting off to heaven at death, or plunging down to the depths of a fiery hell are not God’s ministers, but Satan’s (2 Corinthians 11:13–15). Again, we are warned to “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Some may reason that they do not fall into the category of either Lazarus or the rich man. “I try to lead a good, moral life. I believe in God. What more can I do?” Let us get down to the crux of the matter: Do Christians sin? Again, let the Bible answer: “If *we* say that *we* have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us” (1 John 1:8–10). (Be sure to send for our FREE booklet, *What is a Real Christian?* which explains this matter in depth.)

James, the Lord’s half-brother, tells us, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in *one point*, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). Christ warned, “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matthew 5:18). This is *New Testament* teaching!

The difference between the heart, attitude, and behavior of Lazarus and that of the rich man is a matter of *repentance*. Repentance is not just “giving your heart to the Lord,” as some allege. There are those who redefine sin as “anything that displeases God” and leave it up to the individual to determine in his own conscience what sin is. But the Bible definition of sin is not vague at all. “Sin is”—here is the *Bible definition*, not man’s—“the transgression [*breaking*] of the law” (1 John 3:4). One cannot transgress a law that does not exist. The *wages* of sin—what you *earn* by sinning, or breaking God’s law—is DEATH (Romans 6:23) for all eternity, not eternal life in another place or condition. To repent means to feel such sorrow and regret for one’s sins as to reform—turn around and go the other way, away from sin and disobedience to God and towards obedience. Repentance is the acknowledgment of one’s own guilt and sinfulness and an appreciation of God’s mercy through Christ to the point of actual *hatred* of sin (Psalm 119:128; Job 42:5–6; 2 Corinthians 7:10). This is not difficult to understand! Repentance means a change of mind and attitude, turning from self and sin to God. It is a persistent effort to walk a holy walk with God in the way of His commandments.

Upon heartfelt repentance and baptism one receives God’s Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Thereupon, the selfless sacrifice of Jesus Christ is applied to the repentant sinner and he is washed clean of his sins. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18). Hebrews 10:17 says simply, “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” (Send for our FREE booklet, *Ten Facts You Should Know About Repentance*.)

In conclusion: where are Lazarus and the rich man? In heaven or in hell? No, they are in their graves awaiting a resurrection, along with all—sinners and saints alike—who have died.

Study your Bible—the *entire* Bible. Let no man deceive you. Send for the FREE literature listed at the end of this booklet. Prove all things. Hold fast that which is good.

And most of all, pray and take heed that you may share the eternal reward of Lazarus...and escape the punishment of the rich man.

APPENDIX:

APPENDIX 131, REPRINTED FROM E. W. BULLINGER'S *COMPANION BIBLE*

THE SYNONYMOUS WORDS FOR "HELL," ETC.

"Hell" is the English rendering of two different Greek words in the N.T.

The English word is from the Anglo-Saxon *hel*, Genitive Case *helle* = a hidden place, from the Anglo-Saxon *helan* = to hide.

It is in the N.T. used as the translation of two Greek words:

I. Gehenna. – Gr. *geenna*. This is the transliteration of the Heb. *Gai' Hinnom*, i.e. the Valley of Hinnom or "the Valley" of [the sons of] Hinnom, where were the *fires* through which children were passed in the worship of Moloch.

In the O.T. Tophet was the Heb. word used, because it was a place in this valley.

In our Lord's day the idolatry had ceased, but the *fires* were still continually burning there for the destruction of the refuse of Jerusalem. Hence, *geenna* was used for the fires of destruction associated with the judgment of God. Sometimes, "*geenna* of fire." See 2 Kings 23.10. Isa. 30.33. Jer. 7.31, 32; 19.11–14.

Geenna occurs 12 times, and is always rendered "hell," viz. Matt. 5.22, 29, 30; 10.28; 18.9; 23.15, 33. Mark 9. 43, 45, 47. Luke 12. 5. Jas. 3.6.

II. Hades. – Gr. *hades*. from a (privative) and *idein*, to see (Ap. 133. I. i); used by the Greeks for *the unseen world*.

The meaning which the Greeks put upon it does not concern us; nor have we anything to do with the imaginations of the heathen, or the traditions of Jews or Romanists, or the teachings of demons or evil spirits, or of any who still cling to them.

The Holy Spirit has used it as one of the "words pertaining to the earth," and in so doing has "purified" it, "as silver tried in furnace" (see notes on Ps. 12.6). From this we learn that His own words "are pure," but words belonging to this earth have to be "purified."

The Old Testament is the fountain-head of the Hebrew language. It has no literature behind it. But the case is entirely different with the Greek language. The Hebrew *Sheol* is a word Divine in its origin and usage. The Greek *Hades* is human in its origin and comes down to us laden with centuries of development, in which it has acquired new senses, meanings, and usages.

Seeing that the Holy Spirit has used it in Acts 2.27, 31 as His own equivalent of *Sheol* in Psalm 16.10, He has settled, once for all, the sense in which we are to understand it. The meaning He has given to *Sheol* in Ps. 16.10 is the one meaning we are to give it wherever it occurs in the N.T, whether we transliterate it or translate it. We have no liberty to do otherwise, and must discard everything outside the Word of God.

The word occurs eleven times (Matt. 11.23; 16.18. Luke 10.15; 16.23. Acts 2.27, 31. 1 Cor. 15.55. Rev. 1.18; 6.8; 20.13, 14); and is rendered "hell" in every passage except one, where it is rendered "grave" (1 Cor. 15.55, marg. "hell").

In the R.V. the word is always transliterated "Hades," except in 1 Cor. 15.55 (where "death" is substituted because of the reading, in all the texts, of *thanate* for *hade*), and in the American R.V. also.

As *Hades* is the Divine Scriptural equivalent of *Sheol*, further light may be gained from Ap. 35, and a reference to the 65 passages there given. It may be well to note that while "Hades" is rendered "hell" in the N.T. (except once, where the rendering "the grave" could not be avoided), *Sheol*, its Hebrew equivalent, occurs 65 times, and is rendered "the grave" 31 times (or 54 percent); "hell" 31 times (4 times with margin "the grave," reducing it to 41.5 percent); and "pit" only 3 times (or 4.5 percent).

"The grave," therefore, is obviously the best rendering, meaning *the state of death* (Germ. *sterbend*, for which we have no English equivalent); not the *act* of dying, as an examination of all the occurrences of both words will show.

1. The rendering "pit" so evidently means "the grave" that it may at once be

substituted for it (Num. 16.30, 33. Job 17.16).

2. The rendering “the grave” (not “a grave,” which is Hebrew *keber*; or *bor*) exactly expresses the meaning of both *Sheol* and *Hades*. For, as to direction, it is always down: as to place, it is in the earth: as to *relation*, it is always in contrast with the state of the living (Deut. 32.22–25 and 1 Sam. 2.6–8); as to *association*, it is connected with mourning (Gen. 37.34, 35), sorrow Gen. 42.38. 2 Sam. 22.6. Ps. 18.5; 116.3), fright and terror (Num. 16.27, 34), mourning (Isa. 38.3, 10, 17, 18), silence (Ps. 6.5; 31.17. Ecc. 9.10), no knowledge (Ecc. 9.5, 6, 10), punishment (Num. 16.29, 34. 1 Kings 2.6, 9. Job 24.19. Ps. 9.17 (R.V. = *re-*turned)), corruption (Ps. 16.10. Acts 2.27, 31); as to duration, resurrection is the only exit from it (Ps. 16.11. Acts 2.27, 31; 13.33–37. 1 Cor. 15.55. Rev. 1.18; 20.5, 13, 14).

III. Tartaroo (occurs only in 2 Pet. 2.4) = to thrust down to Tartarus, *Tartarus* being a Greek word, not used elsewhere, or at all in the Sept. Homer describes it as subterranean (cp. Deut. 32.22, which may refer to this). The Homeric *Tartarus* is the prison of the Titans, or giants (cp. Heb. *Rephaim*, Ap. 25), who rebelled against *Zeus*.

All Scripture quotations were taken from the King James Version except as noted.

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