

## LAZARUS AND THE RICH MAN: LUKE 16:25-37

### VOCAB WORDS:

1. **Hades:** This is the Greek name of the place for the dead. Some translations will read “hell”, but Hades isn’t the same as Hell. Hades refers to where the soul goes after it leaves the body. When Jesus died, He went to Hades. Hell is specifically the place of torment sinners will go on the judgment day. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, both characters go to Hades. Lazarus goes to a place of comfort, and the rich man goes to a place of torment. They will go to Heaven and Hell when the judgment day comes.

### THE CONTEXT: LK 16:10-17

What was Jesus previously teaching?

Jesus was teaching His disciples that they need to properly handle money and wealth. He tells them that God will judge them on how they use these physical things. He concluded that they cannot serve the master of wealth and God. Jesus warns them to give their heart to God, and not to wealth.

Who is Jesus audience?

The previous parable was directed to the disciples, but now His attention is to the Pharisees.

How do the Pharisees respond? Why do they respond this way?

The Pharisees mock and disrespect Jesus for His teaching. We see that the Pharisees disagree with Jesus because they have already given their heart to wealth. Knowing that this teaching is against them, they scorn Jesus and refuse His words.

What does Jesus say in response?

Jesus accuses the Pharisees of justifying their evil hearts, but God knows that they are evil.

Jesus changes the topic some. What does He begin to discuss?

Jesus begins to focus on the teaching of the Gospel. First He claims that the Prophets and Law (the Old Testament) were being preached till the time of John the Baptist. Now the kingdom of God is being preached. He accuses many of trying to force their way into the kingdom of heaven. If a door is locked, I need the key to get in. If I don’t have a key, I need to force my way in. Then Jesus explains that every word of the Law will stand forever. Jesus is accusing the Pharisees of expecting to get into the kingdom of God without even following the Law.

From here, Jesus will stay on the topic of wealth by teaching a parable about the improper use of it. It tells the story of a man who uses his wealth all to himself. Further, Jesus will stress that we need to accept the Gospel while we have the chance.

### THE PARABLE: LK 16:19-31

Who are the two main characters in this parable? What are their lives like?

There is a rich man who lives a splendid life. He wears expensive gaudy clothing displaying his social status. He spent everyday living in luxury. There is also a poor man named Lazarus. He sat outside the gate of the rich man every day begging for money. He was so hungry that he longed to eat the crumbs that fell off the rich man’s table. He had sores all over his body. This could be why he is so poor. Perhaps he can’t work because of the sores. To make things worse, dogs would come and lick his sores. This just makes the picture even more pathetic. We need to acknowledge that these two men knew each other. Since Lazarus was seated at the rich man’s gate, they would see each other everyday. Yet, the rich man refused to help.

What happened to the two men? Where did they go?

Both men died. Lazarus died and was carried by angels to Abraham's side. This is meant to signify a place of rest and comfort. The rich man died and was buried. He went to a land of torment.

What did the rich man do in Hades?

He looked up and saw Abraham at a distance. He begged Abraham to let Lazarus dip his finger in water and let him drink of the drops. The tables have turned. Lazarus used to long for crumbs of food. Now the rich man longs for drops of water.

What is Abraham's response?

Abraham explains to the rich man that his final destination is the reward of his life. He is in agony because he refused to help the poor man. Abraham goes on to say that there is a great chasm of separation. No one can cross back and forth. This suggests that even if Abraham wanted to grant the rich man's request, he is unable.

What is the rich man's second request?

The rich man begs Abraham to send Lazarus to his brothers. Evidently they are wicked people as well because the rich man suspects that they will be joining him in torment soon. Abraham refuses this request on the basis that his five brothers already have sufficient reason to change in the Law and the Prophets. The rich man continues to implore Abraham saying that Lazarus's resurrection would convince them to change. Abraham calmly responds that even a man's resurrection isn't sufficient to change them if they have refused the Law and Prophets.

#### **THE MORAL: "IF THEY DO NOT LISTEN TO MOSES, THEY WILL NOT BE CONVINCED EVEN IF SOMEONE RISES FROM THE DEAD"**

This is not a moral that is separate from the parable, but it is certainly the focal point. The teaching about a proper use of money is important, but it isn't the focus of Jesus' teaching. He simply used that as an example to get to the point.

- Jesus is teaching the Pharisees that they need to repent while they still can. On top of that, He is telling them that their need for repentance is based on their rejection of The Old Testament.
- Remember earlier, Jesus told them that many were trying to force their way into the kingdom. He was suggesting that they were trying to get into the kingdom without obeying the Law and Prophets. That is why He teaches the parable about an improper use of wealth. That is Jesus' way of accusing them of that sin.
- Most importantly, Jesus is warning them that their rejection of Him as the Messiah is based on their rejection of the scriptures. If they have already decided to reject God's words, not even miracles will change their mind. Ironically (and providentially), later Jesus raises a man named Lazarus from the dead. Instead of this convincing the Pharisees to accept Christ, it convicts them to arrange His murder.

#### **THE APPLICATION:**

1. Jesus was trying to show the Pharisees why they would be condemned for an improper use of wealth. They were rich, and would be judged harshly if they didn't use that wealth to benefit the needy. This is direct connection to the context of the previous parable about how to handle wealth. Jesus would expect the audience to consider how they used their wealth, and resolve to use it in a more Godly fashion. The same rule applies for use today. We live in a land of extreme wealth. Our concept of "rich" and "poor" is heavily skewed. We need to be careful that we are the masters of our wealth. Can we give it up for Godly purposes? Helping others, church

- treasury, etc...? Let us know that we are condemned not only for doing something bad, but also for not doing something good (James 4:17).
2. The Pharisees needed to repent while they had the chance. John the Baptist and Jesus had been preaching repentance for years. The Pharisees were too busy criticizing Jesus to change themselves. If they continued to live that way, they would end up in torment forever. This is clearly still true today. God loves everyone, but there will come a time when there repentance is not going to work. Let us be convicted to change our lives now, and save ourselves from the torment of Hell.
  3. Most importantly, the Pharisees needed to trust that there was sufficient evidence of Jesus' messianic qualities in the Old Testament. Their lack of faith was rooted on their rejection of what the Old Testament was really teaching. Since they already rejected God's plan that was laid out in the Old Testament, it is natural that they would reject Christ. People today reject Christ even though there is sufficient evidence to believe. If people don't believe, it is because of their rejection of God's plan, not a lack of evidence. If we reject God's plan, seeing someone risen from the dead won't change our mind. We need to quit waiting for God to prove Himself, and search how God has already proven Himself.