

THE PARABLES OF JESUS

LESSON 7

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)

Context

1. The religious leaders (the Pharisees) see themselves as pious and pleasing to God. To the Pharisees the outcasts, the downtrodden, the sinners are not pleasing to God. They had sort of a prosperity theology--God blesses the good and curses the bad. Therefore, if you had good health and wealth you would consider yourself approved by God. Conversely the poor and sick must be wretched sinners. What is Jesus' warning to the wealthy in Mark 10:23-25? What was the disciples' reaction to this in Mark 10:26? According to Mark 10:27 how can a rich man be saved (see also Ephesians 2:8-9)?

The problem that provoked the parable

2. Does one's financial standing necessarily reflect his standing with God? Read Luke 16:14-15 and contrast the perspective of these men with that of God concerning money. Notice in v. 14 it is the "love" of money which is condemned (see also I Timothy 6:9-10). Since "God knows your hearts" (v. 15), does your conviction about money reflect the Pharisees' or God's view?

Read Luke 16:19-31

3. What are the evidences that the man was truly rich (v. 19)? By contrast, describe the condition of Lazarus (v. 20-21). This is the only parable where Jesus gives a person a name. Lazarus means "God is my help." What an incredible paradox that he has such a miserable life and yet his name given by Jesus is "God is my help." In the long run, to which of the two was God's help manifested? If you are undergoing a trial, do your present circumstances dictate whether God loves you and will fulfill His promises to bless you in the end (Rom 8:28, 2 Peter 3:13)?

4. In Luke 16:22 how does Jesus describe their deaths to illustrate their different destinies? Jesus uses the term "Hades" as a place of torment and agony (v. 23). Traditionally, this is a picture of hell. According to the parable why did the man end up here? Why did Lazarus end up in a place of comfort?

5. According to v. 26, is there a second chance after death? According to Hebrews 9:27 what has God appointed for every man? According to Romans 8:1, what kind of condemnation awaits believers in Christ?

6. The parable makes it certain that status in this life has nothing to do with one's eternal destiny. Those who are in comfort now may be in great discomfort later. What does Luke 6:24-26 warn against? According to Galatians 3:26-28, I John 5:11-13 what is the one thing that you must have to secure your eternal destiny?

7. The rich man in the parable believes if he had had more evidence presented to him he would not have ended up in Hades (v. 27-28). How did Abraham respond to this excuse (v. 29)?

8. Based upon Abraham's response in v. 29, 31, what are we all responsible to study and believe (Matthew 4:4, 2 Timothy 2:15, I Peter 2:2, John 17:17, John 8:31-32)? If we neglect this responsibility, as the rich man and his family did, will any excuses be accepted?

9. Notice in v 30 this man condemned in Hades still has the gall to correct the patriarch Abraham. What does he say? How did Jesus Himself demonstrate that it is not a matter of evidence or miracles that ultimately brings a person to believe (Matt. 28:11-15, I Cor. 15:3-6)?

10. The point of this parable is that your current physical material condition gives no evidence of your future eternal destiny. The Pharisees thought that present blessings indicated future blessings, but Jesus was teaching that future blessings depended on our response to the Word of God. Instead of "loving" money will you respond to the teaching of Christ in the Word of God? It is not wealth that excludes from heaven, but unbelief. Abraham refuses the request because it is futile, miracles don't change hard hearts. In Numbers 14:11, what question did God ask (John 11:45-53, 12:10-11; Acts 4:16-17)?