

# §184. Lazarus and the Rich Man - Life After Death

*Luke 16:16–17:3a*

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## Introduction

1. Some think this is not a parable because the name of Lazarus is mentioned. However, compare with parable of good Samaritan where Jerusalem and Jericho is explicitly mentioned. Further, observe that the the connection between the two previous parables.
2. Pharisees derided Jesus because of his previous two parables about riches. Here the Lord is making his allegation more strong by demolition their theory of richness is a sign of blessing/
3. This parable is against Pharisees who neglect the will of God by disregarding the poor.
4. Where is the Justice of God? One had all he wanted and the other had nothing! People of the world seeing only one side of the reality and conclude: "If God is good, why there is so much suffering? Therefore, there is no God".
5. This parable is also not teaching against riches: for Abraham himself was very rich.

## Exposition

**16:19.** “There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.

1. **Purple:** Very expensive dress imported from Asia. Shows pomp and extravaganza.
2. **Fine linen:** Very expensive under garments imported from Egypt. Shows his comfortable life.

3. Fared **euphrainomenos** sumptuously every day: Daily luxurious lifestyle of this person. The same Greek word is used in Luke 12:19. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry" Luke 15:23. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry Luke 15:32. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother . . . lost and is found
4. Name of the rich man: Not worth even mention it. Note that this person has not done any great crime: the only crime he did is he lived for himself. Contrast the shrewd steward whose plan benefited the Master, the debtors, and lastly to himself.

**16:20. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate,**

1. Beggar: Not because of laziness, but because of not able to work. He was laid implies someone put him there.
2. Lazarus: The name means **Eleazar** meaning, God is my help. The name seems to be a joke. The rich man and the Pharisees might have laughed at him.
3. Gate: Not a normal gate; but the gate of a mansion.

**16:21. desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.**

1. Desiring: Intense hunger. Might be impossible to have him to see the dining table. Must refer to garbage coming from his mansion.
2. Dogs: The only creature shown compassion to him and comforted him. It also shows his pathetic state.

**16:22. 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.**

1. Died: Common for both rich man and Lazarus. But there is interesting contrast.

2. **Beggar died:** No mention of burial. Most likely no great burial. The treatment on the left side; but great reception on the other side. **Carried by** angles indicate the great honor to person. No burial in Jewish culture is treated as curse from God. He was earlier with the company of dogs, and now is in the company of angels.
3. **Abraham's bosom:** Figurative of the great honor he received in heaven. The term **bosom** refers to feasting and an occasion of great joy. Again the contrast between the rich man's feast on the earth and Lazarus's feast in heaven.
4. **Rich man Died:** Buried - imagine the kind of burial. No mention of reception on the other side **Burial:** For many; burial is the most important aspect of old age.

**16:23. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.**

1. **Hades:** The abode of all the departed whether good or bad. Life after death is a reality so is also the place of torment though painful accept. Apparently, he could see Abraham and Lazarus. May be God permitted a view. He was conscious, able to communicate, has feelings, feels pain.
2. **Lazarus:** One can imagine the shock wave passed through him - his plight and Lazarus glory!

**16:24. "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.'**

1. **Father Abraham:** He addresses Abraham as the father of the nation; may not be as the father of faith, but father of his race. Obviously, he was not humbled by his present state: considering Abraham as his father! One should not forget the responsibility of the rich man who call Abraham as Father to take care of Lazarus who is also a son of Abraham.

2. **Does the rich man had knowledge of Scripture?** Yes. Remember, the rich man knew of Scripture; otherwise, he would not have recognized and called Abraham as his father. But, his attitude to the Scripture was hard. Scripture did not made any difference in his life!
3. **Mercy:** He never showed mercy to Lazarus; but now he want mercy from the hand of Lazarus. See the futility of riches: contrast the abundance he had daily with this desire for a drop of water that causes nothing!
4. **Send Lazarus:** Observe he still want Lazarus to serve. The value system of the earth does not change. Also, he is not repenting of his sin. There is no repentance in Hades.

**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.**

1. **But Abraham said:** Abraham gave a polite but firm denial of his request supported with valid reasons. Heaven is operated by firm spiritual principles unlike manipulative types on the earth. Heaven has different value systems!
2. **Son:** Called him as the son indicating general relation that he had with all Jews.
3. **Good things:** Good things for the rich man was luxurious food, clothing, and shelter. However, these are not the best. He could have delighted in the word and used his resources to the benefit of others including the poor like Lazarus.
4. **Your:** This term points to the choice rich man had and where as this word is absent in the case of Lazarus since he had no choice except to believe in the salvation from the Lord and submit to the sovereignty of God.
5. **Life time you received good things:** Reversal of realities. It show for the unsaved, there is nothing better than what they have received will get

in Hades. For the saved, nothing worse will happen in heaven. What is better: a short life of evil now verses a long life of evil in eternity.

**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.'**

1. **Gulf:** This is the second reason why the request cannot be granted. The separation is permanent. The gulf means that in the afterlife there is no passing from one state to the other. Evidently, they can see each other;

**16:27. "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house,**

1. **I beg you therefore:** First time he is showing some interest in others, though not poor. Indirectly, the rich man is conveying that he didn't have enough information about life after death. Had he had it, he would have taken a different course of action!
2. **Send him to my father's house:** He is not leaving Lazarus, thinking that Lazarus is always available at his disposal.
3. **Father's house:** There is selfishness even in this request. He is concerned only of his inner circle of people.
4. On a different note, Lazarus was silent: neither cried over his pathetic state on the earth, exalted state in heaven, and not even rejoicing over the state of the rich man. He fully submits the sovereignty of God.

**16:28. for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'**

1. **Five brothers:** What about his wife and children! May be he was having illicit relation; and his real concern is for his family alone.
2. **Illustration:**

**16:29. Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'**

1. **Return of the dead:** Though there is general expectation from many that dead will return to tell their fate, Bible does not give an indication that is possible.
2. **Moses and Prophets:** The supremacy of the Word of God, both the law and prophecies in the old testament. There is no witness greater than Word of God is possible. Heaven is also under the authority of God's word. Look at the value of this book!
3. **Hear them:** Obedience to the Word of God is supreme. Note that the reason for the rich man's state is not his riches, but his neglect of the Scripture and its teaching.

**16:30. And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'**

1. **No, father Abraham:** He is correcting the theology of Abraham.
2. **One goes from the dead:** Logic of fallen human being. Spectacular and miracles will trigger faith.

**16:31. But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.' ”**

1. **No not hear Moses:** If one do not believe in the Spirit inspired divine Word, there is nothing else can make him believe. It is a deception that some kind of supernatural can create faster or better faith.
2. **Neither will they be persuaded:** If a person does not believe in the Scripture, then he will never believe even if someone from heaven or hell visits earth. Is Abraham correct? Observe two incidents:
  - (a) Shortly after this, a person returned from the dead. Did they believed? No. Read the story of Jesus raising another Lazarus (John 11). Not only that Pharisees continued in their unbelief, but they hated him even more to the point of trying to kill Jesus.
  - (b) Think about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. How many believed? Try this next time. They said that the disciple stole the

body. Even when the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, they accused them of drunk with wine. Hence, if one does not believe in the witness of the Scripture, no amount of miracle is not going to turn anyone from their unbelief to faith.

3. Note that this portion discredits any claim by anyone saying he has seen the heaven or hell bodily and come back to witness to us. It is possible, I ,may have a dream of heaven or hell.

## Application

1. **Rich Vs Poor:** Richness is not necessarily a sign of blessing from God and neither poverty is sign of curse from God. Prosperity Gospel is not Biblical!
2. **How to use riches:** Though this parable is not teaching directly, connecting with previous parable (Luke 16:1-8), it teaches that one should use the resources God has given for the benefit of His kingdom.
3. **Salvation is by faith alone:** What Lazarus have done to save? Nothing. Though not mentioned explicitly, he has come to faith.
4. **Now is the time to repent:** Now is the time to repent; even repentance is a grace of God. The future reversal of the human condition
5. **Word of God:** Unlike the rich man was hard on the Word of God, we should take it transforming. It is to be believed, obeyed, and taught to other: This can be done now only. Note the futility of even a spectacular sign like resurrection to persuade those who persist in rejecting God's revealed word.
6. **Judgment:** The reality of future judgment based on one's decisions in this life.
7. **Care for the poor:** Caring for the poor is a fundamental Scriptures. Those who claim God as their "father" are expected to demonstrate this truth by obeying God's commands regarding the marginalized, especially from those of the household.