

THE PARABLE OF LAZARUS AND THE RICH MAN

By Joseph A. Edwards II

Luke 16:19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: **20** And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, **21** And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. **22** 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; **23** And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. **24** 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. **25** But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime you received the good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. **26** 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. **27** Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house: **28** For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. **29** Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. **30** And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. **31** And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

This teaching by Christ is a parable. It is not a literal story which supports the false Doctrine of Hell as many believe.

So how can we know with certainty that this teaching by Christ is a parable?

We can know it because scripture says that Christ only taught in parables:

Mat 13:34 All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:

Scripture even states that Christ was teaching in parables at the beginning of His exchange with the Pharisees & scribes.

Luke 15:1 Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. **2** And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." **3** So He spoke this parable to them, saying:

In this public teaching by Christ to the Pharisees and scribes, the Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man is the fifth and final parable of the series.

To believe that the Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man is a literal story is to deny the truth of scripture.

Here is the meaning of the parable:

Luke 16:19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

The Rich Man represents the leaders of the Jewish Nation which consist of the elders, priests, scribes and Pharisees. He “fared sumptuously” every day upon the Word of God which was entrusted to him. However, the truth the Rich Man has been consuming was written on tablets of stone (Law of Moses) rather than it being written in his heart.

2Cor 3:3 Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

By consuming his truth from tablets of stone, the Rich Man understood God’s Word “carnally”, and because of such, they left out the weightier matters of the Law:

Mat 23:23 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and ye have left aside the weightier matters of the law, judgment and mercy and faith: these ye ought to have done and not have left those aside.

Because the Rich Man left out judgment, mercy and faith from his administration of the Law, he is described as wearing clothes of purple and fine linen to mask his spiritual uncleanness.

Mat 23:27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.

So what do the symbols “purple” and “fine linen” represent?

Let’s take a look at what scripture says about the color “purple”:

John 19:2 And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, 3 And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands.

Rev 17:4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

Rev 18:7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

The color “purple” represents the royalty of earthly kings who claim their rulership by their own “works”.

Now, let’s take a look at what scripture says about fine linen:

Rev 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

Prov 7:16 I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt.

Rev 18:6 And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!

In addition to the purple clothing, the Rich Man also wears fine linen. The fine linen represents the righteousness of Christ. However, the Rich Man's fine linen comes from Egypt and was not given to him by Christ. His righteousness is the false righteousness of "works":

Isa 64:6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and our righteousness is as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

In Christ's eyes, the Rich Man's clothing of purple and fine linen is nothing more than filthy rags (represents man's "works").

Luke 16:20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

Lazarus, who lies at the Rich Man's gate, represents the Jewish Elect. At this time, however, Lazarus is unconverted, unclean (sores) and lame (lays at the gate).

In the parable below, Lazarus is represented by the "poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind:

Luke 14:16 Then said he unto him, A certain man (Christ) made a great supper, and bade many: 17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them (the Rich Man) that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. 18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it (walks by the flesh): I pray thee have me excused. 19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them ("works"): I pray thee have me excused. 20 And another said, I have married a wife (Eve, carnal nature), and therefore I cannot come. 21 So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind (the Jewish Elect). 22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. 23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them (the Gentile Elect) to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

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

As Lazarus lays by the Rich Man's gate, he desires to be fed with God's Word (crumbs from the Rich Man's table) but the Rich Man refuses to feed him. The Rich Man believes that Lazarus is so unclean, that to even associate with him would make themselves unclean.

Mat 9:9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

10 And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. 11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with tax collectors and sinners?

In the Rich Man's eyes, Lazarus is no better than the "dogs" who come and lick Lazarus' sores (uncleanness).

A dog is a symbol for a Gentile who the Rich Man also considers unclean:

Mark 26:7 The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. 8 But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.

Lev 13:45 "Now the leper on whom the sore is, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!'"

Lazarus is in a poor and miserable spiritual state with no ability to help himself and neither will the Rich Man:

Luke 11:46 Jesus replied, "And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.

Luke 16:22 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 it came to pass" both Lazarus and the Rich Man died and were resurrected from the grave.

Prior to Lazarus' death, he repented and was converted. Upon His resurrection, He was found in the Lamb's Book of Life and received the honor being the Bride of Christ:

Rev 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. 4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

The Rich Man, though, never repented and was resurrected to judgment in the Lake of Fire. He was not found in the Lamb's Book of Life:

Rev 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the Lake of Fire.

Lazarus' sufferings were over, whereas the Rich Man's sufferings were just commencing.

Note: The symbol "fire" represents the judgment of Christ. It is not literal fire as the apostate church teaches.

Luke 16:23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

The Rich Man, now realizing that God has rejected him, is in torment. And to make his torment even worse, he can see Abraham from “afar off” with Lazarus in his bosom.

These verses apply:

Mat 8:11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. 12 But the children of the kingdom (the Rich Man) shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Luke 13:28 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.

Eph 2:4 but God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 (we too being dead in offences,) has quickened us with the Christ, (ye are saved by grace,) 6 and has raised us up together, and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, 7 that he might DISPLAY in the coming ages the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness towards us (the Elect) in Christ Jesus.

The term “outer darkness” represents a spiritual state of being and not a literal location. In the case of the Rich Man, his spiritual state of being is so far removed from the knowledge of God that he has become worse than when Lazarus laid at the gate of his house.

Luke 16:24 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. 25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime you received the good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. 26 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.

The Rich Man cries out to Abraham for mercy because he still believes that Abraham, being his earthly father, is the one who has the ability to help him.

This scripture applies:

Mat 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: 9 “and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones (others who are under the Law).

However, only the spiritual descendants of Abraham will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The flesh counts for nothing.

Rom 2:29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

John 6:63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

The Rich Man then asks Abraham to send Lazarus to “dip the tip of his finger in water (Holy Spirit)” which he hopes will cool his tongue.

These verses apply:

Psa 22:15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my palate; and thou hast laid me in the dust of death.

Prov 25:25 As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.

Abraham responds to the Rich Man’s request and tells him that he cannot send Lazarus to him. Abraham reminds the Rich Man that he had received the “good things” (God’s Word) in life which he misused (**Mat 23:23**). And besides that, Abraham says that there is a “great gulf fixed” between the two of them – a gulf so vast that neither of them can pass through.

These verses apply:

Rev 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband... 8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death... 12 And it had a WALL GREAT AND HIGH, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:... 27 And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

The Rich Man now finds himself in the same predicament as did Lazarus earlier in life when Lazarus was begging for help. And since the Rich Man refused to even lift a finger to help Lazarus, Lazarus likewise cannot lift a finger to help him.

This verse applies:

Mat 7:2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

Note: The only solution for the Rich Man is to be made into a child of God, just as Lazarus was.

The old vessel must be destroyed and a new vessel created:

Jer 18:4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.

This is conversion and is how Christ saves us.

Only the new vessel will enter the Kingdom of Heaven but the old vessel never will. For this reason, the old vessel will be destroyed.

Luke 16:27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house: 28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

The Rich Man's "five" brethren represent the other leaders of the Jewish Nation who still approach God by their own "works".

The number "five" represents how a person approaches God. It can be either by "works" (Old Covenant) or it can be by faith (New Covenant).

Luke 16:29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. 30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. 31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

God made the leaders of the Jewish Nation so spiritually blind that they could not see the truth of Christ nor His resurrection from the grave. There simply was nothing within them which could make them see and repent of their "works". The power of God to veil Himself from them was too strong for them to overcome.

However, Israel's blindness was not from their own making. Their blindness was all in accordance with the plan and purpose of God:

John 12:40 He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

1Cor 2:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: 8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

After God's plan and purpose for Israel's blindness is satisfied, Christ will have pity upon them before they perish:

Joel 2:18 Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people.

Christ will then give Israel the Latter Rain which will give them a new birth:

Joel 2: Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the Latter Rain in the first month.

And so all Israel will be saved:

Rom 11:25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. 26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written,

There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: 27 For this *is* my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. 28 As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. 29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. 30 For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: 31 Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. 32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

These scriptures also apply:

Rev 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Isa 41:17 The afflicted and the needy seek water, and there is none; their tongue faileth for thirst: I, Jehovah, will answer them, I, the God of Israel, WILL NOT FORSAKE THEM. 18 I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. 19 I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: 20 That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

Eze 36:26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. 28 And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

After this day arrives at the end of the final age, the plan and purpose of God for His creation will be fulfilled. Christ will then deliver up the Kingdom of Heaven to His Father. God will then be “all in all” with 100% of mankind saved.

1Cor 15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. 21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. 24 Then cometh the consummation, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. 27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. 28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.