

# THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS: THE SELF-INDULGENT VS. THE MAN OF FAITH LUKE 16:19–31

## *Introduction*

Note two things: Jesus identified Lazarus; Lazarus was named. When giving a parable, Jesus never named a character — not even once. Also note: Jesus did not say that this was a parable. These two facts, plus the language used to begin the account, point to it as an actual experience. Of course, it must always be remembered that spiritual and eternal truths have to be described with human and earthly language. This does not in any way lessen the blessing nor the terror of the truth; contrariwise, the eternal truth is much more blessed and much more terrifying than any mere human description.

- I. A difference in life (vv. 19-21).
- II. A difference in death: Lazarus died and was escorted to paradise; the rich man died and was buried (v. 22).
- III. A difference in eternity (vv. 23-31).

## **I. *Luke 16:19–21 Lazarus and the Rich Man***

There is a difference in life. The differences are fourfold.

1. There was one main difference between Lazarus and the rich man: the rich man was nameless, but Lazarus was named. The difference is ever so important. It is the difference between being known and honoured by God and not being known or honoured by God. The rich man did not know God; therefore, he was unknown to God and God was not able to honour him. He was nameless to God. Lazarus knew God and was known by God. His very name, Lazarus, means *God is my Help or Helper*. He trusted God to look after him, and his eyes were upon heaven and the blessings of heaven, not upon the earth. The Latin word for “rich” is *Dives*. This is the reason the rich man is often called *Dives*. However, we must always remember it was not his name; he was a nameless man to God.

**Jn 10:14** *“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.”* (see Jn. 10:27)

**1 Cor 8:3** *But the man who loves God is known by God.*

**1 Cor 13:12** *Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*

**Gal 4:8-9** *Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God — or rather are known by God —*

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*how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?*

2. The rich man was wealthy; Lazarus was poor. (See *Sin*, Lk. 16:19-21.)
3. The rich man was healthy; Lazarus was disabled. Lazarus was full of ulcerated sores, unable to work and earn a living. He was either carried to the rich man's gate or else barely able to walk to the gate. He was what is called a street person — not by choice, but by being handicapped and without a family or friends who loved enough to care for him. How tragic! What an indictment against men. Note the charge is against the rich man and not society. Society is only an idea; men are a reality. The term or idea of society allows some men, including some social workers, to escape responsibility and to build up good salaries, healthy standards of living, and personal wealth while the needful continue to suffer. Each man is personally responsible for the poor and needy of the earth. That is Christ's point. In this case the rich man was responsible for Lazarus.
4. The rich man lived in luxury and extravagance; Lazarus had to beg because he was helpless. The picture is that of Lazarus' lying at the rich man's gate (most people would not allow this). The rich man was too occupied with his own estate, interests and pleasures; he ignored Lazarus' lying at his gate. The rich man neither helped nor seemed to care. While Lazarus waited for the crumbs from the rich man's table, too weak to fight off the dogs from licking his sores, he found hope and peace in God. The wealthy used large pieces of bread to wipe their hands and then threw the large pieces away. It was this bread that Lazarus waited for.

### LUKE 16:19–21 SIN

*“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.” **Luke 16:19-21***

The sin of the rich man would not be a sin in the eyes of most societies. There is no record of a vicious, glaring sin; no record of a vulgar, public sin. He was not cruel — he never ordered Lazarus from his gate nor refused Lazarus the crumbs from his table. He was not a tyrant; not an oppressor of the poor, not a monstrous member of society. Rather, he was socially responsible, an upright citizen, respected and well-liked. No earthly court would ever think of arresting or condemning him. In society's eyes he was honoured and highly esteemed. People liked him and spoke well of him. What then was his sin?

1. The word *luxury* (lamprosa) means that he was flamboyant, displaying his wealth in materialistic ways.

2. The “gate” was a large gate indicating that his home was a large house or a mansion.
3. The purple and fine linen show that he had the latest styles and the ultimate in luxury.
4. The words “every day” show that he feasted every day. His sin was *self-indulgence, comfort, ease, luxury, extravagant living*. He sought the things and pleasures of this world. He was complacent, hoarding and allowing money to lie around making more and more for himself and his estate while needs lay all around him — right at his gate. He neglected and ignored others, most significantly, Lazarus. The needs of a degenerate world concerned him little, if at all. He wanted what others in the world had, plenty for themselves and more. The world acknowledged and honoured those who had plenty, and he wanted such recognition and honour for himself. He wanted what others had and he wanted to keep up with them.

**Mat 25:43** *“I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.”*

**1 John 3:17** *If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?*

**Mark 4:19** *“But the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.”*

**1 Tim 6:9** *People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.*

**Zec 7:6** *And when you were eating and drinking, were you not just feasting for yourselves?*

**Deu 15:7** *If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother. □*

## II. **Luke 16:22** *Difference in Death*

There was a difference in death. Lazarus died and was escorted to Paradise; the rich man died and was buried. Note the only words said about the rich man’s death: “He also died and was buried.” What a terrible and disappointing legacy for a man to leave behind. The rich man was probably buried in state in the finest clothes and within the very best grave and cemetery. He had a most impressive funeral — a funeral well attended by the upper social class of his community. The words spoken over him were probably words of praise, words that recognized his respectability and contribution to society in providing so much for his community and religion. An expensive monument was probably set over his grave. However, the tragedy of tragedies was his experience. He knew nothing about it. He was not there to enjoy it. He just died and was buried.

However, note what is said about Lazarus. He “died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side” (See *Abraham’s Bosom*, Lk. 16:22) or Paradise. Three facts are important here.

1. Lazarus lived on despite his body’s being dead. His being — his spirit and soul — did not die, nor cease to exist, nor fall into a state of sleep.
2. Lazarus’ soul was immediately met by angels. Instantaneously — as quick as the blinking of an eye — when Lazarus died, the angels stood by his body and carried his soul into Paradise.
3. Lazarus was carried into the very place where the Source of all wealth is, where all who have trusted God are, the place where Abraham is: the Paradise of God Himself. (See *Paradise*, Lk. 16:23)

**John 3:16** “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

**John 3:36** “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”

**John 5:24** “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”

**2 Cor 4:17** For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

**Gal 6:8** The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

**2 Pet 1:10-11** Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

### LUKE 16:22 ABRAHAM’S SIDE

“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried.” **Luke 16:22**

This refers to Paradise. It is a term that expressed the happiness that believers could expect upon death. It had the idea of sitting down and feasting with Abraham in Paradise. The side of Abraham was referred to because he was the father of the Jewish nation. □

### III. *Luke 16:23–31 Difference in Eternal Life*

There was a difference in eternity. Ten facts are contrasted here.

1. The rich man was in hell; Lazarus was in Paradise (See *Hell*, Lk. 16:23).

- a. Death snatched the rich man from his comfort and pleasures and from the material goods and wealth of this life. And he was immediately in hell, the place of misery and torment. (See *Hell*, Lk. 16:23.)

**Mat 25:46** *“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”*

**Rev 14:11** *And the smoke of their torment rises forever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.*

- b. The rich man was unfit for Paradise. Why? Because he had lived in a *worldly paradise* while others were hungry and starving, diseased and helpless, cold and unclothed, unsaved and dying. He had possessed the “good things” of life while others had nothing; and he had kept back, banked, and hoarded beyond what he really needed — all for the sake of recognition from people. Justice had to be executed. He was unfit to live in a paradise of justice and love. He deserved to be tormented and left without the “good things,” for he had added to and refused to ease the torments of others while on earth.

**Prov 21:13** *If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered.*

2. The rich man only saw glory: Lazarus was sharing in and experiencing glory. Note three things.
  - a. The rich man was able to see Paradise, but it was far, far off and way out of reach.
  - b. The rich man was able to see into Paradise, able to see both Abraham and Lazarus there. He saw all the glory and comfort, perfection and joy of Paradise. He saw the man Lazarus whom he had neglected and treated so lowly. He saw Lazarus in all the glory and perfection of heaven, and he envied and regretted what he saw.

**Luke 13:28** *“There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out.”*

- c. Note that Lazarus seemed to be totally unaware of hell. He lived only in Paradise, only in the glory and perfection of God.

**1 Cor 15:53** *For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.*

3. The rich man was painfully alone; Lazarus had companionship. Nothing is said about another soul around the rich man. He stood all alone, talking to no one else in hell. He only saw those in Paradise. What a drastic difference from what is so often pictured and expressed by the lost of this world, thinking they will have plenty of company

in hell. The true picture painted by Christ is that a person will be tormented with loneliness, that the person will...

- be all alone
- be cut off from others
- see no one
- be desolate
- sense no one
- be bleak

Lazarus had the company of Abraham and of the saints in glory. Christ had earlier taught the same point to the “evildoers”:

**Luke 13:28** *“There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves [evildoers] thrown out.”*

4. The rich man had a burning sensation; Lazarus had water. The contrast here is dramatic. The rich man was burning with such misery and pain from the “fire” (the wrath of God) that he begged for mercy: if he could not be freed from the flame and the misery, then he begged for just a drop of water to feel a momentary coolness. However, look at Lazarus. He had water; he had the coolness of whatever he needed to refresh his body.

**Luke 3:17**... *but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*

**Rev 22:1** *Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.*

5. The rich man was tormented; Lazarus was comforted (See *Hell*, Lk. 16:24)

**Mat 8:12** *“But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

**Mat 13:42** *“They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

**Rev 20:15** *If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

6. The rich man remembered his former life; Lazarus was silent.
  - a. Note the word “your.” It is emphatic. The rich man had what *he* chose to have when on earth. He had received *his* “good things” (what he considered “good”) in his lifetime, and he saw to it that Lazarus had “bad things.” Now note: he did not beat, injure, or persecute Lazarus; *but he did not help Lazarus either*. He could have helped, for he had an estate and a bank full of money; but he did not help. Therefore, he *kept* Lazarus down and destitute in this world. He saw to it that Lazarus had “bad things” when he could have seen to it that Lazarus was helped.
  - b. Lazarus was not responsible for the bad things that came upon him. Lazarus was *dished out* the bad things of this world by circumstances and by men like the rich man who neglected, ignored and abused him.

The rich man remembered...

- his sins (comfort, ease, indulgence, pleasure, extravagance).
  - his missed opportunities (to help Lazarus).
  - his deaf ear to conscience, God, the Word, Lazarus, and all others who were so needy.
  - his failure to seek the truth (Heb. 11:6).
  - his rejection of warning after warning.
7. The rich man was fixed in hell; Lazarus was fixed in Paradise. There was no passing from hell into Paradise or from Paradise into hell. There was a permanent gulf, and it was there for the *purpose* of keeping one from passing over. The sinner, who chooses to be cut off from God and Paradise, has his wish. He is cut off.

*Mat 13:30* “Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: ‘First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

*Mat 13:49* “This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous.”

*Mat 25:46* “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

8. The rich man agonized for loved ones; Lazarus was settled in eternity. The rich man had five brothers. He had set such a bad example for them they were also heading for hell. Note that the rich man was saying two things.
- a. Hell is such a horrible place that it is not worth all the wealth and comfort and ease and pleasure of this world. Christ had said the same thing:

*Mark 8:36* “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?”

- b. Hell is such a horrible place that the world must be told to flee it. (Note that Christ is sharing how terrible hell is and how desperately we must seek to avoid it.)

The rich man was told that his brothers had the Scriptures, the Word of God, which explained and warned them of the future. They were to hear the Scripture, for the Scripture is a sufficient witness.

Lazarus was settled in eternity. He was a great contrast with the rich man’s brothers. Why? Because he had believed the Scriptures, trusting God and His promises.

*John 5:24* “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”

9. The rich man begged for another chance as Lazarus was silently at peace as the Scriptures promised. This is seen by looking behind the words of the rich man. If Abraham were to allow one to arise to tell the living, the rich man could then plead

less opportunity. He, too, would be entitled to another chance, to a sensational and miraculous sign or so he felt.

Note that Lazarus was at peace just as the Scriptures had promised. Lazarus had believed and was thereby saved.

10. The rich man was unable to intercede for his family; Lazarus rested in God's presence. Note the words, "They will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."
- a. A Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, has risen from the dead, yet men do not believe. Man's unbelief is not due to lack of signs; it is due to their love for the world with all its creature comforts and recognition, indulgence and selfishness, pleasures and honours.

**Rom 2:5** *But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.*

- b. The Scriptures and their testimony of the Lord's resurrection are much greater testimony than a dead man's standing before us in some ghostly, mysterious form.

**John 5:39** *"You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me."*

**Rom 4:24-25** *But also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness — for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. ■*

### LUKE 16:23 PARADISE AND HELL (HADES)

*In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. **Luke 16:23***

The Greek word Hades is the same as the Hebrew word *Sheol* (Gen. 37:35). The picture of Hades revealed by Jesus is that of the other world: the unseen world, the spiritual world, the spiritual dimension of being. Jesus says that Hades is a place which is divided into two huge areas or sections or compartments. The two areas are separated by a great gulf that is impassible (v. 26). One area is the place of sorrow (vv. 23-24, 28). The other area is the place of Paradise where believers go. To say that a person is dead is to say that one is in Hades, in the other world.

Note a critical fact: the other world, the spiritual world and the spiritual dimension of being, does exist. And there are two areas or two places in the other world: Paradise, the place of glory, and hell, the place of torment. Jesus said they both actually exist. (See Lk 22-23; See *Hell, Torment*, Lk. 16:24; Mt. 27:52-53; Eph. 4:8-10.) □



## LUKE 16:24 HELL, TORMENT

*So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'* **Luke 16:24**

To be anguished, tortured, and greatly distressed; to suffer pain and sorrow. The Bible unquestionably teaches there is to be a torment for unbelievers in fire. However, it must be remembered that the fire we know is material and temporal; it is not spiritual or eternal. Earthly fire does not last forever. Nothing on earth does. Earthly fire is of the physical dimension of being. The fire of hell, whatever its nature and qualities, is spiritual and eternal. It never ends. And men must face this; they must not shrink from the truth of hell. Why? Because hell, that is, separation from God, is much worse than any experience here on earth. It will be much worse than any physical experience imaginable. This is the teaching of Scripture. This is the point Jesus was making. Man absolutely must flee from hell. Man absolutely must flee to Christ for salvation (See *Hell Fire*, Mt. 5:22). (See Mt. 5:22, 29; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; 25:41; Mk. 9:43-48; Lk. 12:5; 16:23; 2 Th. 1:8-9; 2 Pet. 2:4; Rev. 14:10-11; 16:10; 18:10; 19:20; 20:10-15; 21:8.) □

## MATHEW 05:22 HELL FIRE OR GEHENNA (GEENNA)

The word is used eleven or twelve times in the New Testament, and in every case it is spoken by Jesus except in the Epistle of James. It illustrates the terrible truth of the second death, of man's final separation from God. Jesus pointed to the burning, repulsive rubbish dump outside the city limits of Jerusalem and said that it was exactly what hell was like. The dump was called Gehenna. It was in the Valley of Hinnom which served as a public incinerator. Hanging over it was a layer of thick, smoldering smoke arising from what seemed to be an eternal flame. The smell and filth became a breeding cesspool for a loathsome worm that was difficult to kill (Mk. 9:44). Thus, Jesus found in Gehenna a description of just what it means to be separated from God eternally and to die the second death. Several facts are said about hell or Gehenna:

- It is the same as the lake of fire, a place of torture (Rev. 19:20; 20:10, 14-15).
- It has to do with the second death (Rev. 21:8; Jn. 8:24).
- It is Hell (Mt. 5:29-30; 10:28; 23:15, 33; Lk. 12:5).
- It is eternal fire (Mt. 18:8).
- It is the fire of Hell (Mt. 18:9; Jas. 3:6).
- It is unquenchable fire (Mk. 9:43-49).

The teaching of Jesus should always be remembered. Remembrance is critical in determining a person's fate. Hell is a definite place, a real place that is specifically located. It was originally prepared for the devil and his angels. But all men who choose to follow self and evil and to reject God shall also be sent to hell eternally.

***Mat 3:10** The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.*

***Mat 5:29-30** "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."*

***Mat 7:19** "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."*

***Mat 10:28** "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."*

***Mat 11:23** "And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day."*

***Mat 13:42, 50** "They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth... And throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

***Mat 16:18** "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."*

***Mat 18:8-9** "If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell."*

***Mat 23:15** "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites: You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are."*

***Mat 23:33** "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?"*

***Mat 25:41** "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"*

**Mark 9:43-48** *“If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.”*

**Luke 3:9** *“The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”*

**Luke 10:15** *“And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths.”*

**Luke 12:5** *“But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.”*

**Luke 16:23-24** *“In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’” □*