

## Luke 16:19-31, "Reluctant Witness from Hell, Part 1"

↳ A very important parable because most people in western culture or who have been exposed to Christianity think they are going to heaven. 90% of Americans believe in God. They mostly all think they are going to heaven. "Do you plan to go to heaven?," what's your plan? Can we agree if what God says is required differs from what you have or can produce, you're not going? Sincerity is not a trump card that gets you in any more than being sincerely sorry for a crime will get you out of jail! Hell will be populated mostly by people who are shocked to find themselves there. Hell will be populated by mostly religious people; most of the world is religious, steeped in does and don'ts. The world is dominated by religious people; therefore, hell will be dominated by religious people, Matthew 7:21-23. This is the story of a religiously approved man who is shocked to find himself in hell. Another shocker to those who listened was that the poor man was in heaven. Hell is the place of the most profound suffering, compounded infinitely by the fact that it will never, ever change. This is a story of a man who went to that place.

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### 1. The rich man is a blessed and godly man in the eyes of that culture.

- ✓ The Pharisees along with the friends of Job were the first promoters of a prosperity gospel: "If you are walking with the Lord, you will be rich, healthy, and have everything you want." It is a hellish doctrine and those promote it or subscribe to it are in danger of Hell itself. What happens to you in this life may have no relationship to how you are living or what God thinks of you. This parable is aimed directly at the most highly respected people in the culture of that day, the Pharisees. We see them as hypocrites and evil people, but we need to understand that they were not at all seen that way by the culture of that day, Luke 18:25-26. They had no concept that the rich weren't going to heaven. The Pharisees and those who followed their doctrine were this rich man.

### 2. This is a story of extreme contrasts.

- ✓ A poor man becomes rich forever and a rich man becomes poor forever. Poor man who suffers in this life and is blessed in the next, and rich man has bountiful blessings but suffers in the next life. Starts with the poor man on the outside and rich man on the inside and ends the other way around. A poor man with immense need and a rich man with no needs; in the end the poor man has no needs and the rich man lives with need for all eternity. A poor man who desires everything but has nothing and a rich man who desires nothing because he has everything; then it all switches. A poor man humiliated, and rich man exalted; ends with the poor man exalted and the rich man humiliated. A poor man who seeks help and receives none; it ends with a rich man who seeks help and receives none.

### 3. The story breaks into three parts: Life, Death, and Life after Death.

- 1) "Life," this is extreme wealth, he was always decked out in the most expensive clothing. Everything in those days was handmade, so the average person may only own 4 or 5 sets of clothing in their entire life!. The rich man indulged in lavish, ostentatious, luxurious lifestyle every day!, Luke 16:19. The culture would have label him blessed by God and certain to go to heaven, heaven, in their minds, had marked him as its own. The other extreme, the word for poor in the Greek here means to have literally nothing to your name, Luke 16:20. Extreme poverty and extreme illness; "laid at the gate" literally means to be dumped there, it implies he was disabled in some way. Extreme hunger, Luke 16:21, these weren't crumbs but chunks of molded bread.
- 2) "Death," Luke 16:22, neither of them go where the culture of the day would have expected them to go.
- 3) "Life after Death," Luke 16:23, the rich man "In Hades" a holding place for the dead where Lazarus is as well, but their experiences are very different. Today we don't go to that holding place but because of Jesus we go home to be with God. The same torment awaits those who die outside of Christ, who reject faith in God. The statement "lifted up his eyes" is a statement of self-realization, it's like he's finally awake for the first time! This is not what he thought would happen, and not what he was told would happen. Very similar to self-realization of the prodigal son who "came to his senses" in Luke 15:17.

**Most importantly, there is no soul sleep here, they are both fully awake in death and fully aware of what is going on as well as what went on in their former lives. The saved are immediately in conscious bliss and fellowship; the unsaved are immediately in conscious torment.**

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