

The Rich Man and Lazarus

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An Examination of Luke 16:19-31

Introduction

All scriptures from the NIV unless noted otherwise.

Have you ever seen a TV show or a movie of a courtroom scene where the lawyer for the defense can make any evidence of guilt seem trivial or inadequate. Some people have the *ability* to take any fact and/or any event and describe it in such a fashion as to imply that it does not apply to the question under consideration. Sadly there are some Christians who have this same *talent*. One of the most basic and yet most important guidelines to follow when doing Bible research, and it sometimes seems to be the most neglected, is this:

**Never read the work of scholars or commentators to find out what they say,
only read them to find out WHY they say it!**

Then examine their reasons to make sure the evidence presented is sufficient to justify their conclusions. Surely it is obvious to all, how easy it is to find some *scholar(s)* to support any possible position on any Bible subject. We, as Christians, must be willing to expend the required time and effort to evaluate that evidence with much prayer, Bible study and humility before accepting their conclusions.

To me, as a Bible student and teacher the three most humbling (and challenging) passages in the New Testament are 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12, James 3:1, and Luke 17:1-3a. Looking at each one separately,

2 Thessalonians 2: 9-12

9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, 10 and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason [i.e. their lack of love for the truth. -cb] God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

I pray constantly for God's discipline to keep me from teaching something that is not in accordance with His will. Since everyone who believes in God says they love the truth, how do I know that I really do? How is my pledge of loving the truth any different from all others who say the same thing, yet teach false doctrines? I can only think of two things to consider when trying to prove to **myself** that my claim of loving the truth is sincere. (Yes, prove to **myself** because I will stand **alone** before Christ on my judgment day):

(1) If I am willing to change my conviction based solely on the evidence.

If my stubbornness or pride constitute rose colored glasses, allowing me to ignore or twist the evidence to agree with my position, then my very strong conviction is the result of a God-sent-delusion and is **not** an indication of the strength of my evidence nor the truth of my position. This is the strongest motivation to carefully evaluate the evidence before, during and after reaching every conclusion of Bible teaching! The second thing to consider is:

(2) My willingness to publicly confess any previous error on my part.

I cannot grow if I do not change! All growth implies change, but not all change implies growth! When I face a difficult Bible decision, as I study and pray, I picture myself in front of my congregation or any group of Christians announcing my decision to change from my previous position, and giving the reasons (evidence) for that change. If, just between me and God, I can sincerely see myself doing this, then, and only then, can I have confidence that my claim to love the truth is probably valid.

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The second scripture all of us as teachers must consider is James 3:1,

¶ **Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.**

So many Bible teachers seem to forget that we too will be required to give an account for **every** word spoken and **every** deed done, Matthew 12:36, 2 Corinthians 5:9-10! It is true I don't know exactly what "*more strictly*" means, and I really don't want to find out! We must remember: Truth is not determined by the strength of my conviction, **nor** by the number of people who agree with me, Matthew 7:13-14.

The third scripture for all teachers to constantly keep in mind is Luke 17:1-3a,

¶ **Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. 2 It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied round his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. 3 So watch yourselves.**

If we teach a person to believe, practice or teach that which is not in harmony with the God's Word, we are probably causing someone to sin and the punishment is severe. We must be very careful that our teaching is in harmony with the teachings of Christ. This is not a casual matter. Constant prayer and Bible study are not effective unless done with humility and an open mind. As we study, are we looking for words to verify our previous thinking or are we searching for the truth which can, sometimes, be difficult to face? The truth is only fulfilling, satisfying and rewarding when we accept it into our lives and make the required changes in our thinking.

Let us continually pray for each other and help each other to practice these guidelines as we engage in this study.

The main reason, if not the sole reason, there are so many different judgments regarding how to please God in our worship and in living a Christian life is our refusal to adopt general guidelines, called hermeneutics, to help us. If we would but follow these guidelines faithfully, praying for an open mind and actually listening to God's answer, all religious error would cease to exist. If this sounds too fanciful to be true, please seriously consider these suggested guidelines and after prayer and meditation share with me the reasons why you doubt the previous sentence (c2baird@charter.net).

- 1 | First and foremost we must love the truth, 2 Thessalonians 2: 9-12!
- 2 | **Always read the context of every scripture on the subject.**
- 3 | Pray for wisdom, James 1:5-8
- 4 | Define your terms, using valid dictionaries and lexicons.
- 5 | Decisions must be made based on the evidence available, even if we think it is too little.
- 6 | The Bible is not only correct, it is complete, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:3
- 7 | The Law of Exclusion, Nadab and Abihu Leviticus 10:1-3.
- 8 | All words are to be understood literally unless sufficient contextual evidence is available to the contrary.
- 9 | Always use the simpler passages to explain the ambiguous ones.
- 10 | Ockham's razor, the simplest answer is always preferred (not **necessarily** correct), therefore must be examined first.
- 11 | Perseverance, don't give up! Romans 5:3-5, Hebrews 12:1, 2 Peter 1:6, Revelation 2:2.

Every scriptural error, or even disagreement on a scriptural teaching, is the result of violating one or more of these guidelines. I know that last sentence might, at first, seem a little unreasonable, but I think the more you

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contemplate these guidelines the more their importance will be realized.

Each of these guidelines is discussed in detail with appropriate scriptural and logical support on my website cliffbaird.wordpress.com in the article "Hermeneutics for us common folks."

Let us now turn to our text of the rich man and Lazarus:

The Text, Luke 16:19-31

¶ "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. 20 At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores 21 and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. 24 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.' 25 "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. 26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' 27 "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, 28 for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' 29 "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' 30 "'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' 31 "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

First I would like to offer some evidence that this story is a parable, not a historical event.

Both the rich man and Lazarus have received a reward (comfort or agony), which implies a previous judgment. Yet no spiritual judgment could have been given at the time of Christ's speaking because He had not yet died for our sins and **Hebrews 9:15** says "For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance —now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant." Sins were not, and could not, be forgiven before Christ died because the blood of Christ is what washes away our sins, Acts 22:16, Ephesians 2:13, Hebrews 9:14, Revelation 1:5. Notice "those who are called" were not set free from the sins committed under the first covenant until "Now" that Christ has died. Therefore Lazarus could not have received his reward of comfort at Abraham's side before Christ's death because his sins were not yet forgiven. Therefore this story is a foretelling, prediction, prophecy or parable. This scripture, **Hebrews 9:15**, also applies to all those who died before the crucifixion, i.e. their sins were not forgiven until after the crucifixion.

We must also consider what Paul says in Romans 3:23-26:

"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26 he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus."

Since God "had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished" ...until... "the present time," i.e. the Christian era, the rich man could not have received the **permanent** punishment described by Christ as He spoke in Luke 16:26. This scripture, Romans 3:23-26, also applies to all those who died before the crucifixion, i.e. their sins were not punished until after the crucifixion.

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Therefore, because of Hebrews 9:15 and Romans 3:23-26 we must conclude the story recorded in Luke 16:19 ff. is a parable or prophecy, and cannot be an historical event. Since this story is not an historical event all the events portrayed can only affect the Christian era, as is true with much of His teaching, such as, "go unto **all** the world," the promised Holy Spirit, the promised coming of His kingdom, the destruction of Jerusalem, salvation through baptism, His second coming, the story of the sheep and goats, etc."

All truths taught in this parable are only effective after the crucifixion, that is, in the Christian age!

Please allow this tangential observation at this point: This same evidence (Hebrews 9:15 and Romans 3:23-26) applies to all who died before Christ. This implies no sins were forgiven and no sins were permanently punished before Christ died. What then happened to the souls of all who died before Christ? When these facts are taken in conjunction with Ecclesiastes 9:10 (ESV, "**Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.**") they provide sufficient evidence to establish a basic state of unconsciousness as the condition of all those spirits in Sheol whose bodies had died before the time of Christ. These souls/spirits were in a condition similar to common sleep, alive but unconscious. Just waiting, for ... what?
See *Jesus in Sheol/Hades* on website, cliffbaird.wordpress.com for a detail answer.

The overall context, of Luke chapters 14-16, is parable after parable. Even after the short pause of chapter 17, the next chapter (18) starts with two more parables. Our conclusion that Luke 16:19 ff. is a parable fits in perfectly with this context.

If this is a parable then we must know what a parable is before we can understand the teachings of Jesus in this passage. Looking up the word in both Thayer's and BDAG's, 3rd edition, lexicons seems to give us "more than we ever wanted to know" about parables. Both these complete references are attached at the end of this paper for your convenience. My effort to summarize these definitions of *parable* from these two sources is:

1. a placing of one thing by the side of another, juxtaposition
2. a comparing, comparison of one thing with another, likeness, similitude, ... an example by which a doctrine or precept is illustrated
3. a pithy and instructive saying, involving some likeness or comparison and having preceptive or admonitory force;
4. a proverb
5. an act by which one exposes himself or his possessions to danger, venture, risk
6. in the synoptics the word refers to a **variety** of illustrative formulations in the teachings of Jesus (48 times)

Please notice there is no reference to the using of a personal name being required nor forbidden for a story to be classified as a parable. The fact that one person in this story, Lazarus, is given a name has no bearing on the **type** of story it is. Denying that this story is a parable because one character has a name has no supporting evidence!

We have established this story cannot be an historical event and that any truths taught therein become effective only after the death of Christ. **Let us now begin a verb by verse analysis of the parable** to see if we, with God's help, can determine what truth God intended for us to learn.

19 "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. 20 At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores 21 and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores."

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At the beginning of this parable Jesus defines the characters to be discussed in the story. One man is rich, the other man, Lazarus, is very poor. As in most parables the characters in this story also represent anyone who meets the conditions ascribed to the members of the parables.

22 "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 [Greek has *and* here] In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. 24 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.' 25 "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.

Verse 22 sets death as the condition ascribed to the members of this parable before any permanent dwelling place is given, in perfect harmony with Hebrews 9:27. Therefore everyone, after death, will experience one of these two types of existence, i.e. he will be comforted or tormented. Verse 23 presents a truth which seems to be the most painful experience possible, the rich man could look over and see the comfort that he could have had!

There is much discussion about these four verses.

Someone might object saying since this is a parable we cannot draw such detail conclusions from it. But the word parable means a story that teaches real human beings, us, a lesson. What do these plain English words mean, if not what they say? If the rich man in the parable was not in torment why did the Holy Spirit use these words to say that he did, indeed, suffer in torment? The Holy Spirit said **he was in torment**. Did the Holy Spirit mean the rich man was **not** in torment? Did the Holy Spirit use the wrong words? Did the Holy Spirit make a mistake? Were the words too explicit. Would the objector like to substitute a better choice or words? Please brethren we must help each other to remember that the Holy Spirit chose the perfect word to express His ideas, **every time!** Yes, yes, yes, I know, some of these words are figurative as in any parable. Would anyone say because *finger*, *fire*, *water*, and *tongue* are figurative therefore *torment*, *agony* and *comfort* are also figurative? Can we not see that in one case if the words are changed there is no damage to the teaching of the story, but to change *torment*, *agony* or *comfort* could destroy the whole meaning? I choose to accept the words of the Holy Spirit and believe the rich man was, indeed, in torment and agony and that Lazarus was comforted, **both conditions occurring immediately after their judgment at death.**

I know that last clause might be challenged by some. I would like to give some of the evidence supporting the idea that this parable teaches that our comfort or torment begins when we die. Please notice the actual wording,

the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side.

How much time and how many events did the Holy Spirit mean to convey transpired between "**died**" and "**the angels carried him to Abraham's side**"? "And" is a coordinating conjunction tying the two actions together. This language implies the closeness of the two actions, unless there exists contextual evidence to the contrary.

Did the Holy Spirit mean to imply that years, maybe centuries, of time plus the general resurrection and the second coming of Jesus occurred between death and the trip to Abraham's side? The general resurrection and second coming are so important, is it conceivable that it will actually happen before our trip to Abraham's side and the Holy Spirit chose not to mention it? That would mean that the two most important events in all of human history, after the ascension, occurred before Lazarus met Abraham and the Holy Spirit chose not to mention either one. How could anyone, especially the Holy Spirit, fail to mention both these events, especially if they are

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required before our reward is received? On the other hand ...

What would the Holy Spirit have said if he intended to imply that the trip happened immediately after Lazarus' judgment at death? Maybe something like "**the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side**"? His judgment is a **necessary** inference from the fact of his reward. His immediate judgment and reward necessarily imply his fate was decided by how he had lived.

The rich man also died and was buried. [Gk. has the word "**and**" added here] **In hell ...**

Again, the same question, how much time and how many events did the Holy Spirit mean to convey transpired between the action of the burial and the description of Hades/Hell in the words: "**buried. And in hell**"? Why didn't the Holy Spirit say something like:

The rich man also died and was buried. When he went to hell ... or

The rich man also died and was buried. Afterwards, **In hell** ... or

The rich man also died and was buried. He was later found **In hell** ... or

The rich man also died and was buried. After his resurrection, **In hell** ... or

any of a hundred other statements to imply a time between his burial and appearance in Hell (Gk. Hades)? Why would the Holy Spirit leave out the general resurrection and the second coming of Jesus, especially if those two events were **required** before punishment could be imposed?

What if the Holy Spirit wanted to convey an immediate transfer into the place of torment, could He have chosen to say something like "**died and was buried. And in hell, where he was in torment ...**"?

Is there more evidence supporting the idea that we receive our reward or punishment at death? We will now consider what the scriptures teach us about facing death? What should we expect at death?

Paul in his letter to the Philippians, the first chapter, starting at verse 21 says:

*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! 23 I am torn between the two: I desire **to depart and be with Christ**, which is better by far;*

When Paul dies he is expecting to go and be with Jesus. Since Jesus is at God's right hand in heaven, Paul is expecting to go to heaven when he dies, not a third place somewhere or somehow in between heaven and earth. The words must be accepted as literal unless there is contextual evidence to justify a figurative meaning. What word or group of words teach, indicate, imply or even hint that these words should be taken figuratively?

Again Paul teaches us 2 Timothy 4:6-8:

*6 For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and **the time has come** for my departure. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 **Now** there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me **on that day** — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

Paul will receive his "*crown of righteousness*" from the Lord "*on that day.*" Which day? The only day mentioned in the context is the day of his departure when he is expecting to be with Jesus. It seems like the "*crown of righteousness*" represents his reward at judgment. And this expectation is not just for Paul, but for all faithful

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Christians. The Lord is in heaven, seated at the right hand of God from whence he will give us our reward. Once again, in context, there is no intermediate place and no time lapse between his death and his reward. Any creative mind can develop some theory implying these words should be taken figuratively. An inventive mind can do that for any scripture. That is why we must agree "all words must be understood literally unless there is contextual evidence necessitating a figurative meaning," else we will have no certain teachings from God on any subject.

The next scripture is very important in our quest for understanding as to when we will have our personal judgment and receive our personal reward or punishment. Please notice how many times Paul repeats the idea of leaving this *earthly tent* and receiving his reward, each time with no time or event between leaving *our home in the body* to be *at home* with the Lord. The Holy Spirit used the pen of Paul to make this comparison **six** times. This fact is very important in our efforts to understand the relationship between our death and our judgment/reward.

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

*Now we know that if the **earthly tent** we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in **heaven**, not built by human hands.*

*2 Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our **heavenly** dwelling, 3 because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked.*

*4 For while we are in **this tent**, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our **heavenly** dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.*

*5 Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. 6 Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are **at home in the body** we are **away from the Lord**.*

*7 We live by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, I say, and would **prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord**.*

*9 So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are **at home in the body** or away from it.*

*10 **For** we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

Paul's only contrast here is between being "in this tent" or in our "heavenly dwelling." And that if we are "at home in the body," then we are "away from the Lord." Again, we "prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord" How could the Holy Spirit make these six comparisons, describing our changing from this life to the next, with absolutely no words to indicate a **resurrection** nor **second coming** between the two events, if both are **required** before our reward? **Unless**, neither is actually required between our death and our reward!

Verses 9 and 10 say we always try to please Him because we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. When will we "appear before the judgment seat of Christ"? Since verse 10 begins with *for*, implying it is an explanation of the previous verses, which implies all the comments about rewards is because, in context, the appearance at *judgment seat of Christ* must take place before we "are at home with the Lord." This means that the judgment will take place immediately upon death.

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All of these contrasts between our earthly living and our spirit's life after bodily death with no mention of any place other than here or heaven and with no time lapse or important event between death and the judgment.

It has been suggested by some that the immediate judgment at death is like a court decision and the *final judgment* at the second coming and resurrection is like the sentencing of a criminal maybe several weeks after the verdict by the jury. This is an effort on the part of some to maintain the traditional view that we will all be judged at the same time at the second coming. This analogy cannot be applied to our spiritual judgment for two reasons:

1) In a criminal case it is true that many times the sentencing is unknown at the time of the jury verdict. This is not true when we die and go to heaven or hell because we know our sentence as soon as we know our verdict, it is permanent!! No possibility of change, no crossing over the *great chasm*, Luke 16:26. The sentencing is at the same time as the verdict.

2) In a criminal case, when the jury verdict is innocent we walk out a free man, back to our old lifestyle! No sentencing. This parallel to an earthly criminal case would leave us with an immediate judgment of innocence with no sentencing or no implementation of the reward. After the death of Christians there will be a judgment AND sentencing into a **new** life, not a return to our previous **old** earthly life!

When considering at what point we will receive our destiny in heaven, at death or wait until the second coming and the general resurrection, we must consider 1) where the thief on the cross went with Jesus and 2) when Christ comes again, God will bring with Jesus those who have died as faithful Christians, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14. While Jesus was on the cross he spoke these words to the thief being crucified with Him in Luke 23:43,

*Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, **today** you will be with me in paradise."*

Since his body was disposed of as others having been crucified, the thief's spirit/soul would be with Jesus, but where did Jesus go? The word *paradise* only appears two other times in the New Testament, 2 Corinthians 12:4 and Revelation 2:7. Most agree the context of both of these passages supports the meaning of heaven, only Luke 23:43 is questioned because of the Jesus' statement to Mary After His resurrection in John 20:17. "**Jesus said, 'Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father.'**" It cannot be forgotten what Jesus said while on the cross, "father into thy hands I commit my **spirit**," Luke 23:46. While His body was in the tomb His spirit was in Sheol/Hades, Acts 2:27,31. When talking to Mary He had his new glorified body. When He said "**I**" this pronoun included His new body implying "I, with my new body" have not yet returned father. While He was in Hades Jesus preached to those in prison, 1 Peter 3:19, and those who heard lived, John 5:25. These He led to heaven, Ephesians 4:7-10. The thief received his reward the same day he died, going to heaven with Jesus after a stop in Sheol/Hades. This is proven in the article *Paradise, where did the thief go?* on website cliffbaird.wordpress.com

Now let us consider 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

Jesus is coming from heaven to meet all the resurrected saved in the air. God "*will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.*" If words have meaning the souls/spirits of the faithful Christians will accompany Jesus on this journey implying their presence with Him in heaven before the journey.

Of course it is theoretically possible that Jesus, on His way down from heaven, could stop by a third place to pick

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up the souls of "those who have fallen asleep in him," and then proceed on toward the earth. Besides the total lack of evidence to support this particular scenario, it ignores the supporting evidence of Christian souls in heaven with God before the general resurrection Revelation 6:9, 7:9, 15:2 and 20:1-4.

6:9 ¶ *When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. 10 They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"*

7:3,9,14 **3** *"Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." ... **9** *After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no-one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were **wearing white robes** and were holding palm branches in their hands. ... **(14)** *These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have **washed their robes and made them white** in the blood of the Lamb. [please read chapters 7 and 8 to see that the context is before the destruction of the earth]***

15:2 *those who had been victorious over the beast and his image... [They were in heaven before the last plagues were delivered to the earth. Compare 15:5 - 16:21]*

20:1 *And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. 4 I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life [Greek. lived] and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

All these verses in Revelation mention the saved being in heaven before the second coming and the general resurrection. They therefore support our conclusion that the dead in Christ are in heaven now, and the story of the rich man and Lazarus is a parable that teaches judgment and reward immediately following death. Does the parable in Matthew 25:31- 46 contradict these conclusions? See Objection 2, on page 11 for a detail answer.

Returning now to our text, Luke 16:26:

26 *And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'*

The rich man and Lazarus were in totally different environments. The rich man wanted relief, any relief. He hears the worse possible news. No relief is possible! To emphasize this he is told of a great chasm or gulf so "those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us." Could this be the worse part of hell? Always being able to see across the chasm and be reminded of what you could have had by simply obeying Jesus!

27 *"He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, **28** for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'*

Accepting his own fate, he immediately thinks of his 5 brothers. Brothers he must love because he so quickly thinks of them and tries to do what he can to prevent their joining him in torment. "Abraham, please send them a warning. Don't let them come here to this place of torment!"

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29 "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' 30 "'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' 31 "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

After Jesus gave up His equality with God, proving his divinity by the many miracles He performed, suffering incalculable mental and physical pain, He then sent the Holy Spirit to enable men to perform miraculous deeds and speak for God in the written word telling us of His great love, mercy, grace, forgiveness, and patience. The Word also tells us His limit! Unless we want to join the rich man in torment we must follow God's written word! In this article we have attempted to prove beyond a reasonable doubt:

A Recap of Luke 16:19-31

The Parable recorded in Luke 16:19-31.

19 "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. 20 At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores 21 and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.

24 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.' 25 "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.

26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'

27 "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, 28 for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

29 "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' 30 "'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' 31 "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

The Truths taught by the indicated verses

1. These two examples, the rich man and Lazarus, imply this parable applies to everyone who dies after Christ, teaching what will happen to all of us at death.
1. These verses teach that **at death** everyone's body is buried (or disposed of) and our souls/spirits go to comfort/torment.
2. From Hell you can look across a see the other side.
1. The rich man's body died and was buried, therefore
2. this parable is teaching about the rich man's **soul/spirit**.
3. The rich man's **spirit** was alive, alert, thinking & suffering.
4. All the talk about finger, water, tongue and fire only teaches **figuratively** about the degree of suffering.
5. Both persons had their fate decided by how they had lived.
1. The great gulf (Chasm) cannot be crossed.
2. The fate of our spirit is sealed when the human body dies or at the second coming of the Lord if a person does not die, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.
1. The rich man remembered his brothers and feared for their future!
2. The rich man cared about his brothers comfort not wanting them to join him in agony.
1. The only way for those who are still alive to avoid hell is to listen to the messages/messengers from God.
2. If a person will not believe/obey God's Word he will not believe even though a messenger comes from the dead.

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Summary

- 1) The story of the rich man and Lazarus is a parable. It cannot be a past event, Hebrews 9:15 and Romans 3:25.
- 2) All truths taught in this parable are only effective after the crucifixion, that is, in the Christian age!
- 3) Whether or not a story is a parable is not determined by a character in the story having a name.
- 4) The parable teaches judgment and reward at death, yielding heaven or hell for eternity.
- 5) The only way to avoid torment in hell is to obey God's word.
- 6) If a person will not listen to God's word, he will not obey even if someone comes back from the dead.

Some Objections answered

Objection 1.

Does the advice "listen to Moses and the Prophets" (verses 29, 31) imply this parable is applicable to those who died under the Old Testament law. If this is true then either: a) Today we also must "listen to Moses and the Prophets" **or** b) nothing in this parable applies to us today because it was spoken to the Jews who were to "listen to Moses and the Prophets."

But "a" contradicts most of the book of Hebrews and many other passages telling us the Old Law is fulfilled and replaced by the New Law, and if "b" is correct then we would seem to be able to bypass any of Jesus' teachings at the discretion of the listener because all of what He said was to the Jews. It is my conviction that neither of these two implications are acceptable! Therefore there must be another reason for Jesus' instructions to "listen to Moses and the Prophets"

Since Jesus was speaking to the Jews, he used their current source of Law, that is, the testimony of "Moses and the Prophets" to represent their Law from God which must be obeyed. Since the "current law of God" changed after the events of Acts 2, the application for us is The New Covenant. Those who lived under the Old Law must obey the "Moses and the Prophets," those who live under the New Law must obey the Law of Christ. Because of the evidence given previously (page 3) we conclude this parable must apply only to those living after the new law was put into effect.

This conclusion is verified by the fact under the old law all people, both good and bad, went to Sheol at death where there was neither comfort nor torment, Ecclesiastes 9:10. And there waited (not knowing for what) until Jesus came and preached to them, as he did to those living in the world during His lifetime. For more details see *Jesus in Sheol/Hades*, on website cliffbaird.wordpress.com .

Objection 2.

The parable of the sheep and the goats is sometimes used to support one judgment for all people at the same time. This parable is a little long, please read the entire story in Matthew 25:31- 46. I believe only verses 31 and 32 are pertinent to our discussion.

31 ¶ "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

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The important questions are: 1) when will this event occur? and 2) who will be there?

1) Jesus is speaking of some future event when all the angels will be there, for example 1 Thessalonians 3:16. To my knowledge all who believe the Bible is from God agree this event to be the second coming of Jesus.

2) Of course Jesus will be there to judge, but who is represented by *All the nations*? Does this mean all nations that have ever existed, implying everyone who has ever lived? If this was the only scripture we had on this subject of judgment we might reasonably conclude: Yes, everyone will be there. But we do have all those scriptures mentioned on the previous pages 5-7 telling us so many details about our judgment being done before the second coming! Therefore these scriptures, from pages 5-7, and others, must modify our thinking on this question. Please take the time to read all the scriptures that use the phrase *all the nations*, listed on page 14.

Our question is: Does *all the nations* mean all nations from/for all time, or just all nations at the time of speaking, i.e. when Christ comes again?

As you read the list on page 14 you will notice that the phrase is probably used in three ways:

- 1) meaning all nations that have existed from past history,
- 2) meaning all nations existing at the time the statement is made,
- 3) meaning all nations for all future time,

We know there will be many still alive at the time Jesus returns, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, and they will all be present for this judging/separation by Jesus, Matthew 25:31. All the people from *all the nations* who are alive at the time will be included. Of course, there will be no nations in existence **after** the second coming because all people will be judged, and all the earth will be destroyed at His second coming. That leaves *all the nations* from all of history to be considered. I am convicted that all the evidence from the previous pages demonstrate that all the people who died before the second coming have already been judged so they will not be included in the separation/judgment described in Matthew 25:31- 46. Please offer evidence that all or any other nations from the past will also be included in this number and we will give serious consideration to your evidence. (c2baird@charter.net)

"All the nations" as in Matthew 25:31 ff.

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- Matthew 24:9 Then shall they deliver **you** up unto tribulation, and shall kill **you**: and **ye** shall be hated of all the nations for my name's sake. [**all nations who know you** - cb]
- Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come. [**all present and future nations** - cb]
- Matthew 25:32 and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; [**context seems to imply all nations at that time** - cb]
- Matthew 28:19 Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: [**all nations present and future, no past nations** - cb]
- Mark 11:17 And he taught, and said unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? but ye have made it a den of robbers. [**all nations from the time "it was written"**- cb]
- Mark 13:10 And the gospel must first be preached unto all the nations. [**all nations from that time on** - cb]
- Luke 21:24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all the nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.
[**all nations at that time** - cb]
- Luke 24:47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. [**all nations from that time on** - cb]
- * Acts 14:16 who in the generations gone by suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways.
[**all nations previous to Christ** - cb]
- Romans 1:5 through whom we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake; [**from "we received grace and apostleship" we deduce all nations at that time** -cb]
- Romans 16:26 but **now** is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith:
[**all nations from that time on** - cb]
- * Galatians 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all the nations be blessed. [**all nations from Abraham on**]
- Revelation 12:5 And she was delivered of a son, a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne. [**all nations from the time of Christ on** - cb]
- Revelation 14:8 And another, a second angel, followed, saying, Fallen, fallen is **Babylon the great**, that hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.
[**cf. v.6 & v.12 seems to imply all nations from the time of Christ on** - cb]
- Revelation 15:4 Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all the nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy righteous acts have been made manifest. [**all nations from all time**]
- Revelation 18:3 For by the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations are fallen; and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich by the power of her wantonness. [**all nations from all time**]
- Revelation 18:23 and the light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the princes of the earth; for with thy sorcery were all the nations deceived. [**all nations from all time**]

"All the nations" as in Matthew 25:31 ff.
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