

The Rich Man & Lazarus

Review:

We've been stepping through the process of death and what happens

Last week we addressed number 3 on this list:

1. Our spirit (life force) leaves our body
2. Our body goes away (to dust)
3. Our soul "sleeps"
4. Our soul is raised
5. Our soul is either...
 - a. wrapped in a new "immortal" body
 - b. destroyed

We talked about the "Problem Words" in the Bible that confuse us

- sheol
- hades
- tartarus
- gehenna

And how we would have been better off had we just left them untranslated:

- שְׁאוֹל
- ᾗδης
- ταρταρόω
- γέεννα

As a reminder:

- **sheol & hades:** The same concept - "realm of the dead"
 - Where we are between death and resurrection
- **tartarus:** We don't know. Possibly where the evil angels are being kept until judgement. Not enough info in the Bible.
 - We DO know: Not hell. (**it's pre-judgement**)
- **gehenna:** "hell"

But there seems to be a problem with all of this...

- **IF...** we don't go right to heaven, but to sheol after we die,
- **AND...** "sheol" is a place of sleep
- **AND...** both the good and bad people go there
- Then.....

What about the rich man and Lazarus?

- Interesting: This doesn't show up in the other gospels
- **If taken literally, this throws a major wrench in to the rest of the Bible's teachings about the afterlife**
- Either we force the rest of the Bible to fit in with what we think is taught here, or we take another look to see if we've missed an angle
- **This is also a question of "Hell"**

Let's turn to Luke 13

- **Not 16** - you can't understand 16 until you start out with 13
- **What's the first rule of Bible Study? context context context**
 - We don't EVER do that with parables for some reason.
 - It would be a good idea to understand context first.

Luke 13:22ff

Before we start: When Jesus is talking to the "crowds" who is always around the edges, listening and looking to trip him up?

- **Pharisees, Sadducees, religious leaders**

22 He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. 23 And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, 24 "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.'

Wait a minute - he didn't answer their question directly!

- The question was, basically: **"How many are going to be saved?"**
 - He doesn't go there directly - he answers in a different way
 - He does this all the time
 - He is asked a question and he says, **"I'm going to tell you something much more important and you don't even know enough to ask the right question."**
- **The answer he gave:**
 - **"A time will come when you can't get in anymore, so be ready."**

26 Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' 27 But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!' 28 In that place there

will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. 29 And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and **recline at table in the kingdom of God**. 30 And behold, some are last who will be first, and **some are first who will be last**

What's the point he's trying to make?

- **The point: It's too late for them. They've blown it.**

Then - the lament for Jerusalem (Luke 13:34-35):

³⁴ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, **but you were not willing!** [and now it's too late] ³⁵ Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'

Luke 14:1-14: He went to eat at the house of a Pharisee...

After healing a crippled man, and watching people seat themselves according to prominence...

Jesus tells them a parable: (Luke 14:15-24)

¹⁶ Jesus replied: A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. ¹⁷ At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' ¹⁸ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' ¹⁹ Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' ²⁰ Still another said, 'I have just got married, so I can't come.' ²¹ The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'

Other people had opportunity and blew it, so now he invites **"the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame."**

Remember that: "the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame."

- **What are we coming up to?** Lazarus and the Rich Man.
- **Who do you think Lazarus will represent?**
 - the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame."
- **Who's he talking to?** Rich men (especially Sadducees - high priest)

Luke 14:25-15:32

Then he talks about the cost of following him

- "It's not going to be easy" he says, "But it's vitally important"
- **"And to do that, you first have to repent"**

So he tells of those parables:

- The lost sheep
- The lost coin
- The lost son
 - **The point of these?**
 - **Repentance - coming back to the fold!**
 - **In other words, "You people listening to me need to repent!"**

Then, the parable of the "Shrewd Manager" (Luke 16:1-15):

- The point of this confusing story is:
 - ¹³ No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve both God and Money.**
 - Followed immediately by: ¹⁴ **The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus.**
 - They don't like what they're hearing
 - **Jesus knows that one of the things they need to repent of is their LOVE OF MONEY.**
 - **Time's running out - life is short!**

Luke 16:14 - Jesus then emphasizes the Law and the Prophets

- ¹⁵ *And he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God"*
- **These were the same people who revered the Law and the Prophets who taught AGAINST the love of money**
 - The Pharisees venerated the Law, but didn't follow it.
 - The "marriage" issue? They were probably doing that, too, despite what the law had to say
 - **Jesus is in their FACES about them ignoring the law and the prophets.**

Up to this point, he has:

1. **Emphasized the fact that there is a point of no return**
2. **Told multiple stories about the importance - and POSSIBILITY - of repentance**
3. **Called the Pharisees out on their love of money**
4. **Then he drives the point home...**

He says in Luke 16:19:

¹⁹ There was a rich man [get that you rich guys, sneering at me] who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. [sorta like you do with your fancy labels, your name brands that you gotta have] 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. [the one who earlier had been invited to the feast] 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**; [Just like YOU do] let them listen to them.' [because you haven't] 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.' [someone like, say, for example, ME! (says Jesus)]

This one passage has led us into incredible misunderstanding.

First of all - let's look at what this story is GENERALLY about

- v23: the word "hell"
- Look in the footnotes - what's it say that word is?
 - HADES - this is NOT "gehenna"
- **This is the ONLY time "hades" is translated as "hell"**
 - it was left that way because of our misunderstandings!
 -

• Another problem: anyone see it?

- "send Lazarus to my father's house, ²⁸ for I have five brothers."
- by the time there IS hell and heaven there would have been judgement
- by the time there's judgement, there will have been a resurrection
- by the time there's a resurrection, there will be NOBODY left on earth
 - EVERYONE will have been judged

• So WHATEVER else it says - this is NOT a picture of Hell.

- If it were - are we to believe that people in heaven can look across at people in hell for eternity?
 - Their loved ones, etc?
 - How is THAT paradise?
 - We don't believe that, do we?
- If it were - what about this tongue, and the water?
 - We won't HAVE physical bodies after we die

• The facts just don't lead us to calling this "hell"

But what does this say about *hades*?

- Does this suggest 2 sections to hades?
 - **Is there a smoking section and a non-smoking section?**
 - Some believe that the torment starts in hades
 - But how can that be? We haven't been JUDGED yet!
 - Sure, God knows, but then **WHAT'S THE POINT OF THE JUDGEMENT?**
 - It just doesn't fit with the rest of scripture
 - In Revelation 20:13-14 hades is itself thrown into the "lake of fire" after being emptied of the dead.

So if it's not talking about hell, and not a picture of hades, why is it there?

He's DEFINITELY talking directly to the Pharisees & Chief Priests:

- the wearing of purple and fine linen (like priestly dress)
- The reference to "five brothers in my father's house" as an allusion to the "Rich Man" being Caiaphas, whose father-in-law, Annas, wrongly secured the position for his five sons who also served as high priests.
 - **"Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be good if one man died for the people." John 18:14**

WHAT'S THIS PARABLE ABOUT?

• Exclamation point on the entire section of Luke:

- **Please repent and come away from your love of money before it's too late!**

• TO DO THIS:

- **THEORY: Jesus may be pulling from cultural stories**
- The story has MANY of the same themes as Jewish and Egyptian stories going around at the time.
 - division between good/bad in the afterlife - like a river
 - viewing one side from the other, etc.
- There were probably stories going around much like there are in EVERY culture in history
 - in the end, the poor man down making coming out on top
 - **Like Cinderella - that story keeps popping up!**
 - First occurrence: Herodotus - 500BC - the story of Rhodipis ("rosy-cheeked")
 - It's a theme that recurs in all cultures in history
 - **Either way - it seems that Jesus is pulling from the culture**
 - There was 400 years between the testaments
 - During that time, there was a lot of talk and thought about the afterlife
 - There are words and themes here that appear in some inter-testamental writings
- **HE'S DEFINITELY SAYING: There's a time for repentance, but when you die - it's too late.**
 - (also to tell them to follow the law and the prophets)

Why does Jesus use real names?

- **When a text like this uses names, it seems so real.**
- **He's a good teacher and wanted to drive it home.**
- **HE CARED ABOUT THESE PEOPLE!! HE WAS ONE OF THEM!!**
- Lazarus
 - THEORY: Could have used "Lazarus" to reference Lazarus of Bethany the **Sadducees** not only did not believe, but attempted to have Lazarus killed again: **"So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well" (John 12:10).**
- Abraham:
 - The phrase "bosom of Abraham" was synonymous with "good afterlife"
 - He used this EXACT imagery at the beginning of this entire section: 13:29 *And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and **recline at table in the kingdom of God.** 30 *And behold, some are last who will be first, and **some are first who will be last****
 - Nobody would have assumed this to be ACTUALLY Abraham.

But when you look at this all in context, it's not about the afterlife at all!

- It's about losing the chance to do the right thing - repent
- This is a literary device - an allegory never intended to be taken literally!

**Jesus is NOT trying to teach us about the afterlife.
He's trying to warn us.**

The lesson stands for us:

- 1) **What do we need to repent of?**
- 2) **Don't wait until it's too late.**