

**THE STORY OF MAN'S DESTINY #13**  
**"THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS"**

*Lk. 16:19-31. There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores. And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 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 in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 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. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted and thou art tormented. 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. Then he said, I pray the therefore, Father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren: that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. 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 is it! This is the story everyone first turns to on the subject of hell. After several previous lessons, covering nearly every mention of hell in both the O.T. and N.T., yet always thoughts are looking beyond all of them with the question: "What about the rich man and Lazarus"? This is the champion passage of scripture used by "hell fire and brimstone" advocates. In a great majority of the messages preached about hell, this is the scripture text turned to more than any other to make the point of eternal torture of the wicked. This is the last word (or so it is believed); the unavoidable conclusion; the clear and unequivocal declaration, that there just has to be a "lake of fire burning for all eternity somewhere. A lake of fire where an "angry God" will gladly consign a Christ - rejecting people, to writhe and scream in agony and torment, while all the redeemed look over the battlements of glory, shouting: "amen, hallelujah"! The advocates of this theory are absolutely sure (they think) that any reasonable, rational and right mind cannot help but see in these scriptures the inevitable end of an unsaved life: "burning forever somewhere in a lake of literal fire". As one "renown" preacher said, not to see this you have to be ignorant and stupid. And the vast majority of theologians are completely convinced that, immediately upon the death of a sinner (even before they can get the casket to the church for the funeral, where "3 preachers" will positively declare that this ungodly specimen of humanity, is now on streets of gold) that they are already (according to their interpretation of the rich man) on fire in a devils hell. Makes you want to ask who it really is that is on the "ignorant" side of this subject, doesn't it"

Maybe it is good after all, that this story of the rich man and Lazarus is indeed the last word on the subject of hell. Now, having it before us and in our sights, we can proceed to find out just what all it is that this story has to say to us about the subject of hell, etc. Reading over this story, you soon learn that there are a lot of facts and statements in it that not one single theologian ever thought to explain to us. In fact, they seem to be so mesmerized with the doctrine of eternal torture, that they have systematically ignored the basis, substance and outright facts which are so obvious and should be (must be) dealt with. They, of all people, should best know that you cannot purposely pass over a vast majority of facts within the story and come to even the remotest essence of its meaning.

It is those "unmentioned facts" that we plan to bring to your attention by this lesson. Facts, that when mentioned, torture advocates will very likely and vehemently declare "they don't matter". Nevertheless, there are facts that will cast an entirely different light on this subject, which the vast majority of theologians, seminary professors, Bible commentaries and rank and file religionists, don't have a clue as to what they mean. Moreover, when these obvious facts that I speak of are read by these theologians, it will cause them to "gnash and grind with their teeth" that anyone would dare tamper with their age old tradition and the greatest love of their theology.

So keep on reading. This is not going to be your traditional journey through these scriptures on “The Rich Man And Lazarus”, found in Lk. 16:19-31. For the purpose of clarity as we proceed, it will help if we set forth the two interpretations which will be compared in this study. This will enable us to see more clearly the contrast between these two interpretations of the parable.

1. **TRADITIONAL VIEW.** The view most widely believed concerning this parable (the traditional view), teaches that (a) the rich man was evil and mistreated people out of his selfishness; (b) that when he died, his immortal soul went directly to a place where there is a lake of fire, eternally burning; (c) and that the rich man will endure the agony and torment of this fire for as long as God lives; (d) and that he sought God for mercy and for water and for pardon for his family, but none was granted. That (a) the beggar had nothing in this life; (b) and when he died he went immediately to “heaven”, described in this parable as Abraham’s bosom.

2. **VIEW OF DISPENSATIONAL JUDGMENTS ON LEVITICAL PRIEST.** This view is seldom ever heard mentioned in the interpretation of this parable. This is a view which proposes (a) that the story is a parable, an allegory, and that the characters in the story represent a truth that Christ is seeking to convey to his listeners; (b) that the story is a message to the failed hierarchy of the Levitical priesthood; (c) that the characters represented in the story confine the ultimate outcome of the story to the Jewish priesthood; (d) that the judgments rendered in the parable represent the final overthrow and disgraceful, agonizing end of this priesthood; (e) that the dialogue between Abraham and the rich man could only occur in an allegorical setting and not in real life; (f) that the rich man and the beggar were not arbitrary individuals of the human family, with their good and evil; but that it was a “certain” rich man and a “certain” beggar, thus narrowing and restricting the application.

The first thing we want to do as we begin this story is to identify the characters, events and conditions of the story. As I have said, most people are oblivious about much of the information as though it doesn’t matter. Following is a list of the characters and events of this story.

- a. A “certain” rich man. No doubt many rich men lived in those days, but the Lord calls attention to a “certain” one.
- b. A “certain” beggar. Surely there were other beggars in Jerusalem. (Acts 3:2).
- c. Dogs..... that licked the beggar’s sores.
- d. Abraham.
- e. Two fathers of the rich man (V27).
- f. Five brothers of the rich man.
- g. Moses and the prophets.
- h. One from the dead.

The events and conditions of the story are as follows:

- a. The rich man’s clothing of purple and fine linen.
- b. He fared sumptuously every day.
- c. The beggar was at the rich man’s gate.
- d. Full of sores.
- e. Crumbs from the rich man’s table.
- f. Dogs licked the beggars sores.
- g. The beggar died and was carried to Abraham’s bosom.
- h. The rich man died and was buried.
- i. Hell.
- j. The rich man in torments.
- k. He could see Abraham far off and the beggar in his bosom.
- l. The rich man asks for the beggar to be sent to cool his tongue.
- m. Further dialogue between Abraham and the rich man, both of which are dead.
- n. The great gulf fixed between them.
- o. A petition to send a message to the 5 brothers.
- p. The 5 brothers have Moses and the prophets for a testimony.
- q. The testimony of one risen from the dead would be more persuasive.

As you can easily see there are many more characters and events to this story than are usually

explained by those who are interpreting the story only for eternal torture purposes. And there are also many more events and conditions than are usually explained. We contend that a fair and faithful exegesis of any scripture does not limit itself to a few of the facts, figures and content related to it. All scripture relating to a passage is profitable and important to that passage. It has been our observation that eternal torture advocates never employ and explain all the points and conditions of this parable. If there are any who do, I would like to be favored with their explanation. You would think by their failure to do so, that the Lord filled up this parable with so much useless fodder just for packing. The Lord was not telling a novel where you write the plot to fit the desired end. He was propounding divine, eternal truth that must be dealt with in its entirety. When you deal with this parable in such a flippant manner, leaving out major portions of it, then you assign any surface, arbitrary application to those portions that come to mind, regardless as to their fit within the whole garment of the story. I trust that I have sufficiently made the point that, in interpreting this parable, all of the details must have a scriptural answer, or our interpretation is highly questionable.

Let us look further at some points and questions to emphasize the impropriety and ambiguity of carelessly avoiding major portions of the parable.

1. Since this parable addresses a “certain” rich man and a “certain” beggar, by what authority can we then make them “general” instead of “certain”.
2. The rich man has 5 brothers: who are they? Or doesn’t it matter? Was the Lord just filling up space with this statement?
3. The rich man says that he has 2 fathers (V27). Who is he referring to?
4. There was a great gulf between Abraham and the rich man. What was it? If you say that it was a gulf of “faith”, (as I do) then you have taken it out of the literal and made it allegorical.
5. The rich man died and was buried, yet he continued talking. Is this every day, normal procedure?
6. How did the beggar get into Abraham’s bosom? If you answer that this is a figure of speech, representing something else, I would agree. But then you cannot limit this “figure of speech” interpretation (allegory) to Abraham’s bosom. That opens the door for the torments, flame, conversation, etc., to also be allegorical.
7. The 5 brothers have Moses and the prophets. Who did Moses and the prophets apply to?
8. The rich man wanted Abraham to send Lazarus, a dead beggar, to cool his tongue. How was (dead) Abraham going to send (dead) Lazarus to cool the tongue of the (dead) rich man?
9. The story speaks of one who rose from the dead. Does anyone have any idea who that might possibly be? Is Abraham connected to someone who has returned from the dead, or has the power to do so?
10. Were the dogs of this parable just a pack of stray dogs roaming around Jerusalem that took advantage of some poor beggar on the street, with his body full of sores, and licked them? If so, can any scripture be produced for a precedent for this?

These and many more questions are posed by any interpretation of this parable, and they demand a scriptural answer. Of course, if you don’t have answers for the questions, then you turn to the bottomless pit of tradition and you confine your comments to the flame, torments, and hell and conveniently overlook all the rest. That satisfies tradition, but it is totally unacceptable for truth.

With all of the fore going parts of this lesson thus described, we have carved out a responsibility for ourselves to apply every single portion of the parable in a harmonious way that will convey the original message the Lord Jesus intended, regardless as to what that does to tradition or theory. That is exactly what we propose to do!

#### THE PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS JUDGMENTS ON THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD.

Turning now to the 16th chapter of Luke, we invite your attention first of all to verses 1-17, and the parable of the unjust steward, before we consider the rich man and Lazarus from V19-31. I think that it is no mere coincidence that in V1, there is also a “certain rich man”, just as there is in V19, of our parable. This raises the question as to whether or not the “certain” rich man of V1, is the same

“certain” rich man of V19? The obvious answer is that they are the same. Either way, we can derive an important beginning point for our study by looking at V1-17.

The rich man of V1 had a steward over his goods and the steward had been unfaithful in his charge and responsibility to the rich man. Without going into details of the failure of this steward, let me direct your attention to V14-15. After Jesus finished this lesson on the unfaithful steward, the Pharisees, because of their covetousness, derided him. In V15, Jesus chides them for their hypocrisy. The Pharisees perceived (and rightly so) that this lesson on the unjust steward was pointed directly to them. They, of all people, had miserably failed to keep the true spirit of the law and the prophets. With all of their outward show of religion, yet inwardly, they were full of hypocrisies, self righteousness and a rejection of the principals of the law. They were unjust stewards of the testimonies of the law and the prophets. No one can doubt that. Then (V19), Jesus goes right into the parable of “the rich man and Lazarus”.

There was a certain rich man --- (1) which was clothed in purple and fine linen; (2) who fared sumptuously every day; (3) he died and was buried; (4) in his death he is in some form of torment; (5) he called Abraham his father; (6) Abraham called him his son; (7) A vast gulf between Abraham and the rich man; (8) the rich man has 2 fathers; (9) the rich man had 5 brothers; (10) his brothers have Moses and the prophets to listen to.

There was a certain beggar named Lazarus. (1) Laid at the rich man’s gate; (2) full of sores; (3) desiring crumbs; (4) from the rich man’s table; (5) dogs lick his sores; (6) he dies; (7) carried to Abraham’s bosom; (8) Lazarus is comforted.

With these 10 characteristics of the rich man and 8 of the beggar, we should be able to go to the scriptures and identify them, along with each of their markings. With the preceding story of this chapter of the certain rich man who had an unjust steward, which pointed to the failed stewardship of the Pharisees, it is evident that the certain rich man had authority over the steward (Pharisees). That leads you, in the parable of the unjust steward, to the conclusion that the certain rich man (over the Pharisees) had to be the Levitical priesthood. Then with the virtual certainty that the rich man in both parables is the same character, we make a statement that the “certain” rich man in our parable, is, likewise, the Levitical priesthood. But we cannot just make that assertion without evidence that all of the other characteristics and facts, also belong to the Levitical priesthood. Let us see.

a. In V19, he was clothed in purple and fine linen. We believe that this represents the priestly garments of the Levitical priesthood. *Ex. 28:4-5; and 39:27-29. And these are the garments which they shall make: a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a brodered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office. And they shall take gold, and blue and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, with cunning work.*

*And they made coats of fine linen of woven work for Aaron, and for his sons, And a mitre of fine linen, and goodly bonnets of fine linen, and linen breeches of fine twined linen. And a girdle of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, of needlework; as the Lord commanded Moses.*

b. V19. He fared sumptuously every day..... The welfare and income for the priesthood was from the Jewish tithing system. They did not have a territory of land in Canaan, but they fared much better than others did because of the tithes that were paid to them. *Num. 18:20-21. And the Lord spake unto Aaron, thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel. And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.* Neither can you overlook the fact that in the days of Christ, the Levitical priesthood was “rich” in power, pomp, pride, tradition, self righteousness and even arrogance. They were rich like the Laodicean church in Rev. 3: rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing. Such was the status of the priests.

c. V20-22. There is a “certain” beggar ---- named Lazarus --- at the rich man’s gate --- full of sores -

-- begging for crumbs from the rich man's table --- dogs licked his sores --- the beggar dies --- and is carried to Abraham's bosom. When Jesus gave this parable, Abraham had been dead and buried in the field of Macpelah for hundreds of years. No one is going to say that this beggar is literally in the bosom of Abraham. So what does "Abraham's bosom" represent to us in this use? Some would interpret this to mean that the beggar died and went to heaven. It does not say that. But even that view teaches that Abraham's bosom does not mean his bosom literally, but instead is a symbol or figure of speech, illustrating heaven. You are compelled to conclude that Abraham's bosom is, indeed, a symbol or allegory for something. The question is: What will scripture verify that it represents. Before trying to ascertain what it represents, there is an even greater problem raised by this symbolic use of Abraham's bosom. If it cannot be taken literal but is a symbol of something else (which it surely is), then does that not impose symbolism on the entire parable? You can't vacillate back and forth between a literal vs. symbolic application of conditions within the parable. That would be an arbitrary, inconsistent method of interpretation. Are the dogs a pack of hounds, or do they represent something else? Is the rich man just someone who has accumulated a lot of wealth (which would not be a sin of itself) or is there a "certain" rich man intended. This all brings us back to a previous point which I made. You cannot extract just a small part of the parable to fit your point of view. It is absolutely essential that you consider every detail. That, after all, is why the Lord put those details in the parable. They aren't just useless words to fill up space.

There were no doubt many beggars in those days as there has always been. But a "certain" beggar is intended here, along with other distinguishing characteristics. The carnal, surface interpretation would describe this beggar at the rich man's gate, as one of a multitude, daily looking for a handout, that the rich man refused so much as the crumbs from his table. This certain beggar is named "Lazarus". Is this name significant in any way?

The rich man rejected any help, comfort or attention to this beggar. Later verses (V29-31) indicate that the rich man had also rejected the voice of Moses and the prophets. First he has rejected Moses and the prophets. Next he rejects a beggar full of sores right at his gate.

We have asserted that the rich man represents the Levitical priesthood, which for centuries ruled the religious life of Israel and lived very well off of the lucrative Jewish tithing system. But now we must determine who this beggar at the rich man's gate is.

I do not believe that this "beggar" represents just any ordinary beggar, but a certain beggar. That being true, we have to look for someone that the symbolic language would present as a beggar and identify him at the gate of the Levitical priesthood. I believe that this beggar, full of sores, at the rich man's gate represents in full measure and detail, the status of the Lord Jesus Christ before the religious authority of the Levitical priesthood. I recognize that is so foreign to the traditional view, which teaches that the beggar was one of many "no bodys". In view of my statement that this beggar is Jesus, let us take a broad look at the relationship between Jesus and the priests of his day in Jerusalem. The hate and rejection of Jesus by them is so well documented, that hardly does it need re-emphasizing. But it will help us to identify this "certain" beggar as Jesus, if we refresh our minds as to how belligerent, self-righteous, disdainful and blasphemous they were toward him. As we say, "they would not give him the time of day". They were haughty, always seeking means to entrap him and destroy him. Jesus came unto his own and his own received him not. In the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus specifically named a priest and a Levite as passing by and refusing help to the one beaten, robbed and left to die. Then a Samaritan came along and took care of his needs. It was Jesus who was so maligned, abused, condemned, rejected and hated by, guess who, the priests and Levites. And it was a Samaritan that helped him. Jesus sorely was hurt, wounded and refused acceptance by the whole Jerusalem establishment. He stood over the brow of the hill and wept over it because they would not listen to his entreaty. As a result, he said, your house is left unto you desolate. In the end of his ministry it was the priests who clamored so loudly about his "blasphemy". Using every base witness available, with anger, rage and religious bigotry as their inspiration, they drove a frenzied mob to demand his crucifixion. Then they paid money to have lies told about his resurrection. In all of the religious society of Judaism that day, no one, not even the literal beggar on the street, was considered more of a tramp, wastrel, low life, outcast or untouchable than Jesus was by the religious

element, headed up by the Levitical priesthood.

Truly Jesus (symbolically) laid at the gate of the priests full of sores, begging for crumbs of acceptance, with not one single word of comfort or peace to him. The gate of cities in O.T. times was the place of judgment, arbitration and treaties and a place where justice was supposed to be found. But none was found there for Jesus. Nowhere did he suffer any more than at “Jerusalem’s gate” of injustice. Well did Zechariah prophecy, saying: “what are these wounds in thine hand”? Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. Jesus lay at the gate of Jerusalem full of sores. The 53rd chapter of Isaiah is a broad commentary of the sufferings Jesus bore. Those sufferings go far beyond just that on the cross, as terrible as that was. His sufferings were not at the hands of the Gentiles, generally. They were at the hands of the religious rulers in Jerusalem. Everyone knows that to be true. Jesus was rejected and condemned at the “gate” of Jerusalem, with the priests leading the way. A “beggar” at the “rich man’s” gate “full of sores” is surely a suitable symbol of the treatment the priests rendered to Christ Jesus.

What about the name of this beggar? If he was Jesus, why did he not use his own name. For the same reason that he so often hid the deep meaning of his message behind a metaphor, allegory, parable, symbol or figure of speech. He concealed it from the wise and prudent and revealed it unto babes. The message Jesus preached for over 3 years, did more to vex and condemn the majority of the religious leaders than it did to bring them peace and hope. This was all because of their pride and hatred of him. So in naming this beggar Lazarus, you see this principal of hiding the truth of his message where it requires the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit to reveal it. The name Lazarus comes from the Hebrew name: Eleazar. This name means: “the help of God”. How fitting. Jesus Christ was the “help of God” for a helpless world. No doubt many will believe that the beggar’s name could just as well have been John, Jack, or Larry. But not when you are dealing with a certain beggar. The Lord did not use this name by accident or carelessly. It was chosen to fit the one who suffered so much at the rich man’s gate, yet came to the world to “help” all mankind be saved. Maybe you don’t agree with this use and application of the name Lazarus to the Lord Jesus. Okay! Simply provide a better explanation from scripture; not from opinion or tradition.

This beggar desired to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table (V21). In spite of their ridicule, hate, unbelief and crucifixion, Jesus still sought even the least recognition and acceptance by them of his message of salvation. They paid no attention to the prophecies that so clearly identified him as the Christ and his compassionate works and mighty miracles they accused of coming from Beelzebub. The rich man’s table was not a dining room table; but the table of the law. In Rom. 11:9, Paul quotes from David: Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block and a recompense unto them. They could not see in their own law, the lowly Nazarene as being the fulfillment of it as their Messiah. This thought of Christ desiring crumbs from the rich man’s table will be greatly strengthened as we consider the “dogs that licked his sores”.

“The dogs came and licked his sores”. (V21). This certain beggar named Lazarus, was at the gate of the rich man, full of sores, desiring the crumbs from the rich man’s table. And along comes a pack of stray dogs that the beggar could not fend off, and they began to lick his sores. Is that the depth of interpretation that tradition offers us on this awful picture? If so, we ask: provide some scriptural parallel and precedent for such a bizarre picture.

Instead of a pack of stray hounds licking this beggar’s sores, we simply continue with our representation of Jesus as this beggar. And if that is at all true, then there must be some scriptures that will confirm for us that “dogs” provided some relief for his sores of rejection and hatred by the high priests. Those scriptures are found in Mt. 7:6, where Jesus teaches not to cast that which is holy unto the dogs. In Is. 56:10, the Lord said his watchmen are all dumb “dogs”. In Ph. 3:2, Paul warns us to beware of “dogs”. Is there anyone who thinks Paul is talking about the 4 footed animal we call man’s best friend? Or is the use of “dogs” in these scriptures a figure of speech or symbolic of humans who sometimes, according to these scriptures, act like dogs?

Now turn to Mt. 15:21-28 and Mk 7:24-30. There a Syrophenecian woman (a Gentile) came to Christ

(believing in him) asking him to heal her daughter. At first Christ ignored her, which is very unusual. When she persisted, his answer was just as unusual, as he said: "it is not meet to take the children's food and give it to dogs". To this answer she replied: "truth Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table". For this answer, Jesus greatly commended her faith, and told her that her daughter was healed. "Dogs" in these scriptures, as everyone certainly knows, is not talking about 4 legged animals. It is talking about Gentile people or Samaritan people, which the Jews (with the endorsement of the high priest) called dogs. And yet these outcasts from the society of the elite Jewish religious hierarchy are so often found believing in Christ and honoring him for his mighty works among them; something the Levitical priesthood scorned and absolutely refused to do. And from this recognition of faith given by these "dogs" to the Lord Jesus, his hurt and pain, HIS SORES, were "licked". Theology has two choices with these dogs licking the beggar's sores. (1) It can assign them to the 4 legged variety wandering around Jerusalem, licking the literal sores of sick people; or (2), It can follow the example of Mt. 15 and Mk. 7, and realize that these dogs refer to those excluded from the religious society of the Jews, led by the Levitical priesthood. How could there be any question that it is the later of the 2.

With this simple fact, of the "dogs" of the Jewish society licking the sores of rejection and scorn inflicted upon Christ by the Jewish religious leadership, the entire parable begins to take on a totally different direction and meaning than hoary tradition offers us. Already there has been so much allegory and symbolism as the only option for interpretation that it presents us with the problem of not being able to apply certain parts of the parable in a literal sense without creating an irreconcilable inconsistency for the entire parable.

Next, the beggar dies, and is carried by the angels into "Abraham's bosom". "*ABRAHAM'S BOSOM*"?! What is that? Where is it? How does it fit? Tradition immediately responds by telling us that Abraham's bosom means "heaven". That the beggar went immediately to heaven when he died. In other words, tradition would have us believe that "Abraham's bosom" is symbolic of heaven. Tradition would tell us that it does not really mean that the beggar went, literally, to the bosom of ancient Abraham. Imagine that! Traditionalists taking this parable that they have so steadfastly maintained should be interpreted very literally and that the torments and flame, etc., are very literal and real but now we come up against the idea that the beggar was transported to Abraham's bosom, and all of a sudden they are sure that it "symbolizes" heaven. It makes you want to say that you can't have it both ways doesn't it? Yes, of course, Abraham's bosom is a symbol. But where in the parable do you apply symbolic application and where do you apply literal? You really cannot have it both ways. That the expression "Abraham's bosom" here is used symbolically, there can be no doubt. However, the real question before us is, how would the scriptures define what Abraham's bosom might be?

We have been portraying the beggar as representative of Jesus. Can that be reconciled with "Abraham's bosom"? In his natural life we know that Abraham was the 'father of the faithful'; the father of the Hebrew family; the great tribal father of the nation of Israel. We also know that his son Isaac was a miracle son, which God had promised to Abraham. In addition to this, we also know that Isaac became the lineage through which God ultimately brought Christ into the world, and thereby our salvation. Maybe you have heard the expression many times that Isaac was a type of Christ due to his miraculous birth and his purpose in the world. More than this, we recognize in the occasion when Abraham was told to make a sacrifice of Isaac to the Lord, that Isaac here typifies the ultimate sacrifice of Christ. With all of this in view, it is not hard to also see that Abraham, in his divinely called purpose, was a great type of God, just as his miraculous son was a type of Christ.

We readily recognize that Jesus died and ascended, as the Bible would describe it, back to God. Once he said that he was come from God and went to God. The Bible describes Jesus as returning to the Father. Now listen to Jn. 1:18. "No man hath seen God at anytime: the only begotten son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. In what sense was Jesus in the bosom of the Father? Further, Jesus said: I am in the Father and the Father in me. Without trying to get into the details of incarnation, or the thoughts about the Godhead, we can certainly state that these expressions about Jesus being in the Father, or being in the bosom of the Father, speak of

relationship. In this case, it would be a relationship that includes his birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension. Thus, the beggar, (in our case, Christ Jesus) has returned to the bosom of the Father, where he was before. He was deity in human form, coming to manifest the fullness of deity to the world. I know of no other scripture in the entire Bible that gives any description of anyone being in the bosom of another, except Jesus Christ who came from God and returned to God.

The rich man also died --- and was buried. Where do you suppose he was buried: in the earth; in the sea; in a pyramid? Already we have seen that in the death of the beggar, his destination (Abraham's bosom) requires a symbolic interpretation. Now we are faced with the death and burial of the rich man. Was this a literal burial in the earth, or was it a symbolic burial? In Eze. 37:12, the prophet says that God will bring the dry bones that Ezekiel wrote about, up out of their graves. No one that I know of believes that this is in reference to a literal grave, but of being buried in trespasses and sins. In speaking of the judgments that would come upon the house of Judah for their unbelief, Jer. 19:11, says, that they would bury in Tophet til there be no place to bury. We believe that the Levitical priesthood, the rich man, was dead in their sins of rebellion, pride and unbelief, and the judgment of the termination of their priesthood and therefore their power and position, was close at hand.

Then the parable continues (V23), "and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments." Following his burial, the scripture says that, "in hell he lift up his eyes". Hell here comes from "hades", which simply means a place of burial or place of the dead. Even though some who seem driven to recognize that hades does not embrace the idea of eternal torture, have therefore tried to interpret hades as an "intermediate" place where the dead wait for their final destination. But there is no scripture or reliable definition for hades as such a place. The rich man is dead, and Ecc. 9:5, tells us that the dead know not anything. Yet this verse and those following describe an ongoing conversation, stemming from the condition the rich man is experiencing. These are conditions that Ecc. 9:5 disputes as being possible. Tradition describes these feelings as that which comes from an immortal, invisible "soul" that left the rich man's body at death and "descended" into hell, where his disembodied spirit will burn in fiery torment forever. (Forever, that is, until his fleshly body is resurrected and reunited with this soul, already on fire, and then both will be consigned to torture). On this one phrase: "and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments", hinges the entire traditional theology of eternal torture. Never mind what all the other facts of the parable mean, nor for that matter, the entire parable being harmonized with the rest of the Bible. Torture theorists exult in the notion that it has found someone in the torment of flames in hell and that is the end of the story, they feel. For all practical purposes the other 10 verses of the parable are totally irrelevant and can be expunged from the sacred text as useless chatter, divine inspiration notwithstanding.

Indeed, if verses 23-25, were the only verses and facts of the parable (and the Bible) on the subject, then the torture theory would deserve more consideration. But they are not! In addition, our interpretation of these 3 verses do not stand alone in biblical theology, but absolutely must be reconciled with all other scriptures that offer us instruction on the subject of the destiny of sinners. And the other facts of the parable must be considered and we are not going to stand aside while theologians conveniently ignore these facts. Their only viable alternative is to provide a scriptural, harmonious application of all the facts of this parable, or else stand charged with a wanton, reckless abuse of scriptural interpretation, which would render inaccurate and false any conclusions drawn from V23-25, without a legitimate analysis of the other verses also.

Now, back to the death of the rich man. The Levitical priesthood which had rejected and crucified Christ, (the beggar) comes to its end, not just because it had fulfilled its appointed purpose, but moreover because of their God - rejecting years of unbelief, they came to a violent, catastrophic end. From their perspective, there was no Christ, and their priesthood would continue on in full force and authority. However from God's perspective, Christ was the end of the law and of its priest-hood, in addition to their years of hypocrisy and rejection of truth. They were --- in God's determination, non-existent, invalid, dethroned, disqualified ---- dead. Get a good picture of their violent ranting, blasphemy and utter contempt for Christ and his message. Everyone knows (including torture theologians) that the priests were the authority that vehemently pushed for the destruction of Christ; the silencing of the resurrection and of the elimination of the "ignorant" disciples who were



proclaiming the resurrection message. Nothing “tormented” them as much as the success of the resurrection; the preaching of it; and the joy that the people were finding in it. They were on “fire” with rage, anger, and their own rejection by God. Look at how they stirred up a frenzied mob to cry for the crucifixion of Christ. Look at Acts 3 and 4, as to how they loathed the apostles and their preaching of the resurrection. Then consider their own conscience seared with unbelief and blasphemy as they saw their priestly office, position, fame, wealth and power crumbling before their eyes. Regardless as to whether you think this parable involves the rejection of the Levitical priesthood or not, yet the description we have just given of them cannot be denied.

Then a strange thing happens. The rich man who was just declared dead begins a conversation with Abraham, who has been dead for centuries. If this is not an allegory, then there is no other precedent for it in all scripture. In addition, the idea that 2 dead men have their immortal souls engaged in a conversation, with one of them presumed to be in heaven and the other in a fiery hell, is a ludicrous proposition for natural life. If they could do it, so could any others. The Lord did not describe any special communication miracles for these two above any others. Of all who traditional theology has assigned to “mansions in the sky” or a lake of fire surely there would be some record somewhere of them lifting up the same plea for deliverance from their torments. The fact is that it is an allegory of the torments and fiery judgments visited upon this rich man clothed in purple and fine linen, who fared sumptuously every day: the Levitical priesthood.

Listen in on this conversation between the rich man and Abraham. Be sure to “hear” what is really said in all of this dialogue between “dead people”, and not just what traditional theology has proclaimed for centuries. Here is this dead man “lifting up his eyes” --- “and seeth Abraham afar off” --- “and Lazarus in his bosom”. Focus on that scene. An immortal soul with eyes (part of the fleshly body) and he can (literally) see from hell to heaven? Moreover, what he sees is one dead man in the bosom of another dead man! Is that the way it is in “heaven” when you go there: you reside in the bosom of someone who went there before you? O no, (tradition would answer); this is an allegory (a picture) of real events. Exactly, it is an allegory. Therefore the question that must be answered is: what is the real event? since it obviously is allegorical of something other than what appears to be.

Then the rich man cries out: “Father Abraham”! (Enough to take your breath away --- he calls Abraham father). By what authority and lineage does this rich man dare call Abraham father? Is it just an off - hand manner of expression, or does he have reason to refer to him as father? Or, as I have been saying, that this rich man is an allegory of the Levitical priesthood, and as such he would indeed refer to Abraham as “father” for several reasons.

Then the rich man asks father Abraham to send Lazarus so he could dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue. Just his tongue? Why not his ears, eyes, hands, feet, body? Is it because the rich man’s “immortal --- body - less, soul does not have any of these physical members, including a tongue? Or is it because the rich man really does represent the Levitical priesthood, which was the mouth piece, the voice of the law, and they had so radically and ridiculously used their “tongue” as a “world of iniquity” against the Lord and against his Christ, and the whole body of eternal truth entrusted in their care? And don’t overlook this fact either: why specifically send Lazarus” unless Lazarus really is a type of Jesus (as we have said) and therefore the only one who would have any authority to grant such a request. And further, is it not precisely because the Levitical priesthood had so officially and vociferously condemned and rejected Christ that they were in the torments of rejection, anger, hate, desolation and “death”.

Pay close attention now, to hear just how Abraham answers the rich man’s request. (V25) But Abraham said, “son” ----. Not only does the rich man call Abraham father, but Abraham calls the rich man his son! Is the Lord Jesus just making this up like a novel or is it just a play on words, or is it the truth? If he is conveying a truth, can we just ignore it, or are we bound to find out what truth? We now have a “father - son” relationship described. In what sense could Abraham call him his son? If the rich man was just any rich man among the selfish Roman Gentiles of his day, then Jesus sure did abuse language, for there would be no kind of father - son relationship between them. This presents us with another overlooked fact. With a father - son relationship between Abraham and the rich man, the entire parable is thereby limited to the Hebrew family and does not, therefore, apply to

**Gentiles.**

There is more. Abraham continues by pointing out that in the rich man's life time, he lived the good life, and Lazarus, in his life time, had evil things. To paraphrase this, it would read: Levi, you wore fine clothing and fared sumptuously every day from the tithing system given to you, while on the other hand, Jesus was despised and rejected and the "Son of man had nowhere to lay his head". More than that, Levi, you would not respect, acknowledge or accept a single thing Jesus did that was good because you were so full of jealousy, envy and hate.

And beside this, (V26) there is a great gulf fixed between us so that they which would pass from hence (where Abraham and the beggar are) cannot. If this was addressing geographic locations (up there and down there) the very presumption that anyone would want to leave from "up there and go down there" is ludicrous. Nevertheless, the statement presumes that possibility. You need to ask, what is this great gulf? Is it a gulf of water; or space as from Australia to Washington, D.C.? Does traditional theology presume it to be a gulf between two fixed points: heaven and hell? A gulf of mere geography would be passable, but this gulf is not. Therefore the gulf has to be philosophical and relational or spiritual. That is, a gulf where the concepts of faith and the condition of relationship between the rich man and the beggar are not crossable. To add to this impossibility of passage, you have the dead status of the rich man (rejected Levitical priesthood), with all hope of reconciliation eliminated. When the angry mob, stirred up by the high priest, shouted, "let his blood be on us and on our children" and so it has been.

(V27-29) Up to this point, we have been attempting to create a pattern of allegories which we have stated were a depiction of a rejected Levitical priesthood compared to a beggar that was exalted, which we have said represents Christ. We have seen the conversation between the rich man and Abraham take on a "father - son" relationship. This alone, we believe, confines the events of this parable within the Hebrew family and therefore is not applicable to the rest of the world.

What we now find in V27-29, is on the one hand impossible to harmonize and explain within the theory of torture theology, and on the other hand absolutely compelling on behalf of the application of the parable to the divine rejection of the Levitical priesthood, along with the exaltation of Christ. V27 says: "I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house -----". He prayerfully invokes "father Abraham", whom he has addressed as father in V24 and whom Abraham addressed as son in V25, to send him (the beggar) to "my father's house". Is this a misprint or a misstatement? If not, then the rich man has two fathers! (Let me press again the issue of the many overlooked or discounted facts of this parable under traditional theology). How could the rich man have two fathers and who are they? If you are trying to rationalize this under torture theology, you undoubtedly have a problem. However, it fits perfectly with our position that the rich man is Levi. He addressed Abraham as father which recognizes him as the father of the entire Hebrew family, and indeed, the great grandfather of Levi. Secondly, Levi's actual father would be Jacob, the patriarch of the twelve tribes, from which Levi came. Thus "2 fathers" further identify this certain rich man as a very distinct member of the lineage of the Hebrew family.

As we shall now see, from V28, God leaves nothing to doubt, in the unfolding of any portion of his blessed truth. In all things God always provides unquestionable details to answer the deepest questions raised by the eternal purposes he chooses to hide from the natural eye in the depth of allegories that only the Holy Spirit can reveal. The rich man pleads with Abraham because "I have five brothers". I cannot help but muse at how lightly traditional theology advocates brush this aside as just a coincidental happen - stance that the rich man has five brothers, and thereby accuse the statement of being useless trivia of absolutely no consequential value. It is not right or acceptable to accuse Jesus with filling his messages with mumbo - jumbo that has no bearing on the message or its purposes. If traditional torture theology is right, then you can safely assign these five brothers to oblivion. If it is wrong, and the parable is an allegory of the Levitical priesthood, then it is incumbent on us to verify these five brothers from scripture. With that challenge before us, I invite your attention as we consider who these 5 brothers are.

We know that, as we previously stated, Levi's father is Jacob. We also know that Jacob was the father of the 12 patriarchs (and tribes) of Israel. We further know that Jacob's sons were born to him by 4 women: Rachel, Leah and their two handmaids, Bilhah and Zilpah. The record of this is found in Gen. 35:22-26. Levi was the son of Jacob by his wife Leah (V23). In addition to Levi, Leah also gave Jacob Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun; exactly 5 brothers. Someone will quickly point out that Levi had eleven brothers. No, he had five brothers and six half brothers. If you will search the families of the O.T., you will find many examples where children of different mothers, even with the same father, are often mentioned in this kind of disconnected fashion. One major example should satisfy this fact. Who does the Bible frequently mention as the "son" of Abraham? Isaac is the correct answer. The fact is, however, Abraham had another son, Ishmael, whom Hagar bore to him. In addition to this, several years after the death of Sarah, Abraham took another wife, named Keturah. Abraham fathered 6 other sons by this marriage. Many will not even know that this is true. ( Gen. 25:1-2). The reason emphasis is only placed on Isaac as Abraham's son is that he was the lineage through which the plan of God would descend. Thus, his other offspring are only a footnote to history. Levi indeed had five brothers, as the parable declares. And now you know their names. Thus, another one of those "trivia facts" points us explicitly to Levi as that certain rich man.

This next point overwhelming puts this parable in the arena of the Hebrew people (and expressly the Levitical priesthood), exclusive of all others. In V29, Abraham says to him (the rich man) they (the five brothers) have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. In other words, if your five brothers want to avoid this place of torment and anguish, then they need to heed what the law and the prophets teach (about Christ). To whom was the law given and the prophets sent? The only answer available is to the Hebrew family. And that was exactly their problem; they had failed to hear and obey them and Levi had forsaken them. In Jn. 5:45-47, the Lord declared: *Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye (pretend) to trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings how shall ye believe my words?* The Jews (through the priests) had failed to believe Christ because they had failed to truly believe Moses writings. In V39 of this same chapter, Jesus admonishes them: *Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.* These five brothers, sons of Jacob, led by the Levitical priesthood, had totally rejected the Christ that was so clearly typified in the law and so distinctly prophesied by the prophets. Let them hear them "Abraham" declares! They cannot ignore, or falsely interpret the law and the prophets and hope to cross the great gulf of unbelief that exists between them and the beggar (Jesus Christ).

Finally, from V30-31, a very interesting and convincing finale is given to this story told in allegory. The previous several verses have presented us with some persuasive facts linking this parable to the Levitical priesthood. In these last two verses, our thoughts will be re-directed to the beggar, whom we have said is an allegory for Jesus Christ. After Abraham told the rich man that his five brothers would have to listen to Moses and the prophets in order to avoid this place (condition) of torment, the rich man appeals to a greater power for their deliverance. "Nay, father Abraham (Moses and the prophets can't deliver them from this fate): but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. Abraham replied, "if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead. The conversation is talking about the beggar being raised from the dead and going to witness to the rich man's five brothers in order to turn them from the same fate he has. With Moses and the prophets being ignored and disobeyed by these five brothers, the rich man thinks that if one rose from the dead it would change them. What shall we say this means? Does it teach that if someone like Lazarus (the brother of Mary and Martha) or the widow of Nain's son would return from the dead it would change the five brothers? Not a chance! When Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, was raised from the dead, the Pharisees and chief priests were incensed. They took counsel from that day forth to put him to death (Jn. 11:46-53). The only valid resurrection with redeeming power in it is that of the Lord Jesus himself (in this parable represented as the beggar). Obviously no other resurrection but his would be greater than Moses (law) and the prophets. We have declared that this beggar, in Abraham's bosom, is a type of Christ. His resurrection, and his only, would have any power to redeem these five brothers. Nevertheless,

Abraham says, if they haven't heard Moses and the prophets, they won't hear Jesus and his resurrection either. History bears out the fact that they would not hear the "resurrection message". They rejected Moses and the prophets and they rejected Jesus and his resurrection also.

Thus the parable of the rich man and Lazarus concludes with a triumphant Lazarus and a desolate, tormented, rejected Levitical priesthood. We have dealt with every single verse in the entire story and with each pertinent fact. We have not avoided the word "hell" which comes from the word "hades" and means a place of burial. We have not avoided the expressions of "torment" or "flame", which we believe we have shown that they represent the torment and mental anguish of a rejected, Christ hating, truth despising, hypocritical Levitical priesthood. There is simply too much evidence within the parable itself that points explicitly to the structure of the Hebrew family alone for it to be ignored and never addressed and given a fair application to the whole. If and when it is fairly addressed, it alters the traditional theology on this story completely. Also, there is too much biblical evidence that upholds the allegorical premise of the parable for this to be ignored. If it be argued that it still points to a searing, burning, literal torment in a literal flame of fire somewhere, then I ask for that to be harmonized with all the rest of the parable as well as the rest of the Bible.

If all one has ever heard from this story is the traditional torture theory, then it is safe to say that you have never before heard any preacher of that view deal with all of the intricate details, harmoniously, throughout the entire parable. Furthermore, avoiding or arbitrarily applying these details is a gross mistreatment of scripture. Too many questions arise from the neglect or avoidance of the facts presented in a story which, by either realm of theology, is of enormous importance.

- Who is the certain rich man?
- Who is the certain beggar?
- Who are the two fathers of the rich man?
- Why did Abraham call the rich man son?
- What is Abraham's bosom?
- Who does "Moses and the prophets" apply to?
- Who alone has risen from the dead with redeeming power?
- Is the story an allegory?
- If it is not an allegory or parable, then how do dead people converse?
- What is the great gulf?
- Does "hell" mean a place of burial and if not what does it mean?
- Where was the rich man buried?
- Is there any evidence in the story that hell and the torments are eternal?
- Was there anguish, torments of mind and heart on the part of the priests over their hatred of Christ, the resurrection and the gospel and their rejection?
- Why was the beggar carried to Abraham's bosom; why not someone else?
- What does the clothing and sumptuous fare of the rich man represent?
- Where does the parable suggest that the torments mentioned were intended for anyone other than the rich man?
- Where does the parable mention anything about the torments being eternal?

These and other questions demand an answer and their answer will greatly affect the application and meaning of the parable. When you consider all of the details and facts of the parable, you cannot escape applying the parable exclusively to within the Hebrew family.

Finally, I would like to make this personal observation about this parable. I am well aware that the interpretation presented herein is different and even strange to the minds of many. To expect that someone would read this treatise and immediately agree or understand what is offered here would be totally unrealistic. It is not something that readily inspires the senses or in any way appeals to the carnal mind. It requires much time, study and prayers, maybe years for the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth about what Jesus was teaching. One of the major points against the traditional teaching on this subject is the fact that it does readily appeal to the carnal mind and does not require searching and hunger for the truth. I have appealed on many instances herein for the harmonious application of every detail of the entire story and not to draw conclusions only from a very few thoughts that seem to fit the desired theology. What is wrong with requiring of traditional theology to give a fair and

harmonious explanation of all of the little details? By what authority can anyone presume to have the truth of this parable unless they have linked each detail with scriptural support? Okay, so you don't agree with the interpretation presented herein. By all means, let us hear a better one, so long as it addresses all of the issues and questions. I make no claims to perfection of interpretation in this or any matter. But the traditional theology of eternal torture is very hard pressed to explain its thinking without totally avoiding major questions. Suppose that what I have presented is the exact truth. Why would that be so earth shattering and bad? Truth is truth anywhere, and only that will stand the eternal test of time and scripture. It is very doubtful that theologians will give this application of the parable a chance. But that does not mean that the individual cannot or should not.

One more thought in defense of this interpretation. I know that it stands to be criticized as coming from atheism, communism, Jehovah's Witnesses, ignorance and even more. That does not move me at all. I also know that the traditional theory has support from Mormonism, Islam, most if not all heathen religions, as well as the person who has never professed or lived for Christ. None of that is the question. The only question is what does the Bible teach when rightly divided and revealed by the power of the Holy Spirit? We have studiously endeavored to follow that rule. Nothing else matters! My prayer is that your faith will be inspired by the justice and wonder of a merciful God as you read and study his word.

THE PARABLE OF  
THE  
**RICH MAN**  
AND  
**LAZARUS**

IS IT  
A DESCRIPTION OF ETERNAL TORTURE OF THE WICKED  
OR IS IT  
A DESCRIPTION OF THE JUDGMENTS AND TERMINATION  
OF THE  
LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD?