

**AGAPE HOUSE OF WORSHIP  
MIDWEEK BIBLE STUDY**

**Study Series: Speaking in Parables**

**March 1, 2023**

**Lesson 4: The Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31)**

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**INTRODUCTION: How to Understand the Parables**

The standard principles of exegesis (interpretation of scripture) should also be used for interpreting the parables. It is essential to ask what the parable meant to the original listeners of Jesus and the original readers of the Gospels, *and thereafter, the parable's application to us as today's believers*. These principles (below) are particularly appropriate to the parables, which contain a complete story with characters and a plot.

1. Examine the context of each parable: what prompted the parable? Was it a question, a problem to solve, or an issue to resolve?
2. Note that parables usually have one central or primary message and subsidiary messages.
3. Parables are not secret codes; they focus on telling people about the nature of the kingdom of God.
4. Take into consideration the cultural gap: we may not easily recognize some of the images and metaphors which were rich in meanings to people in the time of Jesus.
5. Jesus already interpreted some of the parables; in such situations, there is no need for additional interpretation.

**The Parable Summarized:** A certain rich man (**LK 16:19**) clothed in purple and fine linen fared sumptuously every day, while Lazarus, a certain beggar (**Lk 16:20-21**) full of sores laid at the rich man's gate, hoping to be fed crumbs from the rich man's table. Dogs came and licked his sores. They both died (**Lk 16:22**) and Lazarus was carried away by angels to Abraham's bosom, while the rich man was buried. The rich man was in torment (**Lk 16:23-26**) in "Hades" but saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. The rich man begged Abraham for relief (**Lk 16:24-26**) that he might send Lazarus to dip his finger in water and cool his tongue, but Abraham reminded him how conditions were now reversed. Besides, there was a gulf that prevented one from going to one place to the other. The rich man appealed to Abraham on behalf of his five brothers (**Lk 16:27-31**), that Abraham might send Lazarus to warn them of this place.

*Q1: Why did Jesus tell this story and who was the primary audience?*

*Q2: What are the primary and subsidiary messages of this parable?*

*Q3: What do you see as unique in this parable?*

*Q4: What's the meaning of "Abraham's bosom?"*

*Key lessons from the story of the rich man and Lazarus*

**1. In the Kingdom, the Word, not Miracles has Primacy**

Only by heeding the Word of God can one escape the torment of Hades. The rich man had not done so. If God's Word doesn't move you to repentance, a miracle won't either (**Lk 16:31**). Some people say they would believe if they only saw a miracle. But many people saw Jesus' miracles and did not believe; even his resurrection from the dead did not convince some.

*Q5: Are there any risks in relying on miracles to bring people to Christ?*

*Q6: What point was Abraham, in Lk16:29, trying to make by referring to Moses and the Prophets?*

**2. A person's worldly condition is no test of his state in the sight of God**

One may be rich, but not rich towards God (**Lk 12:21**) while another may be poor, but rich in faith and by so doing inherit the kingdom of God (**James 2:5**).

*Q7: Why was the rich man in torment?*

### **3. Death is the common end to which all classes of mankind must succumb**

Both the rich man and the poor beggar met with the inevitable. The reality of death should be a constant reminder of the need to reflect on our faith (**2 Cor13:5, 2 Peter 1:10-11, Ecc 2:14**).

### **4. Choices we make today would impact events in the afterlife**

This story depicts the intermediate state of the both the wicked and the godly, between death and the resurrection (**Lk 16:22-24**)

### **5. Being an offspring of a believer doesn't make you a believer**

The rich man appeared to be a descendant of Abraham, and the great father of faith did not disown him. Yet having Abraham as father was not enough to escape his torment in the life to come. Now the rich man was the beggar, pleading with Abraham (**Lk 16: 30-31**).

### **6. Seek God when you have the opportunity**

Jesus taught the importance of valuing the soul (**Mt 16:26**). The wicked would discover the value of the soul after death, when it is too late (**Isa 55:6**)

*Q8: Why do you think the rich man mentioned his five brothers?*

### **7. Master-Servant relationship ends in this world**

*Q9: How can we buttress or explain this point in the narrative?*

### **8. Use resources in a manner that benefits others**

Through his earthly life the rich man enjoyed all the good things of life (**Lk 16:25**; see **Heb 13:16, Gal 6:10**)

*Q10. How do we use our life to prepare for the life to come?*

## **CONCLUSION**

*This story should remind us of at least 3 things:*

- a. The reality of punishment prepared for the wicked.
- b. The importance of preparing our soul for eternity.
- c. The place the Word of God has in that preparation.