



**IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH**

**SERIES: THE BIG FINISH**

**TITLE: A NICKEL TOUR OF HELL**

**SCRIPTURE: LUKE 16:19-31**

**DATE: OCT. 19, 2025**

## **INTRODUCTION**

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Today, we are walking through Lesson 5 in our *Big Finish* series. Previously, we explored how our lives are like a mist or vapor, as described in James 4:14. We are not guaranteed another year, week, or even day. Therefore, we should do our best to do what we know is good.

We also studied 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11, learning how to encourage one another in times of grief and loss. Believers can grieve deeply, but that grief can be infused with hope.

In the last two weeks, we examined Scriptures that describe how our earthly bodies will be replaced with new, resurrected ones. Our current bodies are perishable, but our future bodies will be imperishable. Our present bodies are like tents, while our heavenly bodies will be like buildings. All of this is made possible through Jesus' death and bodily resurrection.

Today, we are looking at a parable Jesus told about a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. This story is quite well-known—so much so that many people assume it features real individuals, rather than being a parable.

So far in our series, we've talked quite a bit about heaven—especially in terms of our new bodies and Christ's return. However, this teaching of Jesus gives us a vivid description of what hell might be like. Hell is the opposite of heaven. It is a real place and worth our attention as we consider what the Bible says about "last things."

## Text

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### Luke 16:19–31

[19] "There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.

[20] And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores,  
[21] who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores.

[22] The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried,

[23] and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.

[24] And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.'

[25] But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.

[26] And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.'

[27] And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house—

[28] for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.'

[29] But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'

[30] And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'

[31] He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'"

## Observation Questions:

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Before we give explanation, let's as a group try to make some observations from the story.

- How are Lazarus and the rich man different in the story? How are they similar?
- What are some of the ways heaven and hell are described?
- What are the reversals for Lazarus? How was his life on earth described vs how his life is described in heaven?

## Explanation:

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This is truly an incredible story. It's one of many examples of how Jesus was a master storyteller. He could tell a short, compelling story full of contrast, comparison, and deep spiritual insight.

Notice that the rich man is nameless—likely a subtle hint that his wealth wasn't as important as people on earth often think it is. In heaven, people aren't remembered for their abundance of earthly treasures.

The rich man lived an extravagant life. He wore purple and fine linen and feasted sumptuously every day. He wore the most expensive, comfortable, and regal clothing. He never seemed to go hungry—like someone on an all-inclusive resort where the food never stops. And this wasn't junk food; it was gourmet. So much food, in fact, that plenty probably went to waste.

Lazarus, of course, was the complete opposite. He was sick and laid at the rich man's gate—unwelcome inside. Rather than clothed in fine garments, he was covered in sores. We're not told if he ever ate; only that he desired to eat the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. He wasn't picky—just longing for leftovers. His only comfort (if you could call it that) was that dogs came and licked his sores. He was unclean, in pain, and ignored. Even though the rich man likely saw him, he still did nothing.

Then both men died. Death plays no favorites. It cannot be bribed.

We're told that the rich man was buried, while we don't even know if anyone noticed when Lazarus died. But God knew. In fact, angels carried Lazarus to heaven. That's feels like a stunning honor.

Jesus pinpoints a place in heaven next to “Abraham’s side.” What a reversal: on earth, Lazarus wasn’t even welcome at the gate; now, he’s seated next to one of the most honored men in Jewish history. He is welcomed. In heaven, earthly status doesn’t matter for what seat at the table we have in heaven. Meanwhile, the rich man ends up in Hades—a place of torment. And his suffering is far worse than Lazarus’ ever was on earth.

A surprising detail is that the rich man can see into heaven. He sees Abraham and Lazarus and begins begging for relief. He calls out, “Father Abraham,” which implies he was Jewish. This only adds to the horror of his realization—he assumed he would be in heaven, but instead finds himself in hell. That possibility is sobering.

In agony, he asks for Lazarus to dip his finger in water and cool his tongue. It's unlikely a single drop of water could relieve such torment—but maybe he believed water from heaven could do what earthly water couldn't. Perhaps in his agony, an unreasonable request seems reasonable. Also, notice: he *knew* Lazarus' name. That likely means he recognized him from earth. He had seen Lazarus at his gate and ignored him.

Now, Lazarus will not serve him—not even with a drop of water. The rich man denied Lazarus crumbs; now he is denied relief. The consequence is fitting. He had his “good things” in life, and Lazarus his “bad.” Now the roles are reversed. Abraham then explains something crucial: a great chasm separates heaven and hell. It cannot be crossed. Once our lives are over, the consequences—good or bad—are final.

But the rich man doesn’t stop pleading. He begs Abraham to send Lazarus back to earth to warn his five brothers. He knows they are on the same path. It’s interesting that Abraham doesn’t say the chasm is the only reason Lazarus won’t be sent back. Instead, he says the brothers already have what they need: Moses and the Prophets. They should listen to them.

The rich man argues—“But if someone comes back from the dead, they’ll repent!” But Abraham replies with chilling finality: “If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.”



## Discussion Questions

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- This may be a strange question and I even sort of hesitate to ask... also I don't recommend sharing names. This is probably a simple, "yes" or "no" question... But do you think you know anyone who is in hell?
- How do you feel about talking about hell with others? Does it seem rude or judgmental of you? Is there a way to be truthful about the reality of hell and yet also loving and graceful?
- Would anyone in the group say that the thought of hell helped them turn to Jesus for faith and repentance?
- Does anything stand out to you about the rich man in the story?
- Does anything surprise you in this story?

## Conclusions/ Applications

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### JESUS, THE ONE WHO MOSES AND THE PROPHETS POINT

For some, we may feel sympathy for the formerly rich man, who wanted his brothers to avoid the place of torment. To be fair, at first glance, the idea of someone coming back from the dead to warn them does sound convincing. However, upon further reflection, Abraham's response was exactly right.

You see, Moses and the Prophets had already recorded the marvelous works of God. The Israelites heard God's voice from the mountain—they saw and smelled the smoke, felt the earthquake, and heard the thunder. Yet... they still disbelieved. Another generation of Israelites saw Elijah call down fire from heaven on Mount Carmel—and they too disbelieved. Many more examples could be given.

Simply witnessing something supernatural, even with a warning, was not more convincing than what had already been revealed. In fact, it was likely *less* powerful than what had already been given.

There's an almost painful irony for the Jews who were listening to Jesus tell this story. Standing before them was someone greater than Moses, greater than all the prophets. Jesus Himself was the clearest revelation of God. In Him, everything Moses and the Prophets had pointed to was being fulfilled.

Even more ironic is that Jesus would ultimately draw people to the Father through His own death and resurrection. What the five brothers needed—and what we all need—is not just some ordinary man rising from the dead to warn us about hell. What we need is a *sinless man* to die and rise again who can provide access to heaven.

And what we need is to place our trust in Jesus—whose death and resurrection can atone for sin.