

Heaven is for Real; Hell is too! Luke 16:19-31 FBC Canton Sunday am October 26, 2025

Introduction: 2 different people with 2 drastically different destinies=Saved or unsaved.

One has wealth blind him to his spiritual poverty and ends in torments.



“ Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts ”

C. S. Lewis (The Screwtape Letters)

The other has suffering that gives him the gift of seeing his spiritual poverty.

Eternity in Heaven is only possible by being born again. John 3:1-21

Eternity in hell is the default destination of all who are not born again.

Romans 1-3

There are only 2 destinies for all people: Heaven or Hell.

In Chapter 16 Jesus is speaking to 2 groups; his disciples and the Pharisees.

One had no wealth, the other loved money. V. 14

Even to the extent that they would shed their marriages to protect their money. V. 18

He ends the subject of riches with the clearest description of the permanent location of all peoples; heaven or hell.

Here he uses the OT words; Hades and Abraham's bosom, and there are several different words in the NT that describe various nuances of meaning of these places...

BUT....

One thing is for certain; they are both permanent and they are complete opposite.

So I want to contrast these 2 today...motivating us to share with ever increasing fervency the truth of these 2 destinies.

I. Before Death. V. 19-22

a. Rich Man; Unsaved. V. 19

- i. Clothed in purple.
- ii. Fine linen.
- iii. Fared sumptuously.
- iv. Every day.

b. Lazarus; Saved. V. 20-21

- i. Beggar.
- ii. Full of sores.
- iii. Laid at gate, not in home.
- iv. Desire for crumbs...which fell from the rich man's table.
- v. Dogs licked his sores.

c. Both Died. V. 22

- i. Rich man=Hades.
- ii. Lazarus=Abraham's bosom.

II. After Death. V. 23-31

a. Rich man=Immediately in Torments:

i. Can see Heaven. No out of sight, out of mind.

1. Death is separation, not extinction.

2. Saw afar off.

- a. Hades is pictured as down...because he has to look up to see Heaven.

ii. Completely alert.

- 1. Asks for help.
- 2. Father Abraham means he is Jewish.

iii. Feels nothing good.

- a. Fire.
- b. No mercy. No relief.
- c. Only regrets.
- d. Only fear.
- 2. Never have the presence of our Good God around them again.

iv. Does not question his punishment.

1. Hell is for those who have rejected God's gracious offer of Salvation.

- a. It is not for those who have never sinned.
- b. God's love rejected demands punishment. For Love has boundaries.

v. No way out=permanent.

- 1. No reincarnation. Hebrews 9:27**
- 2. Great fixed gulf.
 - a. No purgatory.



vi. Unsatisfied longings.

- 1. Send resurrected Lazarus.
- 2. Does not believe the scriptures.

vii. Every one in Hell is an evangelist.

- 1. Cares about others' spiritual condition on earth.
- 2. 5 brothers. But can do nothing about it.

b. Lazarus=Abraham's bosom

i. Good things:

- 1. With others.
- 2. With God.
- 3. Comforted.

Conclusion: Hell was made for Satan and his demons. God does not want any person to go there. I Timothy 2:3-4

“

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ”



The New King James Version
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CHAPTER 16

THEME: *Parable of the unjust steward; Jesus answers the covetous Pharisees; Jesus speaks on divorce; Jesus recounts the incident of the rich man and Lazarus (poor man)*

PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD

This parable has been greatly misunderstood, and one of the reasons is because it looks as though our Lord is commending a crook. This steward is an out-and-out crook. Some folk assume that anyone whom the Lord Jesus mentioned in a parable is a hero and an example of the noblest character. If this is your assumption, then prepare to make a change because you will have difficulty with this parable. This man is a scoundrel. When I was a pastor, I attempted one summer to run a series of sermons on rascals of revelation, scoundrels of Scripture, thieves of theology, bad men of the Bible, and crooks of Christianity. It was a long series because there were so many rogues! This steward is one of them.

I have already called attention to the fact that Luke gives parables by contrast. He is the only Gospel writer that does this. Most parables are parables by comparison.

In this parable the Lord uses as an example a man who followed the principles of the world. We are told in the Word of God that the world loves its own but hates those who belong to God. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:18–19). A child of God does not belong to this world and does not live by the principles of this world. In Galatians 1:3–4 Paul says, "... our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." Again in Romans 12:2 Paul says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Finally, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world ..." (1 John 2:15). Now, in the world is what we call the "law of life" and the unjust steward is a man who operates by that law.

The first commandment of the world is "self-preservation." A shady business deal is winked at, questionable practices countenanced, and a clever crook is commended by the world. The law is on the side of the crook and the criminal many times. Every man, according to the world's law, is considered innocent until he is proven guilty. The Word of God takes the opposite approach. God says that man is guilty until he is proven innocent. He says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). A man can never be innocent before God, but he certainly can become justified before Him. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus ..." (Rom. 8:1). When a man trusts Jesus Christ as his Savior, he is justified by faith. This is the *only way* a man can be justified.

And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods [Luke 16:1].

This is the story of a rich man and his unjust steward. A steward is a man who has charge of another man's goods. Abraham had a steward, you remember, who had charge of all his possessions. It was Abraham's steward who went on a trip to Haran to find a bride for Abraham's son Isaac. David had stewards, mentioned in 1 Chronicles 28:1. David's stewards had charge over all of the king's possessions, including his children. Paul tells us, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2).

The steward in this parable would correspond to the president of a corporation. He had charge of this rich man's goods. He was guilty of malfeasance in office and misappropriation of funds. He was like the bank president who absconds with bank funds. The unjust steward wasted the goods of his master.

And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward [Luke 16:2].

The day of reckoning had come for this man. He had to give an account. Now since he had the signet ring of his master and was the paymaster, instead of drawing up a financial statement, he decided to use the law of the world which is self-preservation.

Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed [Luke 16:3].

This man had soft hands and felt he could not be a common laborer. And he was ashamed to beg. It makes you smile to read this verse—the man may have been ashamed to beg, but he was not ashamed to steal! Unfortunately, there are a lot of people like that today.

I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses [Luke 16:4].

This man did not repent; he had no regret or remorse for his actions. This man was crooked—called clever by the world's standards. He had no training for other work, and his age was probably against him. He was too proud to beg, but he was not ashamed to be dishonest.

So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty [Luke 16:5–6].

The steward was asking, "How much do you owe my master?" This man owed his master one hundred barrels of oil. "Well," the steward said, "oil is about one dollar a barrel now. I will tell you what we will do. We will let you have it for fifty cents a barrel." The man only had to pay half of what he owed.

Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore [Luke 16:7].

I do not know why he did not give this fellow the same discount that he gave the other fellow, but this man had to pay eighty cents on the dollar. The unjust steward is just as big a crook at the end as he was at the beginning of his career.

He is not being punished.

And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light [Luke 16:8].

This is a shocking statement. Who made it? The lord of the steward, meaning his employer, the rich man. Apparently this man got rich using the same kind of principles that his unjust steward used. He tells him he has done wisely. In what way? According to the principles of the world. This is the world that hates Christ. It makes its own rules. The law of the world is "dog eat dog." The worldly lord commended his worldly steward for his worldly wisdom according to his worldly dealings.

The Lord Jesus said, "For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." That is, the children of this world, of this age, use their money more wisely than do the children of light.

And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations [Luke 16:9].

The most shocking and startling statement of all concerns the relationship of the believer to the “mammon of unrighteousness.” What is the “mammon of unrighteousness?” It is riches, money. Money is not evil in itself; money is amoral. It is the *love of money* that is the root of all evil. For believers money is to be spiritual. Our Lord said that we should lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. We should be wise in the way we use our money. Then when we “fail” or come to the end of life, we will be welcomed into heaven.

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, how will you commit to your trust the true riches?

And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, how shall you give you that which is your own? [Luke 16:10–12].

We are stewards of that which is material. We own nothing as believers. We are responsible to God for how we use His goods. He says that the men of this world are wiser than the children of light in their stewardship. For years I was pastor of a church in downtown Los Angeles which was near the financial district. Through the years I watched many of the men go into a broker's office and watch the fluctuation of the stock market. They would sit down in the morning and figure out what they were going to do. They would not invest in any stock unless they thought it was going to go up in value, or they would play the market. A Christian man once told me that he had made his money by playing the stock market. For this reason he would not accept an office in the church—I do not know how he reconciled to himself the fact that he was a church member. He was clever at making money.

How many Christians today are smart in the use of the mammon of unrighteousness—money? Do they use it to gather spiritual wealth? God will hold you responsible for the misuse of the material wealth He gives you. I personally know of a program that is run just for the self-interest of one individual. In another organization ninety percent of what is given to that program supports a tremendous overhead that keeps men driving Cadillac automobiles. That means you would have to give one hundred dollars to get ten dollars to the poor folk they are telling you about. There is something wrong with the way Christians give their money. This would not happen if Christians were as smart as the men of the world. How smart are you, Christian friend, in money matters? Are you using your money to see that the Word of God reaches those who need it?

In the parable of the unjust steward the Lord Jesus is saying, “Do you think God is going to trust you with heavenly riches if you are not using properly that which He has given you on earth?” Money is a spiritual matter. You are responsible not only for giving it, but for investing it where it will yield the highest dividends in folk reached for Christ.

No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon [Luke 16:13].

What are you doing with your money? Are you making money? If you are, what are you doing with it? This is a pertinent question. Are you using it for the things of the world? If you are, you are serving mammon; that is your master. Are you serving God or mammon? You cannot serve them both.

JESUS ANSWERS THE COVETOUS PHARISEES

The Pharisees heard Jesus and began to feel convicted.

And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.

And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail [Luke 16:14–17].

God knew the hearts of the Pharisees. God knows your heart. God knows my heart. We can put up a front with each other but not with God. We cannot measure up to God's standard.

JESUS SPEAKS ON DIVORCE

Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery [Luke 16:18].

If this were the only verse of Scripture on the subject of divorce, there would be no divorce for a Christian. This verse should be compared with Matthew 19 and 1 Corinthians 7. All of Scripture must be considered on a certain subject to ascertain its truth. Our Lord spoke on this subject, to these men who were under the Law, because they were making light of the Law of God.

JESUS RECOUNTS THE INCIDENT OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS (POOR MAN)

Now we come to another great parable that only Luke presents. I do not believe this is a fictitious story. I believe He drew this story from real life just as He did His other parables. Jesus used illustrations that were familiar to His hearers. They knew exactly what He was talking about. He uses the name of one of the individuals involved in this parable; the Lord would not have given the name of someone who did not exist.

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day [Luke 16:19].

This is the story of a rich man who lived and died without God. It moves into a realm that we know nothing about. In this parable the Lord passes from this world to the next without making any break at all. Although we cannot penetrate the curtain between this life and the next life, our Lord speaks of the next world as naturally as He speaks of this life.

When man is left to his own imagination, he seeks out many inventions and out of his wildest dreams he makes unlimited speculations. When man uses his imagination, he gets into trouble. In this parable we learn what the Word of God says. There were only four men who ever spoke with authority concerning the other side of death: the Lord Jesus; Lazarus; John, who was given the Revelation; and Paul, who was "... caught up to the third heaven" (2 Cor. 12:2).

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 [Luke 16:20–21].

Here are two men at the opposite ends of the social and financial ladder—and, I suppose, every other ladder. One man represents the top echelon in riches, and the other man represents the lowest extreme of poverty. No two men could be farther apart in every way. This poor man was dependent upon the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. He never was invited to sit at the rich man's table; he had to be kept in a menial place. The dogs came and licked his sores. In a few words our Lord pictures the depths of the terrible

degradation and despair into which this man had fallen. I am sure had you lived in that town you might have gotten the impression that poor Lazarus, dressed in rags, did not have much in the way of any spiritual discernment or spiritual riches. I am sure all of us would have written him off as a hopeless case. On the other hand, I am sure that the rich man had several buildings named after him—perhaps a church, a school, or a mission enterprise. I am sure he had a wonderful name in the town in which these two men lived. However, all that the people in the town could see were the outward appearances of the rich man and the beggar whose sores were licked by dogs. This is a picture of abject poverty and extreme riches. Two men could not have been farther apart.

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 [Luke 16:22].

Our Lord comes right to the door of death and passes through it as if it were nothing unusual. When the beggar died, there was no funeral. They just took his body out and threw it into the Valley of Gehenna where refuse was thrown and burned; this is the place where they threw the bodies of the poor in that day. The minute the beggar stepped through the doorway of death, angels became his pall-bearers and he was carried by them into Abraham's Bosom.

The rich man also died and was buried. He had a big funeral, and the preacher pushed him all the way to the top spot in heaven. The only trouble is that the preacher got his directions mixed up; the rich man went the other way.

And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom [Luke 16:23].

Notice two things here: The lost go to a place of conscious torment. Also, people know each other after death. We do not lose our identities.

The word *hell* is in the Greek *hades*, meaning "the unseen world." Actually, *hell*, as we think of it, is a place that has not yet been opened up for business; we don't read of it until we get to Revelation 20:10, where it tells us that hell's first occupants will be the Antichrist and the false prophet. When they died, Lazarus and the rich man went to the unseen world, the place of the departed dead.

Death is separation; it never means extinction. Adam, in the day that he ate of the forbidden fruit, died. Physically he did not die until about nine hundred years later, but the day that he ate of the fruit he was separated from God. Jesus spoke of it when He said, "... I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die ..." (John 11:25–26). Man is separated from God by sin. People are dead while they live. Paul told the Ephesians, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1).

Certain spots in a big city are really alive and jumping at night. If you want to see a lot of zombies and dead people, look in on one of these nightclubs. That is where you will find them. They are beating the drums, blaring out the music, getting the beat, drinking all they can, and getting high on drugs because they are dead and want to live.

There is a second death, which is spiritual death, and it means eternal separation from God. At physical death the body becomes inert and lifeless because the person's spirit has moved out. The body is put into the grave, and the elements return to the dust: "... for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19). Therefore, death means separation.

It will help us understand this parable if we realize that Sheol or *hades* (translated *hell* in the New Testament) is divided into two compartments: paradise (which is called Abraham's Bosom in this parable) and the place of torment. Paradise was emptied when Christ took with Him at His ascension the Old Testament believers (see Eph. 4:8–10). The place of torment will deliver up the lost for judgment at the Great White Throne (see Rev. 20:11–15). All who stand at this judgment are lost, and they will be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death.

Now when the rich man died, his spirit went to the place of torment, the compartment where the lost go. The beggar went to the compartment called paradise or Abraham's Bosom.

Note that our Lord is not saying that the rich man went to the place of torment because he was rich and that the poor man went to Abraham's Bosom because he was poor. Going through the doorway of death certainly changed their status, but it was due to what was in the hearts of these two men. This is what our Lord has been saying through this entire section—man cannot judge by the outward appearance.

There are some other things revealed in this story that we would not know if our Lord had not revealed them.

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 [Luke 16:24].

The rich man becomes the beggar, while the beggar is now the rich man.

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 [Luke 16:25–26].

The bodies of believers today, since the resurrection of Jesus Christ, go into the grave and return to dust, but their spirits go to be with Christ. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8). The lost today still go to the place of torment in hades. Ephesians 4:8–10 gives us the following picture, "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)" In other words, when our Lord descended into hades after His crucifixion on the cross, He entered the paradise section, emptied it, and took everyone into God's presence. No one occupies the paradise section of hades today. The only part of hades still occupied is the place of torment where unbelievers go when they die. The day is coming when hades will be cast into the lake of fire and men will no longer go there at all (see Rev. 20:14).

The body is merely the physical house in which we live. At death we move out of our old homes. You can do anything you want to with the old house after it is deserted, but the important thing is what happens to the spirit after it has left the body. Where is it going?

Heaven is a place, friend, and the moment you die you will either go there to be with Christ, or you will go to the place of torment where you will ultimately be judged and then cast into the lake of fire. The point is that God never intended the latter as an end for anyone of the human family. The lake of fire was made for the Devil and his angels (see Matt. 25:41). You *choose* your final destination.

"There is a great gulf fixed:" our Lord made that clear. You must make the decision in this life where you will go after your death. You do not get a second chance after death.

Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house [Luke 16:27].

Notice his concern for his living brothers. He wanted them to repent, change their minds before it was too late. Friend, if the lost could come back, they would preach the gospel to us.

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 [Luke 16:28–31].

Many people believe that multitudes would repent if someone returned from the dead to tell them what it was like. Well, Someone *has* come back from the dead. His name is Jesus Christ. They did not believe Him any more than they believed Moses and the prophets. Friend, do not delay in making your choice. There will be no opportunity after death.¹

Chuck Smith

Sermon Notes for Luke 16:19-31

I. "SHEOL AND HADES "THE UNSEEN WORLD."

A. Prior to Christ's death in two sections.

1. Paradise.

a. (Righteous) To thief on cross "today thou shalt be."

b. (Dead) Lazarus comforted in Abraham's bosom.

2. Torment.

a. Rich man "tormented in this heat" tormented by conscience "Son remember".

3. Sections divided by great gulf.

B. Christ went to Hades when He died.

1. [Acts 2:27](#) Paradise Section.

2. [Eph. 4:9](#) Thief.

C. He led the righteous dead to heaven.

1. [Eph. 4:8](#).

D. Christians now "in Christ" ascend, to paradise, not descend.

1. "Paul caught up into third heaven" into "paradise."

2. "Absent from body present with Lord".

II. GEHENNA "VALLEY OF HINNOM" - CHRIST 'S DESCRIPTION.

A. [Mark 9:43](#)

B. [Matt. 10:28](#) "Body and Soul."

C. [Rev. 19:20](#); [2:0](#)

III. SECOND RESURRECTION.

A. [Rev. 20:11-15](#)

David Guzik

Study Guide for Luke 16

MONEY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

¹ J. Vernon McGee, [Thru the Bible Commentary: The Gospels \(Luke\)](#), electronic ed., vol. 37 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 197–209.

A. The story of the dishonest steward.

1. (Luke 16:1-8) What the dishonest steward did.

He also said to His disciples: “There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.’ Then the steward said within himself, ‘What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.’ So he called every one of his master’s debtors to **him**, and said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ And he said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ So he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ So he said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’ And he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’ So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.”

- a. **He also said to His disciples**: This seems to be a different occasion than the previous chapter. Here Jesus taught **His disciples**, not the multitude mentioned in [Luke 15:1-2](#). However, as Jesus taught **His disciples**, a group of Pharisees also listened ([Luke 16:14](#)).
- b. **There was a certain rich man who had a steward**: A **steward** was a manager, especially a manager of money or property. In the story Jesus told, the steward’s boss (the **rich man**) heard that his steward had cheated him (**wasting his goods**), and he called him to account.

- i. “The steward had followed a career of embezzlement.” (Barclay)
- ii. **“Give an account of your stewardship”** are words that everyone will hear, both sinner and saint. All will have to give **account** in some way, and we will give account to God. Spurgeon once noted that each of us will have to give account of our stewardship regarding our **time**, our **talents**, our **substance**, and our **influence**.
- iii. For each of us, our stewardship will one day come to an end. The preacher’s voice, mental faculties, and strength will not last forever. The wealth of this world may not last even in this life. A mother’s stewardship over her children changes and diminishes greatly. If Jesus does not come first, we **all** will die and pass from this life to the next.

- c. **What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me**: When the steward knew that he would be called to account, he knew his poor management would be exposed. He also knew that other options were unattractive to him (**I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg**).
- d. **So he called every one of his master’s debtors to him**: So, the steward made friends with his master’s debtors by settling their accounts for less than they actually owed. Therefore the

steward, knowing he would be called to account, used his present position to prepare him for the next stage of his life.

e. **So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly**: While not approving his conduct, the master did in fact approve the steward's **shrewdness**. Jesus added the thought that the businessmen of his day (**sons of this world**) were more wise, bold, and forward-thinking in the management of what they had (**more shrewd**) than the people of God were with managing what they had (**the sons of light**).

i. Some consider this to be one of Jesus' most difficult parables, because it seems that Jesus used an obviously dishonest man as an example for His disciples. Yet God sometimes uses evil things that are familiar to us to illustrate a particular point, without praising the thing itself. Other examples of this principle are when Paul used things like war and slavery as illustrations of the Christian life.

ii. Yet, the dishonest steward was a good example on several points. First, he knew he would be called to account for his life and he took that seriously. Christians should take seriously the idea that they will be called to account, and that idea can be a **joy** if we are properly about our Master's business. Second, he took advantage of his present position to arrange a comfortable future.

iii. Jesus' assessment is still true: **the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light**. If we pursued the Kingdom of God with the same vigor and zeal that the children of this world pursue profits and pleasure, we would live in an entirely different world. It could be said that it is to the shame of the Church that Coca-Cola is more widely distributed than the gospel of Jesus Christ. Simply, it is because **the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light**.

iv. "Go to the men of the world, thou Christian, and do not let it be said that the devil's scholars are more studious and earnest than Christ's disciples." (Maclaren)

2. **(Luke 16:9)** Using money now with an eye to eternity.

"And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home."

a. **Make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon**: Jesus transferred the principle of the parable, reminding us that we need to use our present resources to plan ahead for eternity.

i. **Unrighteous mammon**: "The word 'mammon' is from the Aramaic word **mammon**, which originally meant, 'that in which one puts one's trust,' hence wealth." (Pate)

ii. Jesus called it **unrighteous mammon** because "Riches **promise** MUCH, and **perform** NOTHING: they excite **hope** and **confidence**, and **deceive** both: in making a

man depend on them for happiness, they rob him of the salvation of God and of eternal glory.” (Clarke)

b. **That when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home:** The world is filled with financial planners and advisers; and it is good for Christians to learn how to use their money wisely. But when most Christians talk about wise money management, they forget to practice the most important kind of long term investing: investing with an eye to eternity, an **everlasting home**.

- i. The important thing is to invest your resources for the Lord now; most of us wait until the day when we think we will have enough.
- ii. In a survey taken long ago (1992), people were asked how much money they would have to make to have “the American dream.” Those who earn \$25,000 or less a year thought they would need around \$54,000. Those in the \$100,000 annual income bracket said that they could buy the dream for an average of \$192,000 a year. These figures indicate that we typically think we must double our income in order to find the good life — instead of finding it now.

3. **(Luke 16:10-12) Faithfulness in the little things shows how one will be faithful in the large things.**

“He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own?”

a. **He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much:** In these words of Jesus, money is considered to be one of the least things. Therefore, if a person cannot be faithful in managing the things that are least, they should not be trusted to be faithful in handling the things that are much.

- i. If one is false and unfaithful in everyday life, it doesn’t matter if they know how to project a Christian image; they are also false and unfaithful in the spiritual life — and no one should entrust them with **true riches** (spiritual riches).

b. **If you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?** In this sense, those who are leaders among God’s people must be good managers of their own money. If a person can’t be faithful before God with the money He gives, how can they be faithful with the care of people?

- i. This certainly does not mean that leaders in the church have to be wealthy or make a lot of money. It is an issue of how they manage the resources God has given to them, not how great their resources are.

ii. Unfortunately, when it comes to the question **who will commit to your trust the true riches**, far too many Christians are willing to entrust their spiritual care to a person who can't even care for the things of **unrighteous mammon**.

c. **If you have not been faithful in what is another man's**: Here, Jesus seems to refer to the fact that all our riches belong to God, and we must see that we are managing **His** resources. Faithfulness in this will result in blessing that is our own (**who will give you what is your own**).

i. "So God is testing men by giving them money, that He may know how far to trust them in the mart of the New Jerusalem." (Meyer)

4. **(Luke 16:13)** No one can be faithful to more than one master.

"No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

a. **No servant can serve two masters**: Having **two masters** is not like working two jobs. Jesus has the master and slave relationship in view. A slave can't belong to two masters at the same time.

i. Jesus states that serving two masters is a simple impossibility. If you think that you are successfully serving two masters, you are deceived. One can **have** both money and God; but one cannot **serve** both money and God.

ii. Certainly, Jesus spoke about the **heart** here. Many people would **say** they love God, but their service of money shows that in fact they do not. How can we tell Who or what we serve? One way is by this principle: **You will sacrifice for your God**. If you will sacrifice for the sake of money, but will not sacrifice for the sake of Jesus, don't deceive yourself: money is your God.

iii. On a Friday afternoon in 1990, a businessman staggered to the steps of his Los Angeles office. Before he died of the gunshot wound to his chest, he called out the names of his three children. But he still had his \$10,000 Rolex watch clutched in his hand. He was the victim of a rash of Rolex robberies — and was killed as a sacrifice to his god.

iv. A 1992 story in the Los Angeles Times told about Michelle, a successful writer and editor, who fears the day her husband might discover her secret stash of credit cards, her secret post office box or the other tricks she uses to hide how much money she spends shopping for herself. "I make as much money as my husband... If I want a \$500 suit from Ann Taylor, I deserve it and don't want to be hassled about it. So the easiest thing to do is lie," she explains. Last year, when her husband forced her to destroy one of her credit cards, Michelle

went out and got a new one without telling him. “I do live in fear. If he discovers this new VISA, he’ll kill me.”

v. A school teacher explained more: “Men just don’t understand that shopping is our drug of choice,” she joked, even while admitting that some months her salary goes exclusively to paying the minimum balance on her credit cards. “Walking through the door of South Coast Plaza is like walking through the gates of heaven. God made car trunks for women to hide shopping bags in.”

vi. A young professional named Mary explained: “Shopping is my recreation. It’s my way of pampering myself. When you walk into [a mall] and you see all the stores, it’s like something takes over and you get caught up in it.”

b. **You cannot serve God and mammon**: Some think that just because they are not rich, they are not a slave to money (**mammon**). But you don’t have to be rich to serve **mammon**; the poor have just as much potential for greed and covetousness as the rich have.

i. “When God is served, Mammon is used beneficently. When Mammon is served, the claims of God are ignored.” (Morgan)

ii. “The worldling’s wisdom (as the ostrich’s wings) to make him outrun others upon earth, and in earthly things; but helps him never a wit toward heaven.” (Trapp)

iii. “Money possessing a man is the direst curse, for it hardens his heart and paralyzes his noblest powers. The money of a God-possessed man is a blessing, for it becomes the means of his expressing his sympathy with his fellows.” (Morgan)

5. **(Luke 16:14-15)** Jesus responds to the Pharisees’ derision.

Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”

a. **And they derided Him**: The derision of the Pharisees was based on their own self-interest. They **were lovers of money**. Often we reject the message of Jesus because it hits too close to home.

i. **Derided**: “The word literally means that they turned up their noses at him.” (Barclay)

b. **You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts**: It is one thing to **justify yourselves before men**, because smooth words and a “loving” smile can

deceive men. **But God knows your hearts** — when you serve another master, it is impossible to be justified before God, no matter what men think.

i. For some people the idea **God knows your hearts** is *comfort*; for others it is a *curse*.

c. **For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God**: God judges our hearts with a different set of values. Men may honor someone because of their wealth or their public display of spirituality; but God sees who they really are.

6. (Luke 16:16-18) The unchanging nature of God's law.

“The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail. Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.”

a. **The law and the prophets were until John**: Jesus indicated that the ministry of John the Baptist marked the end of one great aspect of God's work. **Since that time** (the time ending with John's ministry) the good news of a new covenant is presented, with an order that is different than the law yet it fulfills the law.

b. **The kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it**: In Jesus' day, there were hundreds of revolutionaries willing to use violence to bring in the kingdom of God. While we do not imitate their violence, we do imitate their dedication, their willingness to sacrifice, and their passion to see the Messiah reign. In a sense, we are also *at war*.

i. Pate suggested that **pressing into it** does not describe the appropriate effort and zeal necessary to pursue the kingdom of God. Instead he thought it described the attempt of demonic powers (and their human agents) to forcefully enter and disrupt or destroy the work of God's kingdom, describing *opposition* to the work of Jesus. Certainly in a sense, both are true.

c. **It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail**: As Jesus spoke of a new aspect of God's work beginning after the ministry of John the Baptist, He didn't want any to think that the new aspect of God's work ignored or neglected **the law**.

i. But the new order that we must press into is not an order of rebellion; it is a new order of submission and obedience to God; His new order fulfills the law.

d. **Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery**: For example, the law concerning marriage is still binding — no matter how some Rabbis tried to explain it away. Some Rabbis taught that if a woman burned her husband's breakfast, it was grounds for divorce. Others considered finding a prettier woman was an acceptable reason to divorce.

- i. Jesus here taught the ideal regarding marriage and divorce, and it is dangerous for us to establish doctrine on isolated statements of Jesus without taking into account the whole counsel of His teaching.
- ii. Since Jesus also taught that sexual immorality was acceptable grounds for divorce ([Matthew 5:31-32](#), [19:7-9](#)) and later the Apostle Paul added that desertion by an unbelieving spouse was also an acceptable reason ([1 Corinthians 7:15](#)). Because of those two clear allowances, we must regard Jesus' command here to refer to the one who **divorces his wife** *without Biblical cause* **and marries another**; that *this one* **commits adultery**.
- iii. Again, Jesus emphasized the point: Under the new covenant (since the ministry of John the Baptist), God still cares about His law and our obedience.

B. The story of Lazarus and the rich man.

1. ([Luke 16:19-21](#)) Lazarus and the rich man on earth.

“There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.”

a. **There was a certain rich man**: Jesus did not present this story as a *parable*, and in no other parable did Jesus actually name an individual (as the poor man is here named). We have every reason to believe that Jesus gave us an actual case history, one He knew from His eternal perspective.

b. **Clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day**: The rich man’s wealth was evident by his *fine linen* clothing (luxurious and expensive), and by his excess with food (most people in that culture **fared sumptuously** only a few times a year).

i. **Fared sumptuously**: “The word used for feasting is the word that is used for a gourmet feeding on exotic and costly dishes. He did this *every day*.” (Barclay)

ii. The rich man is unnamed, but was traditionally given the name *Dives*, which is simply Latin for *rich*.

c. **A certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs**: Not far from the rich man — at *his gate* was a desperately poor and sick man. The rich man didn’t *do* anything against Lazarus, except neglect and ignore him.

i. “Here are two men, and day after day there is not the space of twenty yards between them, yet a distance like the sea divides the two.” (Morrison)

ii. “The name is the Latinized form of Eleazar and means *God is my help*.” (Barclay)

- iii. **Fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table**: "Food was eaten with the hands and, in very wealthy houses, the hands were cleaned by wiping them on hunks of bread, which were then thrown away. This is what Lazarus was waiting for." (Barclay)
- iv. **The dogs came and licked his sores**: Jesus described the misery of the beggar in these strong, nauseating details.

2. (Luke 16:22-23) Lazarus and the rich man in Hades.

"So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom."

a. **So it was that the beggar died...The rich man also died and was buried**: Both men eventually died. Lazarus did not even have the honor of a burial in this life, yet heaven honored him, being **carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom**. The rich man had the honor of a burial, but no angelic escort or pleasant destination.

- i. It would seem obvious that when the beggar was **carried by the angels**, it was his **soul** or **spirit** that was carried; the immaterial and eternal aspect of his being. Except for the angel's carrying work, the same was true of the rich man. His body was **buried** and remained on earth, but **he** was **in torments in Hades**.
- ii. "The idea of Abraham's bosom can be explained in one of three ways." (Pate)

- The idea that in death, the righteous are gathered to the patriarchs in the faith (**Genesis 15:15, 25:8**).
- The thought of a parent's love and care, as in **John 1:18** (*The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father*).
- The idea of sitting at the place of honor at a banquet, as in **John 13:23**

iii. We should not think that Lazarus was saved by his poverty, any more than we should think that the rich man was damned by his wealth. Lazarus must have had a true relationship of faith with the true God, and the rich man did not. Their life circumstances made that faith easier or more difficult, but did not create it.

b. **And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom**: The rich man was not far from Lazarus; yet he was a world apart. His place was full of torment and pain, while Lazarus enjoyed the comfort and care of Abraham.

- i. "Having punishment without pity, misery without mercy, sorrow without succor, crying without compassion, mischief without measure, torments without end, and past imagination." (Trapp)

c. **Being in torments in Hades**: In this story Jesus described a place He called **Hades**, which seems to have been the common abode of the dead. The rich man and Lazarus were not in the same place, but they were not far from each other. It may be best to say that they were in two areas of the same place (Hades), one a place of torments and the other a place of comfort (**the bosom of Abraham**).

- i. From this story of Jesus, we find some hints regarding the world beyond as it existed in the past and as it exists now. From Jesus' description, one may say that at that time — **before** the finished work of Jesus on the cross — that the spirit or soul of the human dead went to a place called Hades. Some in Hades rested in comfort; others suffered under torments of fire.
- ii. **Hades** is a Greek word, but it seems to carry much the same idea as **Sheol**, a Hebrew word with the idea of the "place of the dead." **Sheol** has no direct reference to either torment or eternal happiness. The idea of **Sheol** is often simply "the grave" and the understanding of the afterlife in the Old Testament is much less clear than in the New Testament.
- iii. **Hades** is technically not **hell**, or what is also known as the **Lake of Fire**. That place is called **Gehenna**, a Greek word borrowed from the Hebrew language. In **Mark 9:43-44**, Jesus spoke of **hell** (**gehenna**), a Greek translation of the Hebrew "Valley of Hinnom," a place outside Jerusalem's walls desecrated by Molech worship and human sacrifice (**2 Chronicles 28:1-3**; **Jeremiah 32:35**). It was also a garbage dump where rubbish and refuse were burned. The smoldering fires and festering worms of the Valley of Hinnom made it a graphic and effective picture of the fate of the damned. This place is also called the "lake of fire" in **Revelation 20:13-15**, prepared for the devil and his angels (**Matthew 25:41**).
- iv. **Hades** is something of a waiting place until the day of final judgment (**Revelation 20:11-13**). Yet since Jesus' finished work on the cross, there is no waiting for believers who die; they go directly to heaven, to the presence of the Lord (**2 Corinthians 5:6-8**). It is reasonable to think that when Jesus visited **Hades** as part of His redemptive work (**Acts 2:24-27**, **Acts 2:31**) and when Jesus preached in Hades (**1 Peter 3:18-19**), that Jesus set the captives in Hades free (**Ephesians 4:8-9**, **Isaiah 61:1**). Jesus' work and preaching offered salvation for those like Lazarus, who in faith awaited it (**Hebrews 11:39-40**), and it also sealed the condemnation of the wicked and unbelieving.

3. (**Luke 16:24-26**) The rich man's plea.

"Then 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 in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are

tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.”

a. **Father Abraham, have mercy on me:** The rich man was definitely 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.

i. Again, the rich man was not in torment because he was rich; but because he lived a life apart from love and trust in God, and this was demonstrated by his life. Lazarus himself was richer than the man in this story of Jesus.

b. **Send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue:** Even in the afterlife the rich man thought of himself as superior and as Lazarus as his servant. This shows that death did not take away his sense of entitlement and station in life.

i. “And he could not plead he was ignorant of Lazarus, for he recognized him at once in Abraham’s bosom. It was not want of knowledge, then, but want of thought that was the innermost secret of his tragedy.” (Morrison)

ii. Death also did not take away the rich man’s sense of desire, only the fulfillment of that desire. This was true torment, and he was desperate for even a drop of relief.

c. **Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things:** Through his earthly life the rich man enjoyed all the good things of life; yet did not share them or use them to prepare for the life to come.

i. The rich man is therefore a contrast to the previous parable of the unjust steward (Luke 16:1-12). The unjust steward used his present position to prepare for his next position; the rich man did not.

d. **Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot:** Though the rich man could see and speak with Abraham, he wasn’t close to him at all. There was a **great gulf fixed** between them, and their destinies were fixed for all time.

i. We remember that all this happened to the rich man’s spirit or soul, the immaterial part of his being. His body was still buried, yet he did not cease or suspend existence or awareness.

ii. We see no idea of soul sleep or annihilation; not of spiritual progression or reincarnation. Also, “There is no hint here of purgatory or remedial cleansing. The chasm was fixed, it is assumed, by God.” (Pate)

4. (Luke 16:27-31) The rich man thinks of his brothers.

“Then he said, ‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’ Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’”

a. **I beg you therefore, father**: It is again emphasized that now the **rich man** is the beggar, not Lazarus.

b. **Send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them**: It is again seen that the rich man **still** thought of Lazarus as a servant to him. He asked Abraham to send Lazarus on another assignment (perhaps in a dream or vision), this time for the benefit of his **five brothers**.

i. Obviously the rich man remembered and cared about his relatives even when he passed from earth to the life to come. His memory was not wiped clean or given a new consciousness.

c. **Lest they also come to this place of torment**: **Now** the rich man cared about others not going to **torment**. He lived his life utterly unconcerned of this, either for himself or for others. If he himself could go to his brothers, he would; but he seemed to understand that this was also impossible, so much so that he did not even ask for it.

i. The mention of the five brothers is the first indication that the rich man thought about anyone except himself. Unfortunately, his concern for others came when it was too late to do any good.

d. **They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them**: Abraham pointed out that the rich man’s brothers had all the necessary information to escape the torment of Hades. Listening to **Moses and the prophets** and doing what they said to do was enough.

i. **Abraham said to him**: “Luke uses the historic present tense for Abraham’s reply:

‘Abraham **says**, “They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.”’ (Pate)

ii. “When God’s whole creation having been ransacked by the hand of science, has only testified to the truth of revelation — when the whole history of buried cities and departed nations has but preached out the truth that the Bible was true — when every strip of land in the far-off East has been an exposition and a confirmation of the prophecies of Scripture; if men are yet unconvinced, do ye suppose that one dead man rising from the tomb would convince them?” (Spurgeon)

iii. "If the Holy Scripture be not in the hands of God enough to bring you to the faith of Christ, then, though an angel from heaven, then, though the saints from glory, then, though God himself should descend on earth to preach to you, you would go on unwed and unblest."
(Spurgeon)

e. **No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent:** The rich man immediately objected, knowing that his family did not take **Moses and the prophets** seriously. He desperately hoped that if someone came from the dead, it would be more convincing than the Word of God. Yet it would not be more convincing, because if they would not believe because of God's Word, **neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.**

i. The rich man knew what his brothers must do, and what he *did not* do: **repent**. He mistakenly hoped that a spectacular appearance of one from the dead would persuade them; but Abraham knew it would not. After all, the unbeliever thinks the Bible *already* speaks too much of judgment and hell; they don't want to hear more of it, even if the messenger came from the world beyond.

ii. Of course, Jesus did rise from the dead; yet many did not believe then. Additionally, a man named Lazarus also came back from the dead ([John 11:38-44](#)) and the religious leaders did not believe him; they tried to kill him ([John 12:9-10](#)).

iii. With this story Jesus showed the weakness of trusting in signs to bring people to faith. It is easy to think that if people saw a spectacular enough sign, they would be *compelled* to believe. But what creates faith unto salvation is hearing the Word of God ([Romans 10:17](#)); a sign may or may not have a role in that work. God, working through His word, has power unto salvation. "He declares that the sacred writings are in themselves as powerful as anything like the delivery of their message by one risen from the dead." (Morgan)

iv. "Although a churchyard should start into life, and stand up before the infidel who denies the truth of Christianity; I declare I do not believe there would be enough evidence in all the churchyards in the world to convince him. Infidelity would still cry for something more."
(Spurgeon)

v. "I do believe that Lazarus from Abraham's bosom would not be so good a preacher as a man who has not died, but whose lips have been touched with a live coal from off the altar."
(Spurgeon)

vi. The rich man wasn't lost because he was rich. He was lost because he did not listen to the law and the prophets. Many will also be lost for the same reason.

vii. In one way the rich man of Jesus' story was very different than the religious leaders, the Pharisees. He lived a life of gourmet excess and indulgence, and the Pharisees were rigid and disciplined and super self-controlled. Yet they shared this with the rich man: they cared nothing for the needy around them, and despised them with neglect. That's why they were so offended when Jesus taught and cared for tax collectors and sinners ([Luke 15:1-2](#)). "A hundred miles may separate two rivers, but for all that, they flow from the same lake." (Morrison)

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Chuck Smith

Verse by Verse Study on Luke 16-17 (C2000)

Jesus speaks on two unpleasant subjects, to a lot of people. Not unpleasant to me, but to a lot of people. Talks about hell. That's not unpleasant to me, not worried about it at all.

Now Jesus is at a supper with the Pharisees; it's on the Sabbath day. And this particular section that we are now in is still in that supper that Jesus was invited to, beginning the fourteenth chapter, where

the Pharisees invited Him to the house, set Him up with fellow with dropsy, and so this whole interchange of thought and all is going on there. At times He is addressing the Pharisees, at times He is addressing His disciples. And at this point, beginning of the sixteenth chapter, He is now addressing His disciples.

And so he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he wasted his goods. And he called them, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? giving account of thy stewardship; for you may no longer be steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord is taking away from me the stewardship: and I cannot dig; and I am ashamed to beg. I know what I'll do, so that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they will receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much do you owe my lord? And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, sit down quickly and write fifty. He said to another, And how much do you owe? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take your bill, and write eighty. Now the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world or in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends by the use of the unrighteousness of mammon; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations ([Luk 16:1-9](#)).

So Jesus here gives a parable, it's to His disciples, and it's a parable of stewardship.

Now, the thing to notice, first of all, about his steward was that everything he possessed belonged to his master. And in his waste he was actually wasting his master's goods. In the application of this, of course, God has made us stewards and everything that we have really belongs to God. Bible says, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." It all belongs to Him. Now God allows me that privilege and opportunity of overseeing that which belongs to Him. But God also holds me responsible as to what I do with it when it is under my care. So, as a disciple of Jesus Christ, everything we have is our Lord's. But I am responsible to Him.

There is another parable of the steward, and in the other parable the lord went away to a far country and left his goods in the hands of his servants. And one he gave five talents, to another four, to another one. But the same ideas, the lord came and they had to give an accounting of what they had done with what was the lord's. When you see yourself as a servant of Jesus Christ, then it naturally follows that as His bond slave everything you possess actually belongs to Him. I own nothing of my own; it all is the Lord's. And this particular steward was accused of wasting his goods. And so he was called to give an account. The Bible tells us that one day every one of us are going to stand before the Lord to give an account of the things that we have done while we were in these bodies, whether good or evil.

II Corinthians, chapter 5, Paul said that we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. We are also told that we are going to be judged according to our works and many of the works will be burned by fire, but those that remained we will be rewarded for. So we will all one day give an account to the Lord of our stewardship, how I managed the Lord's properties. How I managed the Lord's resources that He placed at my disposal. I have that responsibility, then, of proper management whenever God places anything in my power. And so he was called to give an account.

Now this particular steward knew that he was in trouble. When the audit was made, the accounting was to be made, he knew that he was guilty of wasting his master's goods. He knew that he was going to lose his job. And so he was concerned because he felt that he was just too frail to dig ditches and he was ashamed to beg. And then he hit upon an idea, very dishonest. In which he began to call in his master's debtors. And he began summarily to discount their obligations to his master. Now the master, in this case, was probably a landlord. And so often the landlord in renting out his property would take instead of rent some of the produce from the land. It was very common for the people to pay their rent in wheat that had been produced on the land. Or in the oil that have been produced on the land or in some of the products of the land itself. And this was a very common thing. And so the first one, he brought him in, and he said, "How much do you have to pay?" And he says, "Well, I pay a hundred measures of oil," and he says, "Here, take down, write fifty." And to the one who owed... paid a hundred measures of wheat, he said, "Write eighty."

Now, what he was seeking to do is to make these people obligated to him. So that when he was fired from his job, he would be able to come back to them and sponge off of them for a while because of the favors that he had granted to them in discounting their bills. As he was the steward managing his owner's affairs, he was setting himself up using this position of authority. Using this opportunity that he had to set himself up for the future. Which he knew was going to be very grim once he was fired, because he wasn't a ditch digger and he was ashamed to beg.

Up to this point, we can follow the story rather clearly. But at the next scripture, when the lord commended the unjust steward, that's where the problem arises. Why would he commend the unjust steward? Why would the lord commend him? Now I can understand if the lord said, "Cast that unjust steward out. Put him in the debtors' prison until his obligations have all been taken care of." But the lord commended him. For what? Not for his actions, not for his honesty, but for his wisdom. The wisdom of using his present position to set himself up for that uncertain future that he knew was coming for him. That's what the lord was commending.

Now as we go to the proverbs, Solomon said, "Go to the ant, thou slugger, to you lazy bum. Learn of his ways and be wise" ([Proverbs 6:6](#)). Again, he said, "There are four things upon the earth that are exceedingly small, but exceedingly wise. And among these four things the ant, is but a feeble folk.

Know that was a conies is a feeble folk. The ant lays up its meat in the summer" ([Proverbs 30:25-26](#)). The wisdom of the ant laying up its food supplies during the summer. The ant somehow knows that the weather isn't always going to be this nice. Somehow there's recorded information in that little brain of the ant, that the winter is coming it's gonna to get cold, it's gonna get rainy, and he won't be able to get out and forage for food. Therefore, it is necessary while it is still summer, while he can get out, to get out and to gather together all of the food that he'll need to survive during the winter season. In other words, take advantage of the present situation to prepare yourself for what you know is coming in the future.

Now, this is the wisdom that was manifested by this steward. And that's why he was commended. Because he took advantage of his present situation to help set himself up for what he knew was coming in the future. That is always very wise, but it isn't wisdom that we always follow. We know that one day we are going to die. We know that when we die we can take nothing with us. We know that any treasure that we lay up in heaven we have to lay up now. We've got to take advantage of our opportunities now to lay up heavenly treasure. We know that we came into the world naked we're going out of the world naked. We brought nothing into the world and it is certain we are going to take nothing out. So if I'm going to set my self up in the heavenly kingdom, I must do it now and I must take advantage of the opportunities that I have now in order set myself up for the heavenly kingdom. And this is exactly what Jesus is saying. Make use of the unrighteousness of mammon. Make use of this filthy luker. This money that God places at your disposal, make use of it in such a way that you will be reaping eternal benefits from it. Invest it in the things of the kingdom in such a way that when you failed, when you come to the end of the road, you might be received into the everlasting habitations.

God, I am certain, keeps a very interesting set of books. Paul the apostle, when he was writing to the Philippians, thanked them for the gift that they sent to him. He said, "Not that I particularly needed it, but I desire that fruit might abound to your account" ([Philippians 4:17](#)). Thank you for what you sent to me. I wasn't particularly in need, but I'm grateful for it because the fruit of my labor. Those people that I won to Christ will abound to your account because of the fact that you supported my ministry there. So money is a tremendous outlet of spiritual power if we use it right. Money can be a blessing; it can be curse. It all depends on how a person uses it. It can be the closest thing to omnipotence that man possesses but so often creates impotence. Jesus is warning here against that impotence that money often creates with a person. Make use of the unrighteousness of mammon, so that when you fail they might receive you under the everlasting kingdoms.

There is, to me, one interesting aspect of arriving in heaven. Something that you don't hear of much, but I expect to meet a lot of people that I have never seen before. Who, though I have never seen them, I am responsible for their being there in the heavenly kingdom. Maybe some native from Africa when he gets to heaven will say, "Now how is it that I heard the gospel?" and God will go through the

books and say, "Well, actually, that missionary that was out there was supported by Chuck Smith. So when he arrives that's the one you one to look for." And so this fellow come up to me and say, "Hey, I want to thank you, brother. Oh I so appreciate what you did." "Well, who are you?" "Oh man, I was a Ubangky. But you brought me the gospel." "What do you mean I brought you the gospel? I've never been in Africa." "Oh, well, I checked the records up here and you where the one that was supporting that missionary over there that brought me to Jesus Christ."

How can they believe unless they hear, how they can hear except there be a preacher? How they can preach except they'd be sent? As it is written, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those that carry the gospel of peace." But that part of being sent, and that's where we can come in. Make use of the unrighteousness of mammon. So that when you fail they might receive you into the everlasting kingdoms.

And now the Lord goes on in verse 10 to make the application of the parable, as He relates it now to your place in the kingdom of God, when you come in to the kingdom of God.

If you have been faithful in least, [in these little things that God has placed at your disposal,] then you will also be faithful in much [in those great things of His kingdom]: but if you have been unjust in the least then you'll be unjust in the greater things ([Luk 16:10](#)).

Man if you're embezzling dollars now, you'll be seeking to embezzle more later, you see. If you're unjust in the little things, if you have a bigger opportunity you're gonna be that much more unjust.

If therefore you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, then who is going to commit to your trust the true riches? ([Luk 16:11](#))

Now this unrighteous mammon is not true riches. Moth and rust can corrupt it. The banks can fail. There's just many ways that this unrighteous mammon can suddenly disappear. It's not true riches. The true riches are the things in the kingdom of God. They're the eternal riches. Yet, if you've not been faithful in this unrighteous mammon, then who is gonna commit to your trust the true riches?

If you have not been faithful in that in which is another man's ([Luk 16:12](#)),

You see, I'm a steward; whatever I have belongs to God. It's not mine. And if I'm not faithful in taking care of what belongs to God,

then who is going to give that which is my own? No servant can serve two masters: he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon ([Luk 16:12-13](#)).

You can't serve them both. Divide in loyalty, it just won't work. You cannot have God as your god and money as your god at the same time. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money ([Luk 16:14](#)),

They were covetous, they loved the money.

They heard all of these things that he was saying to his disciples: and they began to deride him ([Luk 16:14](#)).

And so He turned on them. Now He's talking to the Pharisees,

And he said unto them, You are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knows your hearts ([Luk 16:15](#)):

There are so many times when a person comes up and tries to justify before me something that they have done. I say, "Hey, man, it's cool; doesn't make any difference. I'm not the one who is going to be your judge. You don't have to justify your case before me; I'm not your judge. God is the one. He knows your heart. He knows what the motive was." And the Pharisees were those who love to justify themselves before men, but God knows their hearts.

for that which is highly esteemed among men ([Luk 16:15](#)),

Talking of the Pharisees who were highly esteemed by men, He says,

is an abomination in the sight of God ([Luk 16:15](#)).

Men may highly esteem you, but as far as God is concerned you're an abomination.

The law and the prophets were until John: and since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it ([Luk 16:16](#)).

So up until the time of John you were under the law you were under the prophets. Now the kingdom of God, John came preaching what? The kingdom of God. Saying, "The kingdom of God is at hand." And Jesus preached of the kingdom of God, and so, since the coming of John, the kingdom of God has been preached. And every man must press into it. The word **press** is a intense word in the Greek. It's **agonizo**, must agonize into it.

And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail ([Luk 16:17](#)).

Now, He said, you know, the law was until John. Now the kingdom of God is being preached, but heaven and earth will pass but not one little part of the law is going to fail.

Now evidently there was a running battle between the Pharisees and Jesus over the issue of divorce. For there was a school of thought followed, following Rabbi Hillel, which was the popular school of thought, who interpreted the law of divorce. If a man finds an uncleanness in his wife, let him give her a writing of bill of divorcement. He interpreted that uncleanness to, if she put too much salt in his soup, grounds for divorce, salty soup again. And so they had liberalized the law of divorce. A man can put away his wife for just about any cause in which he just was displeased with her. It was almost

as bad as it is today. Look how we liberalized, you know, you don't need any excuse now, just go to court and say we're incompatible.

So it was much that way in the day of Christ by the liberal interpreting of the law by the rabbis who followed the school of Hillel. And so Jesus, taking a more literal view of that law, and no doubt it was a running battle with Him, so He says, "Hey, not one little tittle of the law is going to fail, you know, easier for heaven and earth to pass than one of this little marks in the Hebrew to fail." And then He sticks the knife in, this particular issue that they were asking Him about and, no doubt, arguing with Him about, He said,

Whosoever puts away his wife, and marries another, commits adultery: and whosoever marries her that is put away from her husband commits adultery ([Luk 16:18](#)).

I mean, He lays it out straight, hard, and just nails them. And then He goes right on and He said,

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 name Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores ([Luk 16:19-21](#)).

So we have a very vast contrast of lifestyles. A rich man fairing sumptuously everyday, and there at his gate a poor beggar covered with sores, begging and seeking to eat the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table and dogs coming and licking his sores. Some have said that this is a parable. Jesus didn't say it was a parable. I do not think it was a parable. For in all of the parables never was a person named. In this story the person is named, Lazarus, the poor man. The rich man isn't named. Someone called him Divvies, but we don't know that.

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angel into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried ([Luk 16:22](#));

Notice it didn't say the poor man was buried. In those days when the poor people died, they just throw them into the Valley of Tophet, into Gehenna. Into the valley just outside of Mount Zion, Valley of Hinnom, where they put the refuse from this city. And there was constant fires burning there in the Valley of Hinnom, and they would just cremate the bodies, throw them in the fires in the trash heap. They wouldn't bury the poor people. So the poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried and in hell, Hades.

He lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and seeing Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. He cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his fingers in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that you in your lifetime received the good things, and likewise

Lazarus the evil things: but now he is comforted, and you are tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf that is fixed: so that they which would pass over from here to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from there. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house: for I have five brothers; that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment ([Luk 16:23-28](#)).

Now Jesus is teaching here concerning Hades, which is translated for the most part in the New Testament [hell](#). A place that is located in the center of the earth. When they asked Jesus for a sign, He said, "A wicked and an adulteress generation seeks after a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah, for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." So Jesus located it in the heart of the earth, because we are told that Jesus descended into hell when He died. But God had given Him the promise, "Thou will not leave my soul in hell, neither will you allow the Holy One to see corruption, and Peter said God fulfilled the promise and He did not leave His soul in hell, neither did He allow the Holy One to see corruption, but this same Jesus hath God raised from the dead. And Peter, in Acts chapter two, bear witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in his message to the throne.

Later, Paul the apostle tells us in [Ephesians 4](#), "He who has ascended into heaven is the same One who first of all descended into the lower parts of the earth, and when He ascended He led the captives from their captivity." Peter tells us that He went down and preached to those souls that were in prison, who in one time were disobedient. So according to the scriptures and according to the teaching of Jesus here, prior to the death and burial of Jesus Christ and subsequent resurrection, Hades or hell, a place in the center of the earth, was divided into two compartments. In one compartment Abraham had charge of comforting those who came into that particular compartment, as the poor man was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. What a fitting person to be comforting them. The father of those who believe. What was he comforting them with? The promise of God to send the Messiah to deliver them.

In Hebrews chapter 11, as it talks about the faith of Abraham, it said these all died in faith. Abraham and Enoch and all of the rest of these all died in faith not having received the promise but seeing it afar off they embraced it, they held to it, and they claimed that they were just strangers and pilgrims here; they were looking for a city which have foundation who's maker and builder is God.

So Abraham was saying, "Hey, look, God is true to His word. He'll keep His promise. You're not gonna have to stay here forever or not, just don't worry about it. Just, you know, Lord is gonna do it. The Messiah is gonna come; He's gonna deliver us out of this place." And one day into hell there came a burst of glory as Jesus came in and said, "Hey, I did it. It's finished; the price has been paid. You've been redeemed from your sinful state." And He broke the bars of hell, and when He

ascended, He led the captives from their captivity. Part of the prophecy of Jesus Christ in [Isaiah 61](#) is He would open the prison doors and set at liberty those who are bound. That's exactly what He did. And He led the captives from their captivity. That's why Matthew's gospel records that after the resurrection of the dead, after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, many of the bodies of the saints were seen walking around the streets of Jerusalem. "Hey, what's Moses doing walking over there?" You know. "David, oh." Then Jesus ascended and He led the captives from their captivity as He ascended into heaven. So that the one compartment of hell at that point was emptied.

Now the other compartment in hell will also one day be emptied. It, as is described here by Jesus and who would know better than He, was a place where the rich man was in torment. He asked that Lazarus be sent to dip his finger in water and cool his tongue. He was tormented in the flame. One day at the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ, death and Hades will give up the dead which are in them, and they will stand before the Great White Throne judgment of God, Revelation chapter 20. And whosoever's names are not found written in the Book of Life will be cast into Gehenna, this is the second death. So hell... someone says, "Well, hell isn't eternal." That's true; it will disgorge itself of its inhabitants at the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ. It is Gehenna, which Jesus described as being a place of outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Where there worm dieth not, neither is the fire quenched. And in Revelation concerning Gehenna it says, "And the smoke of their torment ascends from the ages throughout the ages" ([Revelation 14:11](#)). Now you interpret that however you want, but don't ask me to modify it. Because God says if any man takes away from the words of this book, that is modifies them, his name will be taken out of the Book of Life. You do with it what you want. I'm not gonna to modify it; I'm just gonna leave it be. Let the Word of God speak and let it be. You say, "Oh, that's horrible." I agree. That's why I have no intention of going there.

Common fallacy is often expressed in the question, "How can a God of love consign a man to eternal punishment, send a man to hell?" The question is a fallacy because, first of all, the God of love that we serve has never sent one man to hell nor will he ever send one man to hell. In fact, the God of love that we serve has done everything short of violating man's free will to keep him out of hell. The God of love that we serve sent His Son to die on the cross so men wouldn't have to go to hell. Jesus came to seek and to save those which are lost and God has done everything short of violating man's free moral agency. So man, by his own choice, goes to hell. Never sent there by God. So rather than saying, "How can a God of love send a man to hell?" just say, "How can a man be so stupid as to chose to go to hell when God has made all of the provisions to keep him from it?" Because that's what the truth actually is.

Now, couple of more things that we notice about Hades: there's no transferring from one side to the other. Those that are on this side, if they want cannot come over there, Abraham said to him. Neither can those that are over there come over here. The boundaries are set; there's no transferring back

and forth. There is consciousness. There is remembrance. "Son, remember you in your lifetime lived in luxury. You had the good thing, Lazarus the evil." Remember, he could remember, he remembered his brothers. "If he can't come and comfort me a bit, please send him back to my house, my five brothers I don't want them to come to this place."

Abraham said, They have the law and the prophets; let them hear them. He said, No: they don't listen to that but they will listen if someone comes back from the dead. Abraham said, If they won't listen to that, they won't listen even if someone comes back from the dead ([Luk 16:29-31](#)).

Now to me it is very interesting. Jesus is talking, remember, to the Pharisees, and there was a man named Lazarus who lived in the city of Bethany. And he was very sick. And his sisters sent an urgent message to Jesus who was at the Jordan River and it said, "Come quickly. The one you love is sick." And Jesus remained at the Jordan River with his disciples for two days, and then He said, "Come, let us journey to visit Lazarus." And as they were journeying they were talking about Lazarus' illness, and Jesus said, "Well, he's sleeping." And the disciples said, "Oh, that's a good sign, if he can sleep he's probably getting better." And Jesus said, "No, you don't understand me, he's dead." And so they said, "Well, let's go, you know, so we can die with him."

Well, as He was coming into town, Martha heard that Jesus was finally arriving at the village. She ran out and said, "Lord, if You'd only been here my brother wouldn't have died. Where were you? What took you so long? Why weren't you around when we needed you?" Jesus said, "Martha, your brother is going to live again." "Oh yes, Lord, I know the last day the great resurrection." Jesus said, "No, Martha, I'm the resurrection and the life. And he that believeth on Me though he were dead yet shall he live and he live and believeth in Me, he will never die. Don't you believe this Martha?" Heavy, isn't it? Pretty radical. But you see what He did, as He always does, divides men into two categories, those who believe and those who don't. I mean, He makes a radical claim and then He divides you. He says, "Psst... " sets the knife right down and you're in one side or the other; you either believe or don't. You either have hope of eternal life or you have no hope of life. She said, "Lord, I believe that You are the promised Messiah of God." And so then they came to the house where they were all weeping, and Mary said, "Lord, if You'd only been here my brother would have not had died." Jesus said, "Where did you bury him?" "Come, we'll show you the place," and they got to the place the tomb and Jesus said, "Roll the stone back." And they said, "Oh Lord, can't do that; he's smells by now. He's been in there for four days, the body is decaying." He said, "Roll the stone back." And then He cried, "Lazarus, come forth." He didn't just say, "Come forth," or the whole graveyard would have emptied. You've got to be careful when you got that kind of power. And Lazarus came hopping out. All bound in his grave clothes. And Jesus said, "Loose him and let him go." And they went back home and they prepared a dinner and Jesus was sitting at dinner. And the Pharisees said, "We better kill him." Maybe they were some of this rich man's brothers.

Abraham was right. They will not believe even if they see one who has come back from the dead. Lazarus came back from the dead. It did not make believers out of the Pharisees. Oh, there were many who, when they saw him, believed. But if you are predisposed to unbelief, all of the proof in the world isn't going to change you. You see, believing in Jesus is a matter of choice. And if you've chosen not to believe, I don't care how much proof or evidence is offered to you, you've chosen not to believe and you won't believe. Believing is matter of choice, I choose to believe in Jesus Christ. I choose to believe that He is the resurrection and the life, and by believing in Him I expect never to die. "Oh, oh," you say, "I knew you were weird." Never to die from a scriptural definition. I'm gonna to move out of this old tent into a beautiful new house that the Lord has been preparing for me. He said, "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. And I'm going to prepare one for you. And if I go and prepare one for you, I'm going to come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" ([John 14:2-3](#)). "For we know when this earthly tent, our body, is dissolved, but we have a building of God not made with hands that is eternal in the heavens. So then we who are in these bodies do often groan, earnestly desiring to move out, not to be an unembodied spirit, but to be clothed upon with a body which is from heaven. For we know that as long as we are at home and living in these bodies we are absent from the Lord, but I would rather be absent from this body and to be present with the Lord" ([II Corinthians 5:1-8](#)). So some day if you read in the paper, "Chuck Smith died," don't believe it. Poor reporting. If they're gonna to be accurate they're gonna to have to write, "Chuck Smith moved out of an old worn-out holy tent into a beautiful new mansion. A building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

So here Jesus is telling them a little bit about what's going on. And this is interesting to me as Abraham responds, if they will not believe, if they chose not to believe the law and the prophets, they have predisposition themselves not to believe, they won't believe even if they see a miracle of someone coming back from the dead. They'll say, "Oh well, he must have swoon, he really wasn't dead, and isn't it fortunate that he revived."

Chuck Missler. Commentary on Luke 16

17] And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

A tittle: the tiny decorative "hook" on some of the Hebrew letters.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Matthew 5:17,18

A jot ("yot"): smallest of the 22 Hebrew letters; appears like an apostrophe. The message: Take the Bible literally.

18] Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

The Pharisees justified themselves but were not living according to the Law. One Example—Divorce: Divorce and remarriage = adultery. (Jesus gave one exception to

this: Mt 5:32; 19:1-12; 1 Cor 7). An example of justifying themselves in the eyes of men, but not being justified before God.

The Rich Man & Lazarus

19] There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

20] And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores...

Lazarus = Greek form of the Hebrew name Eleazar: "God is my help.") Lazarus was sick, and possibly crippled: he "was laid" at the rich man's gate.

There's only one who has returned from the grave: He alone "has the floor." This is one of the few reliable passages on this subject. Notice that this is not a parable: this is an actual incident; these are real historical characters with names.

Two reasons to emphasize his name:

1) To demonstrate it really happened; it wasn't merely a rhetorical device.

2) The rich man likely did not know the man's name. Jesus knew his name.

21] And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

...Abject poverty with hunger and poor health.

22] 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;

Death is not the end. It is the beginning of a whole new existence in another world.

Lazarus was righteous not because he was poor but because he depended on God.

The rich man was not condemned because he was rich, but because he didn't use his resources properly. Abraham was among the wealthiest in the world of his day, yet he was not in torment in Hades. He's an idiom for the "good place."

23] And in hell [Hades] he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

"...hell" = Hades. "Abraham's bosom" becomes an idiom for a place of paradise for Old Testament believers at the time of death (Lk 23:43; 2 Cor 12:4).

Theologians believe Abraham's bosom was evacuated after the cross and resurrection (Eph 4:8-10). Christ was the first fruits of them that slept (1 Cor 15:20).

For the Christian, death means to be present with the Lord (2 Cor 5:1-8; Phil 1:21). For the unbeliever, death means to be separated from God's presence; it results in a tormented state.

Hell

English word derived from the Saxon helan, "to cover"; hence the covered or the invisible place. In Scripture there are four words rendered "Hell": • Sheol • Hades • Gehenna • Tartarus.

Sheol

Sheol: *IAav* - sheol, occurs in the Old Testament 65 times; derived from a root word meaning "to ask," "demand"; hence, insatiableness (Prov 30:15,16). It is rendered

“grave” 31 times (Gen 37:35; 42:38; 44:29,31; 1Sam 2:6; etc.) and rendered “hell” 31 times in the AV—the place of disembodied spirits.

The inhabitants of sheol are “the congregation of the dead” (Prov 21:16). It is the abode of the souls of the wicked dead (Num 16:33; Job 24:19; Ps. 9:17; 31:17 etc.). It is also of the good (Ps 16:10; 30:3; 49:15; 86:13 etc.).

Sheol is described as “deep” (Job 11:8); “dark” (Job 10:21,22), “with bars” (Job 17:16). The dead “go down” to it (Num 16:30,33; Ezek 31:15,16,17).

Sheol is not to be confused with a grave, qeburah (sometimes Sheol is used connotatively). A grave is physical, and receives the bodies. It can be used in the plural, and one can have title to a grave. Sheol is singular, never used in the plural.

Hades

a[|dhj, the Greek word for that which is out of sight, to denote the place of the dead; translated “hell” 11 times in the NT.

The Septuagint uses hades to translate the Hebrew |Aav - sheol, (the place of the dead) on 61 occasions (Gen 42:38; Ps 139:8; Hos 13:14; Isa 14:9, et al.).

In Greek it is associated with Orcus, the infernal regions, a dark and dismal place in the very depths of the earth, the common receptacle of disembodied spirits. In the Greek conceptions, it had two subterranean divisions: Elysium and Tartarus.

Hades refers to the abode of the unsaved dead prior to the great white throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

- It is a prison (1 Pet 3:19);
- with gates and bars and locks (Mt 16:18; Rev 1:18);
- is downward (Mt 11:23; Lk 10:15);
- and the righteous and the wicked are separated.

Some view the blessed dead as in a part of Hades called Paradise (Lk 23:43) in “Abraham’s bosom” (Lk 16:22). However, the rich man lifted up his eyes v.23 the “bosom of Abraham” was “afar off.” Abraham’s bosom is in heaven (Mt 8:11).

Most of the early church fathers viewed Paradise as a part of Heaven, not Hades. The “two compartment” view is an accommodation to the Greek conception.

Gehenna

Gehenna (originally Ge bene Hinnom; i.e., “the valley of the sons of Hinnom”) was a deep, narrow ravine to the south of Jerusalem, separating Mount Zion from the so-called “Hill of Evil Counsel.” Here the idolatrous Jews offered their children in sacrifice to Molech (2 Chr 28:3, 33:6; Jer 7:31,19:2-6).

This valley afterwards became the city dump. A fire was continually burning there. It became an idiom to speak of a place of everlasting fire and burning. In this sense it is used by our Lord 11 times (Mt 5:22,29,30; 10:28 18:9; 23:15,33; Mk 9:43,45,47; Lk 12:5); “the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.”

Tartarus

Another word translated “hell” but only one use in the New Testament (2 Pet 2:4). The deepest abyss of Hades.

“...As far below Hades as the earth is below Heaven...” Homer’s Iliad

Tartarus is the specific place of incarceration of the angels that sinned in Genesis 6
Abousso

Another related term is the “bottomless pit,” or the abyss, or a;bussoj - aboussos. This is what the Beast of Revelation comes out of (Rev 11:7; 17:8) and where Satan will be bound for 1,000 years (Rev 20:1, 3). It is also the place from which the demon locusts emerge in Revelation 9.

Some Insights

- The man in Hades was fully conscious (memory; speaking; pain; desires).
- His eternal destiny was irrevocably fixed.
- He knew that what he was experiencing was fair and just—he also knew what his brothers needed to do to avoid his own fate: repent.
- (He was not yet in Hell, but only Hades)

24] 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.

All hope abandon ye who enter here.

Dante’s Divine Comedy

The punishment of lost sinners is not remedial: it does not improve them. *Hades* and *Gehenna* are not hospitals for the sick; they are prisons for the condemned.

25] 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.

26] 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.

“...a great gulf”: ca,sma – *chasma*: a gaping opening, a chasm, a gulf (from a form of *chao*; to “gape” or “yawn”).

(Some conjecture that the *Abousso* is involved in this geocentric topology. The only place topologically one can have a “bottomless” pit would be at the *center* of the earth.)

27] Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house:

28] For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

People in Hades (apparently) have a concern for the lost, but can’t do anything about it.

29] Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

30] And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

31] And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

“...rose from the dead”: One did. It is interesting that his name was also Lazarus (John 11).

The response of the chief priests was to plot to kill him (Jn 11:46-50; 12:10). Faith that is based *solely* on miracles is not a saving faith (Jn 2:23-25).

Conclusion

Jesus spoke more of Hell than of Heaven. They both are real. This should preempt all of our other priorities!

The safest road to hell is the gradual one – the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.

C. S. Lewis

Many ask, “How can a loving God even permit such a place as Hell to exist, let alone send people there?”

In asking that question, they reveal that they do not understand: the love of God or the wickedness of sin.

God’s love is a holy love, not a shallow sentiment. Sin is rebellion against a holy and loving God. God’s mercy is unobligated and sovereign.

I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy...

Romans 9:15

The incarnate God, who has vicariously suffered more for man’s sin than any man will personally, surely has the right to determine the method and extent of his own self-immolating compassion.

God does not “send people to Hell.” They send themselves there by refusing to heed His call and believe on His Son (cf. Rev 21:8; Jn 3:18-21, 36). Nobody will be in Hell for their sin. They will be in Hell for rejecting the provision God has made for their sin. To escape danger, one must believe in that danger. Salvation presupposes a prior damnation. Denial prevents penitence for sin, and this prevents pardon.

No error, consequently, is more fatal than that of Universalism, which:

- blots out the attribute of retributive justice;
- transmutes sin into misfortune, instead of guilt;
- turns all suffering into chastisement;
- converts the redemptive work of Christ into mere moral influence;
- makes salvation a debt due to man instead of an unmerited boon from God.

No error, consequently, is more fatal than that of Universalism: No doctrine throws its solemn shadows upon even the most careless human life. The fall and eternal ruin of the human spirit is the most dreadful event imaginable.