

# HELL FIRE & JESUS' PARABLE OF LAZARUS AND THE RICH MAN

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These notes, composed from 2013 on, are based on taped lectures given between 1977-97 by Dr. Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., formerly Head of Theology for the Worldwide Church of God; he resigned in January 1974 because of his unresolved doctrinal issues with the administration. Sadly Dr. Martin died in January 2002, a great loss to the world and to those who seek Biblical truth.

The first and possibly the most important fact to understand about Christ's teachings is that He taught in Parables. Parables are not to be taken literally. They are figurative and allegorical. They are stories to illustrate a point.

One way people get totally confused and mixed up in their reading and study of the Bible is that they often choose to think that the literal statements are figurative, and the figurative statements are literal. Confusion and misunderstanding is the result.

Many well meaning people wonder why the Bible is so difficult to understand. Why are the scriptures not easier to understand? The reason is that God and Christ are writing in their own style to fit in with their Plan to reveal information to Their children at a time when it is appropriate for them to know something.

There are three little known, understood, or appreciated factors at work all through the entire Bible.

1. From beginning to end, the Bible contains "progressive revelation". Subjects are introduced piece by piece, and more truth is gradually added throughout the scriptures. Hints concerning the Gospel started in a very rudimentary form in the Old Testament, more were added to from time to time.

The disciples were given some more information, but the whole detail of the fantastic truth of the Gospel was not even revealed to them while He was alive. After His resurrection He taught them more, but it was not until after Christ had returned to heaven that He sent the Holy Spirit to open their minds to be able to understand spiritual matters.

It was not until 63 A.D. when the final piece of the story was added. Christ personally then revealed to Paul just before his death. This was the understanding of 'the Mystery hid from the foundation of the world' that we are God's actual children, and that we are destined to become God just like

God and Jesus Christ are. This fact is still hidden from the vast majority of “Churchianity” presumably because it is not their time to understand it.

2. God closes people’s ears and eyes to prevent them becoming responsible for knowledge before they are ready to receive it.

Why does our loving God close people’s eyes? Because He does, and because He loves every single human individual, and has a specific Plan for them which involves **timing**.

3. People also close their own ears and eyes, and persist in “seeing” things their own way, through the filters of their own mind and the imaginations of their hearts. Most people do not want to know about God, certainly not about their Creator God. They want to know about pagan gods, yes; about heathen gods, yes; about weird and wonderful practices that God hates like Easter, Christmas, and Hallowe’en, yes; but about the real truth of God, they actually choose not to know, even if they happen to read the truth about the heathen, pagan, idolatrous origins of those festivals they love in newspapers and magazines, they merrily go on their way. But God makes it clear:

Jeremiah 10:1 Hear ye the word which the Lord speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: 2 Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. 3 For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. 4 They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.

Isaiah 1:14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.

Amos 5:21 I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. 22 Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.

The people of this world have never yet come to the realization that there is only one acceptable way to worship God – HIS WAY.

Jeremiah 16:12 And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me:

Most religious people in Churchianity believe they will go to heaven when they die to be with the Lord, but is that what Christ taught? Christ said, "The meek inherit the earth." Not heaven. He also said, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:3)

When we die we do not go to heaven or 'hell', we die, and we are dead to await the resurrection.

Ecclesiastes 9:5 For the living know that they shall die:  
but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward;  
for the memory of them is forgotten.

So where is the 'where' Jesus will be, and when will we be with Him? When Christ returns, He is coming to the Earth. Christians who are alive at that time will rise to meet Him in the air, those who are dead for however long will also meet Him in the clouds just before His feet touch the Mount of Olives. So to be with the Lord, we will need to be on the Earth, not in Heaven!

Romans 1:21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Here is some information about parables, and the most important thing in relation to the story of Lazarus is that it is a parable. In Matthew 13:34 the inspired scripture of Jesus Christ clearly states: "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and **without a parable spake he not unto them:**"

Matthew 13:13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. 14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

Matthew 13:15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and **their eyes they have closed**; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

Matthew 13:33 Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures

of meal, till the whole was leavened. 34 All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: 35 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

So is there a Hell fire? The Bible certainly appears to mention it, but it is the fate of the unbeliever?

God gave a commandment to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. God said. "If you eat of the tree of Good and Evil, you will die." The serpent said, "You will not die." So the doctrine of the "Immortality of the Soul" was initially preached to Adam and Eve by the serpent. The notion of eternal or age-lasting punishment is based on that doctrine was gradually introduced from ancient pagan history and practices into Christianity in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. In the 3-4<sup>th</sup> century at the Council of Nicea, It was confirmed as official church doctrine at the Council of Trent 150 years later, and so continues to this day.

The Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man appears in Luke 16. The main problem people have with this parable can be summed up by the fact that they take the story literally. They do not realize is it a parable, simply a colourful story to illustrate a point. To understand it properly, it is necessary to understand who the characters are in the parable and what the significance of the details really are.

First we need to understand that in Luke 16:1-12 Jesus Christ was talking to His disciples, and expounding the parable of the 'unjust steward', but also we need to know that the Pharisees were there listening, and hating what they heard, and ridiculed Christ, because He had touched a raw nerve. Traditionally Jewish priests had always had an avaricious streak, and used their offices to benefit their own finances.

Luke 16:13 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.

The Pharisees were guilty of claiming to serve God but in reality were self-serving, and far from being obedient to God in their work.

Luke 16:14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.

Knowing the hostile attitude of the Pharisees, the religious leaders, Jesus begins the 'Lazarus' parable, this allegorical story by setting the scene:

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

Most people read right over two important things to understand in this first sentence. The rich man was clothed in purple and fine linen. Why was this mentioned by Christ? Firstly, He was telling his Jewish listeners that the Rich Man was of royal stock, they would know this because only regal people wore purple, not the least because it was extremely expensive. Secondly He was telling his listeners that the Rich Man was also a 'Jew' and also a priest because he was wearing 'fine linen'. This will become important as we go on.

Luke 16:20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus (a Gentile), which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the (Jewish) Rich Man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

Note that the beggar was a Gentile, with whom the Jews would not normally associate at all, let alone allow them to receive some of the benefits of being Israelites. This Gentile was hoping to feed off the crumbs which fell from the Rich Man's table. The name Lazarus identifies the beggar, who should be associated with Abraham's Gentile servant of the similar (actually the same name in Hebrew) Eliezer (in Gk. Lazarus) which means 'God of help' who was sent to find a wife for Isaac.

[Genesis 15:2](#) And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

Eliezer was a Gentile from Damascus, a good servant, who was a God-fearing man.

Genesis 24:1 And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. 2 And Abraham said unto his eldest servant (Eliezer) of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh (Heb. yarek – organs of generation - testicles): 3 And I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: 4 But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.

Genesis 24:9 And the servant put his hand under the thigh (Heb. yarek – testicles) of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning that matter.

This clearly was a very sober and momentously important historic moment, as Abraham was commissioning Eliezer to find a wife for Isaac, who would eventually give birth to Jacob who became the father of the children of Israel, who were to become God's special people.

Now Eliezer, prayed to God, and asked Him to help him find a suitable wife for Isaac. Eliezer, although a Gentile, would have inherited all Abraham's wealth until Isaac came along, but was now disinherited, and 'poor' by comparison. So Christ is using Lazarus (or Eliezer), a Gentile as an example of the 'beggar' in His story.

Luke 16:22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom:

The Jews of Jesus' day all believed that when they died, they would be 'carried to Abraham's bosom', into a very close relationship with Abraham, just like so many people today who believe that when they die they will go to heaven. So Jesus was using an analogy that his hearers would have been very familiar with.

But to suggest that the beggar who was a Gentile would be carried into an intimate relationship with Abraham's, into his 'bosom' so to speak would have been very offensive to Jews, especially Pharisees.

But notice that Jesus was saying that Lazarus, a Gentile, would die and be carried into a special privileged relationship with Abraham. The Jews would have regarded this as impossible as in their book, Gentiles had no such close relationship with Abraham, and therefore by reference, with God.

Luke 16:22 ... the Rich Man also died, and was buried; 23 And in hell (a 'hole' in the ground the grave) he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

This is an analogy, Christ knew, and we know from His Word that there is no consciousness when we are dead, but this is like a movie to illustrate a point.

Now notice, Jesus was explaining to his Jewish listeners that when the Rich Man who was a Jew of Royal stock and a priest died, he did not go into Abraham's bosom, but to a very unpleasant place, but Lazarus did go

into Abraham's bosom. So the two 'dead' men were in the very opposite situation to what the Jews would have thought. Lazarus a Gentile went into a privileged position, and the Rich Man into a 'terrible' place.

Luke 16:24 And he (the Rich Man) 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.

What arrogance the Rich Man had in expecting Abraham to send Lazarus over the gulf between the two fates which separated them with some water to give him relief!

Luke 16:25 **But Abraham (in this story) said**, Son (the Rich Man was a descendant 'son' of Abraham'), remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, (because he was a Jew, an Israelite!) and likewise Lazarus evil things (because he was a Gentile from Damascus, and was not an Israelite): but now he (Lazarus) is comforted, and thou (Rich Man) 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.

This "gulf" in this story is the Jordan valley, and the phrase "pass over to us" in the original means "to ferry over a river", but ferry over what? The Jordan river, was the border between the land of Israel and the land where the Gentiles and other tribes of Abraham's non-Israelitish children lived.

Christ's Jewish listeners would know what he meant because they understood perfectly well the geography of the area, they also would be very familiar with the scriptures and who Eliezer was. They would know that Jesus was saying that the Gentile was with Abraham in the land of Israel and the Jew was in Gentile land on the other side of Jordan, and they would have been horrified, aghast even.

Luke 16:27 Then he (The Rich Man) 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.

No why did Christ quote the Rich Man as having "five brethren" here, not four, or six, but **five**? Most people just reading the Bible would pass over this point. How is this relevant or important? Christ's listeners would have understood that Jesus was clearly identifying the 'Rich Man' as a Jew!

Abraham's son Isaac had a two sons by his wife Rebekah, Esau, and Jacob who became 'Israel'. Jacob had twelve children who became the twelve tribes of Israel by several different women.

Genesis 35:23 The sons of Leah; Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Zebulun:

So Jacob had six children by his wife Leah, one of whom was Judah, who therefore had **five** brothers.

Luke 16:29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

God's complaint against the Jews was that they had never 'heard' Moses, but turned a dead ear to God's Laws of the Old Covenant.

Luke 16:30 And he (the Rich Man) said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

Luke 16:31 And he (Abraham) said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

Christ knew that the Jews would not be 'persuaded' even though He would be risen from the dead.

Christ is telling his Jewish listeners that historically the Jews and Israelites did not "hear" (the law of) Moses, and would not be persuaded to repent even if one rose from the dead. Of course, the Jews were not persuaded to repent then when they killed Christ although they knew the Mosaic Law, nor did they recognize and repent because Christ DID rise from the grave in their time; and Christ is also saying that Israel and Jews who have had not respected "the Law of Moses" through history, and even until this day in our era Jews will not believe that Christ rose from the dead, will not repent, and continue not to do so, and indeed many of the most religious practicing Jews still practice forms of idolatry that God hates to this day.

Israel and the Jews will not mend their ways, or repent and accept Jesus Christ until just before the second coming of Christ. Israel and the Jews according to the scriptures are to this day 'not my people'.

Hosea 1:8 Now when she had weaned Loruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. 9 Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.

But the time is coming, just before the second coming of Christ, that once again, Israel will become God's people.

Hosea 1:10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.

So how can we nail down the fact that this is indeed a parable? Here are Biblical facts about sin and death. We need **rightly** to divide the Word of Truth.

1. If the penalty for sin is eternal life in hell fire, then Jesus would have had to pay that penalty to absolve us from sin. Is Christ alive and burning in hell fire? No! Of course not!! He died, was resurrected, judged sinless, and is now at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

2. If the penalty for sin is eternal death, knowing nothing, then Christ must still be dead. But He is not!! He died, but was resurrected by God the Father, and is now very much alive at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

Let Jesus Christ be our example and our standard. Christ took the sins of the human race on His shoulders, and died to reconcile us to God.

Ezekiel 18:20a The soul that sinneth, it shall die.

This verse in Ezekiel says clearly, you sin, you die.

Also very interestingly, for those who think that the ten commandments are eternal and unchanged, the inspired Word of God is saying through Ezekiel that there is a major change in the second commandment. This is more 'progressive revelation'. In Exodus 20 it says:

Exodus 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

But in Ezekiel 18:20b it says that God is changing this part of the commandment, and that the children will no longer have to bear the sins of their fathers to the third and fourth generation.

Ezekiel 18:20b The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

Romans 6:23 23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So the penalty for sin is death. According to the inspired Word of God, death is cessation of life. When dead, humans have no consciousness.

Ecclesiastes 3:19 For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity.

Ecclesiastes 9:5 For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

So for Jesus to pay the penalty for the sins of His future children and reconcile us to God, Jesus Christ had to die. And die He did, and stayed dead for three days and nights. But He did not stay dead for ever, He was resurrected.

Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

So yes, we will die, and at the appointed time, at the judgment, because Christ paid the penalty of our sins for us, we will be judged sinless, as Christ was judged sinless, and raised to immortality, and will be with Christ and the Father for ever here on Earth which will become God the Father's Headquarters.

Revelation 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. 2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle (house) of God is

with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

No, we shall not dead as a dodo for eternity, we shall not be burning in hell fire, nor will be in heaven, we shall be alive with God and Christ for evermore on this Earth.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

So here is the **huge** reason why Jesus Christ put this unusual and very different story about Lazarus and the Rich Man into the Bible. Jesus was revealing more 'progressive revelation'. Our Elder Brother was foretelling an enormous change in humankind's future potential, a new phase and development of the Gospel that was to become made clear after His death and resurrection.

He was telling the leading Jews of His day, that Lazarus, a Gentile, would be 'in Abrahams bosom' in the 'Promised Land' receiving God's blessings BEFORE the Jews, who because of their rejection of God, were 'on the other side of Jordan' outside the Promised Land, and not receiving the promises.

Initially God chose Israel and the Jews to be a special people. Not special in themselves or because they were 'better' than others, but 'special' in the purpose God intended them to fulfill. God wanted Israel to be a shining example of human beings who would honour Him, obey His laws, and behave as He asked them to. So special were they that God 'married' Israel.

Over history, from their beginning as a nation, they had systematically rejected God to rule over them, they had consistently ignored His laws, and they were constantly involved in heinous forms of idolatrous worship, even murdering their own children to worship the gods they chose to serve.

So God 'divorced' Israel. He told them, "You are no longer my people, and because you have rejected me I am rejecting you."

So having rejected His special people, God gave new opportunities to the Gentiles. In Old Testament times, the Gentiles apparently had no part in the Gospel story, and were not included in the promises to Israel.

In the New Testament, first Peter was shown that he should not call the Gentiles 'unclean', but that they could gain Salvation. Then Paul was appointed the Apostle to the Gentiles when Christ personally revealed His new phase of the Gospel to him. Because the Jews and Israel had rejected God, the Gospel would now go to the Gentiles, and they would be eligible for Salvation which was a new concept.

This latest edition of the scope of the Gospel emphasised that the Gentiles would now be included in the promises of the Gospel and the New Covenant. This was another example of "progressive revelation". It was a huge step forward for ALL of God's children regardless of their race or nationality. 'Universal Reconciliation' is now beginning to be understood by more people. All will eventually be 'saved'.

The vast majority of the British, the Americans, and the inhabitants of Europe are all Gentiles, they certainly are not "Israel" or "Israelites" as some denominations have taught! It is British, American and European Gentiles who have spread God's Word, the Holy Bible worldwide. Israelites, Israelis, and the Jews still reject Christ, and therefore God, and have had nothing to do with the spread of the knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the world.

So when we observe what has happened all over the world regarding the result of the invention of the printing press, the printing of Bibles, the worldwide spread of the principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the almost universal inculcation of the Ten Commandments in most countries of the world, all this work has been done by Gentiles.

In the Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man, Jesus Christ was announcing to the leading Jews of His day, (and of course by the New Testament scriptures), that because of their rejection of God then and now, the message of Salvation was going to go out first to the Gentiles and Israel would have to wait. For the message Christ taught in this parable, this and His other claims, they had Him murdered. The time is coming when the peoples of the Tribes of Israel including the Jews will repent of their rejection of God, and once again become His people.