

## **Three Lessons from the Rich Man: Luke 16:19-31**

### **10-8-17**

The story Jesus tells in Luke 16:19-31 is one of the most unique in the Bible. While it follows many of the patterns of the parables of Jesus (compare verse 19 with verse 1 for example) in both style and intent and purpose, there are a number of irregularities which cause many to wonder if it is a parable at all. If it is a parable, it is unique in naming one of the people in it, in using a real person (Abraham) as part of the story, and in describing a location. However, a number of the parables in Luke have unique characteristics (consider the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son).

But in debating that issue, we risk overlooking what the real point of the teaching was. There are three lessons we need to learn from this parable.

#### **1. This Life Is All About Making Sure We Are Ready For Eternity**

Consider the issues of the parable. Jesus is teaching this because of the love of money of the Pharisees. He had told them earlier that *"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"* (Luke 16:13). The Pharisees scoffed when they heard this, so Jesus tells them the story of another rich man.

Consider the life of the rich man. Was he evil? It does not speak of his evil deeds, but that he simply lived this life to the fullest. When he is before Abraham, he is not accused of wicked deeds, but of simply using this life to be content. That is the issue at hand. When we see this life as just about being satisfied now, we miss the real purpose of life, which is to prepare ourselves for the next life.

#### **2. If The Dead Could Speak, They Would Remind Us Of Lesson One**

The rich man does not see his fate as unjust, suggesting that he knows that it is fair. But his chief concern is that of his brothers who are alive. He desires that they should be warned. This tells us something important; if the dead could speak, their only concern would be to tell us that we need to be ready for eternity. They would not care if we are happy, rich or content. Whichever side of the great gulf they lie, they only want for us to succeed in being on the right side.

If the dead could speak, their message would echo Mark 8:35 *"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"* They would tell us NOTHING in this life compares to the rewards or punishments of the next.

#### **3. The Dead Can't Speak, But The Word Of God Speaks Greater Anyway**

Abraham tells the rich man that once dead, the eternal destination is fixed. Consider the message of Hebrews 12:14-17. There we hear about Esau losing his birthright, and how it was that there came a point when he wanted it back, but it was too late. This message is important, because it speaks to us.

If we are unwilling to listen to the Word of God, then there is no supernatural message we will listen to either. The Pharisees often demanded a sign from Jesus, but Jesus refused, because they truly were unwilling to hear him. Matthew 12:38-40 *Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."* It is ironic that the sign Jesus spoke of was His own ascension from Hades. Yet even after that, they did not believe. A Dead Man has come back, and yet most still do not believe.