

## LESSON 8

# THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

Luke 16:19-31

**INTRODUCTION.** The story of The Rich Man and Lazarus is called by some a parable, yet others believe the story is taken from real life. Either way the lesson is the same. Only Luke records the story, and he places it in the same context with Christ's teaching to the Pharisees on the proper use of riches. This story tells the consequences of unbelief, which results in covetousness and the failure of the proper use of riches. "...Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16:13).

The Rich Man and Lazarus is a story of contrasts. In the physical world there was a rich man and a poor beggar. The rich man had the finest clothes of purple and fine linen, while the poor man was clothed in sores. The rich man dined sumptuously every day, while the poor man desired to eat crumbs. The rich man had numerous servants to serve him, while the poor man had only the dogs to lick his sores. Then both men died. In the spiritual world the beggar was in Abraham's bosom, while the rich man was in torment. The two men did not dwell together on earth, and after death they were still separated.

**PURPLE.** Purple was a color in the ancient world that symbolized royalty and nobility. Purple dye was extracted from the *murex* shellfish found in the eastern Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Phoenicia and Canaan. The snails secrete a yellowish fluid which makes a permanent purple dye when boiled and treated. To produce one ounce of the dye, 250,000 of these shellfish were required (*Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, p. 288). The silk, wool, linen, and cotton fabrics dyed with this "Royal Tyrian Purple" was very expensive and in great demand by the wealthy. The name Canaan probably meant originally "land of the purple," and the name Phoenicia comes from a Greek word meaning "purple." Thus these two ancient countries probably derived their names from the purple dye industry in that region (Jack Finegan, *Light From the Ancient Past* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959], pp. 135-136).

**FINE LINEN.** Linen is a cloth woven from the fibers of the flax or hemp plant. The plant was common in Egypt, growing in the fertile Nile River valley. Flax was also grown in the Jordan River valley near Jericho and in Galilee. Linen of various grades was a popular material in Biblical times for many kinds of clothing, sheets, curtains, and even sails for ships. The "fine linen" referred to in the Bible was a sheer, almost translucent fabric woven by skilled weavers from yarns that were so fine they were sometimes almost invisible. Linen when bleached was brilliantly white, and fine linen was thus symbolically used to denote purity and righteousness in the scriptures (Rev. 19:8). Garments of fine linen were very expensive and worn by royalty, priests, and the wealthy.

## **A. THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS**

### 1. *The Rich Man* (Luke 16:19)

- a. How was the rich man clothed?

*Note.* The purple garment of this rich man was the outer garment and the linen the inner garment.

- b. How did the rich man fare (eat)?

### 2. *The Poor Man* (Luke 16:20-21)

- a. What was the poor man's name? Describe his condition.

*Note.* The name Lazarus means "God a help."

- b. What did the poor man desire to eat?

*Note.* In rich households the custom was to place loaves of bread beside the guests. Since there were no eating utensils, the hands became soiled while eating. The guests wiped their hands on pieces of the bread and then tossed the hunks of bread away.

- c. What comfort did the man have?

3. When the beggar died, where did he go? Who carried him there? (Luke 16:22)

*Note.* We must assume Lazarus had faith, for his poverty alone would not have brought him to Abraham's bosom.

4. What happened to the rich man? (Luke 16:22)
5. Where did the rich man go after he died, and what was his condition? (Luke 16:23)

*Note.* The rich man was in torment because of his unbelief, not because of his wealth.

6. What did he ask Abraham to do? (Luke 16:24)
7. What was Abraham's answer? (Luke 16:25)
8. What prevented Lazarus from going to the rich man, or the rich man going to Lazarus? (Luke 16:26)
9. What was the rich man's second request of Abraham? (Luke 16:27-28)
10. What was Abraham's response? (Luke 16:29)
11. Next the rich man asked that a sign be given to his brothers. What was his third request of Abraham? What did his brothers need to do? (Luke 16:30)
12. What was Abraham's answer? (Luke 16:31)

## **B. HADES: PARADISE AND TORMENT**

1. *Why was the rich man in torment?* The rich man was in torment because of his *unbelief* in God and God's word. It was his unbelief that led to his covetousness and failure to properly use his possessions and riches (mammon of unrighteousness). Abraham told the rich man that his brothers had Moses

and the prophets to teach them. The rich man in his life on earth had not believed Moses and the prophets. What had Moses and the prophets taught?

- a. *Moses*: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine \_\_\_\_\_, and with all thy \_\_\_\_\_, and with all thy \_\_\_\_\_" (Deut. 6:5). "...thou shalt love thy \_\_\_\_\_ as \_\_\_\_\_" (Lev. 19:18).
  - b. Jesus quoted these two passages in Matt. 22:35-40. What did He say about these two commandments? (Matt. 22:40)
  - c. *The Prophets*: according to Micah, what three things does God require? (Mic. 6:8)
2. *What is Hades?* This story teaches the fearful consequences of unbelief, and that a person's fate in eternity is sealed at death. The rich man was in Hades (Luke 16:23). *Hades* (Greek) in the New Testament is the place or region of the departed spirits. Hades corresponds to *Sheol* (Hebrew) in the Old Testament. From this story we learn there are two regions in Hades: Abraham's bosom and torment, with a "great gulf" between the two which none may cross.
- a. The righteous dead (Lazarus in this story) are in Abraham's bosom. Jesus referred to this place when He talked with the thief on the cross. What did Jesus call this place? (Luke 23:43)
  - b. The unrighteous dead (the rich man in this story) are in torment. Where are the angels that sinned? (II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6)
3. *What happens after the judgment?* When Jesus comes again, He will judge the world; then what will be the final abode of the righteous and unrighteous?
- a. The righteous who have been in Paradise or Abraham's bosom will be blessed in what way? (Matt. 25:34)
  - b. The unrighteous who have been in torment will be condemned to what place? (Matt. 25:41)
  - c. After the judgment what happens to death and Hades? (Rev. 20:14)