

Summer 2023 Newsletter
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THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

Jesus said, "I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand." -- Matthew 13:13

A parable is a story in which the things pictured are symbolic of the things meant. This is not too hard to grasp when Jesus was speaking of Wheat and Tares, but when people are characters in the story there is a temptation to interpret them as actual persons. Jesus' explanation for why he spoke in parables was because the people did not see or hear or understand. "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." But to his disciples Jesus said, "blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear." (Matt 13:15,16)

In the 15th and 16th chapters of Luke, the Lord spoke a series of parables in response to the criticism made by the Scribes and Pharisees regarding Jesus' attention to and concern for the common people of Israel. The "publicans and sinners" were the lowest strata of Jewish society and were left outside of the social notice of the Pharisaical class. These rulers of the people felt Jesus should favor them, but he knew that they had little regard for his teachings and tried to catch him up in his words again and again. Meanwhile, the publicans and sinners were hungry to hear Jesus' words, but the Pharisees "grumbled, saying 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.'" (Luke 15:1,2--all citations from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted) So, Jesus told the self-righteous

Pharisees a parable about a Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1-7) in which the shepherd leaves the flock to go after and recover one sheep that has strayed. Next, he told them of a woman's search for one Lost Coin (vss.8-10) and her joy when she had found it. He told them these stories to awaken these arrogant religious rulers to their failure in not befriending the common people. "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." (Luke 15:7)

The parable of the Prodigal Son (vss.11-32) is the next in the series. It tells of a father with two sons. The younger son asks the father for his inheritance and leaves his home to go into the world and try his own way. He comes to ruin and decides to return to his home and throw himself on the mercy of his father and beg for a place among his father's servants.

In the meantime, his older brother has continued to work on his father's land, but hearing sounds of revelry, he inquires about the source. He learns that a feast is ensuing. The delight of his father at his younger son's return prompts him to make a feast of thanksgiving in his honor. The older son hears of all the preparations from the servants and resents the fuss made over his errant brother. He refuses to join in the festivities. He complains that although he has remained with his father, he has never had such a party thrown for

him. When he complains about the waste of his father's wealth by his brother, their father's response is "It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found." (Luke 15:11-32)

Have you guessed who the characters are that Jesus was illustrating? God is the father in the tale. The elder brother pictures the Pharisees and Rulers of the nation who had never left but who were serving God for position and honors—not out of love for Him, but from obligation. The younger son represents the publicans and sinners who had strayed into paths of the world only to find them empty and leading to destruction. Chastened, he recognizes the blessings offered by his father and, repenting returns, humbly willing to assume any lowly position within his father's house.

Jesus next tells the story of a **Dishonest Manager (Luke 16:1-13)** who fears the loss of his position when his Master begins to suspect that he is crooked. "I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses". (4) This Manager's solution was to summon all his master's debtors and cut their bills. His Master approved "because he had done wisely: for the children of this world." The dishonest Manager sighed with relief. He lost the graft he had been adding to his master's bills, but he kept his job. Jesus' summation: "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." (13)

"The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things,

The last parable in this set of five is the **Rich Man and Lazarus. (vss. 19-31)** There are many who deny that this is a parable because they see it as a support for doctrines which they have absorbed from the traditions of their churches. In it they find what are in fact extra-Biblical concepts adopted after the death of the Apostles, Plato's

The Rich Man and Lazarus

The rich man in this parable pictures the nation of Israel as represented by the Pharisees and Doctors of the Law. Lazarus pictures the publicans and sinners and Gentiles (the dogs) all

Why Abraham? Because God gave his oath and his promise to Abraham (Gen. 22:17; Gal 3:8) Where is Abraham's bosom? Since Jesus was clear that "no one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of

Man," (John 3:13) and in Hebrews 11:39,40, we are told that Abraham (vss.17-19) had not yet received his reward, so wherever "Abraham's bosom" is we have it on good authority]

[**Hades**—Acts 2:31 and Psa. 16:10 provide the key to the correlation of the Greek word **Hades** with the Hebrew **Sheol** which is described as "sleep" throughout the Old Testament. (See 1 Kings 11:43 and various verses in context.) **Jesus also described Lazarus' death as sleep** (John 11:11-13) "For in

The Greek word translated "torments" literally means "a touchstone." (Strong's #931, *basanos*) signifying being tested

This word "tormented" comes from a different Greek word "grieve." The Rich Man was grieving the great loss of God's love. For ones who have enjoyed an honored status, the loss of it is grievous.]

In this flame"—

Strong's #5395 *phlox*, (*flox*); to flash or flame; a blaze—This word is used seven times in the Scriptures and in all but one of them the word "flame" has the added words "of fire" from

this division during the three years of Jesus' ministry. Day by day the rich man pictured the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, the Judea in which Jesus taught and performed his miracles. His five brothers would stand for the ten other tribes of Israel,

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you

are not willing to come to Me that you may have life. ... Do

(Abraham) said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the

By special reason Jesus used Lazarus' name here. Approximately
Pharisees "persuaded" to become followers of Jesus when Lazarus
rose from the dead"? Not at all! "Then gathered the chief priests and

The Jewish nation, represented by the Pharisees had sealed their
fate. Although one "went to them from the dead" they would not
acknowledge Jesus' Messiahship. Hence, their greatest fear was
realized. They lost their place and their nation and were scattered
throughout the earth. Jesus had given them warning. This is an
important warning for us, too. It is possible to "search the scriptures"
wrongly. When we seek do we come with pre-conceived ideas for
which we hope to find support, or do we study to learn what the
scriptures have to teach us? Let us not be like the Pharisees closing
our eyes to "inconvenient" or "unpopular" truths. Let us not make the
test of truth "have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed?" (John
7:48) Rather, let us be guided by the Scriptures alone.

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."
-- Psalm 119:105

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