

## **[Planted in the Sea] / Gospel of Luke 16:19 – 17:37**

~ In this report from our Spiritual Safari we will witness Lazarus the beggar walking onto the Biblical stage and, as a result, launch our thinking into a new orbit of understanding. These parables are all real-life accounts of actual events in the history of certain chosen people for particular purposes; they are not obscure folk tales that were handed down through the centuries. I make that statement right up front in complete confidence in Holy Writ; and because this report is going to get down to the ugliest of the nitty gritty in our life. I suppose I could be wrong in my interpretation - because I have heard others that are, at least, plausible; but I highly doubt I am wrong.

Two men at the opposite ends of the social, financial and educational spectrum open this scene. We have the top echelon of riches and the lowest extreme of a poverty-stricken, bottom-feeding segment of society. We cannot bring any two classes of men from society before us who are any farther apart than these two are. The crumbs that fell from the rich man's table were all the poor man had. I don't see where Lazarus was ever invited to sit at the table, either; I can only find how Lazarus was always kept in a menial place far away from being seen. Of course, that's when the dogs come along.

Lazarus represents the lowest depths of human degradation, suffering and debilitating despair. We need to realize that description is the condition of this man in this life. If you had lived in Lazarus town you would have doubted any spiritual discernment could possibly be attained by him. I'm sure every one of us would have written Lazarus off as insane without a second thought. In contrast, I'm sure the rich man had several doctorate degrees on the wall of his hundredth-floor office, owned buildings around town that were named after him and his name was regarded in the town as a fine, upstanding citizen. Some people perceived him as a genius, I'm sure.

Well, this is the picture from the outside; one man is dirt poor, and one is clothed in purple. Abject poverty and extreme riches divide men just about as far apart as they can possibly get. Here, Jesus walks us through the doorway of death as if nothing unusual has happened; and for Him, of

course, nothing unusual had happened. Jesus goes from stage right and exits stage left without even noticing the crowd staring at Him. You and I will not be able to attain plenary penetration in the thinking that our Lord Jesus instructs us in now....

## XVI

***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,***

***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.***

***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;***

~ The moment Lazarus steps through the doorway of death, his pall bearers are angels. Those angels were prepared for him and waiting. Lazarus is handled lovingly by God's angel's that usher him directly into paradise. The rich man died and was buried; but before he was buried, I'm sure there was a huge funeral with some slick eulogy attempting to push this man right into the top place in Heaven - and even into the right hand of God in their minds. None of that is mentioned. What a wicked imagination mankind really has, my beloved. In reality, the preacher got this rich man's direction of departure confused....

***23 And in hell the rich man lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.***

~ This is truly a tricky section of Scripture to navigate in regard to precise intent by wording - and the best suited translated word is not "hell" at this point but, rather, "hades" in the New Testament - or "sheol" in the Old Testament - as the Septuagint does not vary. This means the place of lost departed human spirits awaiting judgment. "Hell," in and of itself, is not

open for business as I type this report and as you read it. That does not happen until we get to the conclusion of Revelation and, even then, we don't find Satan there; we find antichrist along with the false prophets - but Satan is still in the earth. As of today, however, Sheol is the place where souls go when they die; and the word means "the unseen world." We can make a more conclusive decision about this word if we look at the way it has been used throughout the Old Testament. The Psalmist says, "...Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell." That would have had meaning years ago; but it is actually a faulty translation. Today, we think of all these places as only one place. Either way, the meaning of "Sheol" is the place where the lost dead go.

God does not allow His Holy Son to see corruption; so, we need to give a comprehensive and conclusive definition of what death is. Death never means extinction; death always refers to separation. The moment Adam ate of the tree, he died spiritually; although not physically. That moment caused his separation from God. Jesus saith, "though a man be dead, yet shall he live if he hear Me." This, of course, refers to man separated from God by sin. People are dead while they inhabit this flesh down here – they just have no awareness of the truth without the Word of God. Paul told the Ephesians they were dead in their trespasses and sins. That, by de facto, means separated from God. I find it interesting to hear talk about live music and live hot spots of night life. Well, I've been down there, and it's as dead and as lonely as it can get. One can stand in a crowd of fifty thousand people and be just as lonely and alienated as he can in a prison cell with no windows. Zombies and vampires are very real; and they're all down there in the bars and clubs. Those people bang the drum and stir up the crowd to howl at the moon all night because they are dead corpses who want to live. That's why they call it "living it up." That's, actually, the whole point for them.

If we die in this body in our lost condition, having rejected Christ as our Savior, then eternal spiritual separation from our Father in Heaven occurs. Lazarus flesh was just thrown into a pauper's grave; but the angels were already there to take his soul to paradise. The rich man went to the place of torment where the lost go immediately when they die. The Lord Jesus Himself makes that clear in this passage. The rich man didn't go to hell

because he was rich, though; and Lazarus didn't go to Heaven because he was poor - but their status has reversed undeniably. That change is due directly to the condition of the individual heart of each man; and that is the point of this section of Scripture. The outward appearance of a man cannot be used as a reliable factor to judge him by. To be sure, you cannot judge a book by its cover....

***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.***

***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.***

~ And here we come to the great fixed gulf. It is one likeness defining the nearly incomprehensible separation of the Christ rejecting man from God our Father in Heaven in death throughout eternity. The bodies of believers return to the grave and to dust, but the spirit of man returns to God. When we die, we go into the presence of the Lord. Paul said that if believers are absent from the body, we are present with the Lord. The lost go the place of torment - and that begins immediately at physical death. Later, the day comes when Hades is cast into the lake of fire and men no longer go there - because hell and death are consumed. The physical house in which we live will be abandoned wholesale at the time of our death. Think about the place you lived in when you were born. When you die, you'll be as far from this body as you are from that place today - and the reality will be just as real and tangible. Turn that over in your mind a few times and see what you come up with.

Frankly, cremation is a pagan and heathen tradition that tempts God. Cremation has no place in the Christian's final plan whatsoever. The Greeks cremated the dead and the Egyptians embalmed them. The modern Farsi

places the dead in a hammock for the birds to eat. I can't think of anything more disgusting than that. The Aztec dug a hole and dropped the dead in it. The Hindu cremates and scatters the ashes in the mountains. Some crazy religions dress the corpse up and return year after year to change its clothes. After we move out of this body a lot of things can be done with the remaining house before it rots. Our root word for cemetery is also very interesting, meaning something like a hotel where the body rests temporarily. Well, you're always somewhere - and you're going to be aware of it; whether it's in Heaven or the place where you will be judged and tormented in the blackness of darkness forever. The whole point is that man was never intended to end up there; this was a creation specifically for the devil and his fallen angels. It results from the choice we make in accepting or rejecting Christ. That decision is made in this life today because there's no getting over, around or back across that great gulf fixed. There isn't going to be a second chance after this life....

***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.***

***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.***

~ Many people mistakenly think that if someone could just return from the dead to tell the tale of what death entails on the other side that everyone else would believe them. But even if it happened, mankind still wouldn't believe it any more than they already believe the Word of God. The only reason anyone rejects the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior is because there is sin in their life that they refuse to give up. The only reason anyone rejects

the Bible as the Word of God is because it condemns their sinful lifestyle. Let's not kid ourselves. This just happens to be deadly accurate, and it encompasses all of life's questions and problems if we see it all the way through....

## XVII

***1 And he said unto his disciples, It is impossible but that occasions of stumbling should come; but woe unto him, through whom they come!***

***2 It were well for him if a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, rather than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble.***

~ The severity of this passage is not fully recognized today - even by the most well-meaning Christians; and when people misquote this section of Scripture it leads to some weird and wild theology. I would rather be anyone than the person that is hurting a young person by keeping them from knowing God. This may be as simple as neglecting to take the children in a home to a proper church - but it can also mean teaching a Sunday School class incorrectly. The person who harms a child that way will be worse than other lost sinners. The only thing imaginable that is worse than being in hell is to have a family who all followed you down there because they believed in what you were doing. That should send chills down your spine, friends. I see many people talk about the "gentle Jesus" and how peaceful He was and that we are to be nothing but peaceful. This passage reveals a Jesus most people just do not happen to know. Jesus was gentle with the children, but we're going to find out exactly how condemning Jesus could be with the hypocrite who offended a child....

***3 Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.***

***4 And if he sin against thee seven times in the day, and seven times turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.***

***5 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.***

**6 And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye would say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou rooted up, and be thou planted in the sea; and it would obey you.**

**7 But who is there of you, having a servant plowing or keeping sheep, that will say unto him, when he is come in from the field, Come straightway and sit down to meat;**

**8 and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?**

**9 Doth he thank the servant because he did the things that were commanded? I trow not.**

~ Let's bring this application up to date. There are those who say they try to live by the principles of the Sermon on the Mount; they say they are a good neighbor and a good citizen in the community and all that. They say they truly love everyone; but it's merely lip service. It sounds good to them and feels even better when they hear themselves congratulating themselves. Their neighbors would probably totally disagree about the extent of love in their self-evaluation, but that never stops them from continuing the self-adoration. Jack in the corner stuck in his finger and pulled something fruity out of the pie – and thought that made him smart – and many people are just that stupid and childish today when handling the Word of God....

**10 Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do.**

**11 And it came to pass, as they were on their way to Jerusalem, that he was passing along the borders of Samaria and Galilee.**

**12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off:**

***13 and they lifted up their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.***

***14 And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go and show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they were cleansed.***

***15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, with a loud voice glorifying God;***

***16 and he fell upon his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.***

***17 And Jesus answering said, Were not the ten cleansed? but where are the nine?***

***18 Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger?***

***19 And he said unto him, Arise, and go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.***

***20 And being asked by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God cometh, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:***

~ So, we're on our way to Jerusalem and the Pharisee's are very uncomfortable with what is going on with Jesus. Many of the people were healed - but not saved! This is important to distinguish, friends. Thankfulness is something that must be natural in a saved Christian's heart. Do you go to church to worship God and to thank Him for what He has done? Our thanksgiving just happens to be the only thing we can give to God. I don't think many people honestly thank God for what they have been given. How tragic. God has told us to make our requests known with thanksgiving unto God. Everything we do as a Christian should be done with thanksgiving and praise. We should also have a thankful heart towards God at all times....

***21 neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, There! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you.***

~ Remember, the Pharisee's have demanded that Jesus answer their question, "... when shall the kingdom come?" Jesus is NOT saying the Kingdom of God is inside these Pharisee's, though; no, the "Kingdom of God was within their midst" is the proper translation. Christ was standing in their midst. The kingdom was within their midst in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ Who was the One speaking to them - Face to face, by the way! Jesus is actually telling these men that God is standing right in front of their faces....

***22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.***

***23 And they shall say to you, Lo, there! Lo, here! go not away, nor follow after [them]:***

***24 for as the lightning, when it lighteneth out of the one part under the heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall the Son of man be in his day.***

***25 But first must he suffer many things and be rejected of this generation.***

***26 And as it came to pass in the days of Noah, even so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.***

***27 They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.***

***28 Likewise even as it came to pass in the days of Lot; they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;***

***29 but in the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all:***

**30 after the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of man is revealed.**

**31 In that day, he that shall be on the housetop, and his goods in the house, let him not go down to take them away: and let him that is in the field likewise not return back.**

**32 Remember Lot's wife.**

**33 Whosoever shall seek to gain his life shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose [his life] shall preserve it.**

**34 I say unto you, In that night there shall be two men on one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.**

**35 There shall be two women grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.**

**36 [There shall be two men in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.]**

**37 And they answering say unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Where the body [is], thither will the eagles also be gathered together.**

~ Our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God has previously traveled through the account found in the last part of this chapter; and we're also going to review it one more time in the Gospel of John. So, we'll pass by it here without commentary. The Lord Jesus will one day be returning to this earth, friends. The Son of Man is revealed when He returns establishes His Kingdom. These people are told that they will be given no warning of that day. The point is: be ready! We are to always be looking for and making ready for the appearing of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ - The Son of God - the Blessed Hope of the world! It could happen at any moment, as Christ will appear as a thief in the night - or it could be another two thousand years. Are you ready? ~

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