

supply minimal aid (lick their wounds). How did they weasel out of obeying God's plain commandments about helping the poor (Deut. 15:7-11)? They taught poverty was a virtue, and at death the poor would be carried away to bliss at Abraham's bosom (a fictitious place). Therefore, the poor should accept their hardships and embrace poverty. Besides, all Pharisees' money was "corban" (dedicated to God; Mark 7:11). They were hypocrites who never inverted this "reversal of fortunes" teaching. The conclusion would be their torment since they presently received "good things." Neither did anybody confront them on this, UNTIL JESUS. A perfect parallel of no mercy, no drops of water would be given to them since the poor never received any crumbs. Synagogue excommunications were permanent; no forgiveness was ever given to the branded "sinner." This was a great gulf.

Their ego imagined themselves as the "just" who needed no repentance. Crossing them was like crossing God. Christ rightfully said to them, *I have many things to say and to judge concerning you* (John 8:26). Because of their "greatness," they demanded an entitlement of special miracles (like sending Lazarus to witness to his family). The Word of God (Law of Moses) should have been enough. Christ warned them, *if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?* (John 5:47). They would not listen to God's Word. Their godliness was imaginary as they openly transgressed the commandments of God for their traditions (Matt. 15:2). The satire ends abruptly as rebukes always do. Similarly, Jesus told a parable (Luke 19:11-27) where the nobleman took others' false words and used those words against them. That is exactly what is happening in the RMAL. The Lord of Hosts, the Commander of Heaven's armies, is in a war of words with His opposition and condemning their false, hypocritical views. (Otis Q. Sellers wrote an expanded masterpiece, called *The Rich Man and Lazarus*, that can be found on Seed & Bread's website, seedandbread.org, for further study).

This powerful discourse has lost its message today. Perhaps it is Bible ignorance or Platonic ideology seeping into Christianity. The entire account (*context, details and the specific words*) calls for a right interpretation. The *satirical purpose* falls on deaf ears. Plugged by the bias of tradition, these deaf ears overlook the passage's *contradictions*. Yet, our interrogation *results* can be unlocked treasures from the Word maintaining the perfection of individual words. Unfortunately, Satan has blinded many, like the Pharisees, into other priorities rather than meditation on His Word. But God still calls, *Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters* (Isa. 55:1). Come and drink.

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Interrogating Luke 16

By Andrew Brown

Too many read the Bible superficially with biased eyes (if they read it). Bible students have been baffled for centuries over the story of the "Unjust Steward" in Luke 16. A deeper understanding would come through removing the biased lenses and putting the passage under the hot lights of interrogation. Would a boss, after firing a crooked employee, proceed to rehire him because the man elevated his embezzlement? This story does not record actual events. Consider the Lord's statement, *And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home* (Luke 16:9, *NKJV* throughout). Can money buy salvation? Can crooked money reserve your eternal home? Of course not! Why did the Lord say this? He spoke his point in plain truths afterwards. *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 (money)* (Luke 16:13). Jesus was speaking to Pharisees revealing their love of money and hatred of God. Jesus was using satire to expose the Pharisee's wicked and contradictory actions. They had created God in their own image and thought He would approve of their actions. How wrong they were! Through proper interrogation, we will find ourselves closer to the Scripture's truth.

Equally fascinating or baffling, the story of "The Rich Man and Lazarus" (RMAL) appears directly after this. *This context must be noted* so that we are not treating this portion as an isolated island. Money and wealth are themes of the stories in context. Was Christ purposefully emphasizing some issues? If viewed honestly, seemingly contradictory problems arise here too. Have you been reading Scripture with biased lenses? Please read Luke 16 while considering the questions of the following interrogation.

Why is the RMAL usually the primary passage defending the intermediate state? Is it perplexing the words "God," "Jesus," "spirit," "soul," "gospel," "faith," and "belief" are not found in the passage? How can "soul" NOT appear if this is a relevant passage pertaining to the immortality of the soul? Is punishment enacted at the moment of death before one

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stands trial before God? Is a future mock trial needed? Does torture without trial upset you? Is resurrection unnecessary?

Is this a historical narrative to be understood literally? Why do explanations drift into figures and assumptions? *Did Christ forget the details? Are some specific words wrong or unnecessary?* Why does it say, **The beggar died, and was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom** (Luke 16:22)? Did the beggar actually die? Did the angels carry his physical body? If not, what did they carry? Why does it not say the beggar's spirit or soul was carried? Why not mention "disembodied soul"? Is that a Biblical term? Can you carry a disembodied soul? Why is that necessary? Why is the Bible silent elsewhere regarding angel transportation? Was the rich man also carried?

Why does "Abraham's bosom" appear only here in the Bible (but appears in Pharisaic documents)? Why is it **ABRAHAM'S** bosom? Why Abraham's **BOSOM**? Is Abraham in charge? What was it named before Abraham? Where is this teaching in the Old Testament? Why does the rich man appeal to "Father Abraham"? Why not appeal to God? Does Abraham have power to reverse this man's fate? Was Abraham tormenting him? If not, why appeal to him? Would a drop of physical water really alleviate the rich man's pain? Does Lazarus' "disembodied soul" have a finger to dip in water for the rich man's tongue? Does the rich man have a tongue (in the intermediate state)?

Why is there absolutely no mention of the rich man's wickedness or the poor man's righteousness? Why is the rich man "clothed in purple"? Why is he wearing "fine linen"? Does Lazarus' name signify anything? Why is the wealth of each individual so important? Is it significant that Lazarus was full of sores? Why is Lazarus laid at the rich man's gate? What is the significance of the crumbs Lazarus wanted? Do the dogs licking Lazarus' sores matter? Are all these details unnecessary?

Why is the Greek word *Hades* used for hell? Would not *Gehenna* be a more appropriate word if the orthodox view were true? Since *Hades* ties to the Old Testament word *Sheol*, is it unusual this word is connected with silence in death: **For Sheol cannot thank You, death cannot praise You** (Isa. 38:18); **For in death there is no remembrance of You; in the grave [Sheol] who will give You thanks** (Psa. 6:5); **For there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave [Sheol] where you are going** (Ecl. 9:10)? *Why contradict the Old Testament?*

Could speaking this message to the unbelieving Pharisees, who were unwilling to do His will, be a problem? *For what purpose did Christ tell this story?* Was the Lord throwing His "pearls before pigs"? Why did Jesus not reveal the character of these men? Why is there no reason recorded to admire Lazarus? Can Abraham's answer be taken literally, **Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented** (Luke 16:25)? Are riches wicked? Why did Abraham not remind the rich man of his sin, wickedness, or unbelief? Why were no accusations made against the rich man? Why were there no praises for Lazarus? Can you see this statement's hypocrisy coming from a wealthy man blessed by God with "good things" (Gen. 13:2)?

By his own word, should not Abraham be tormented? Why are "good things" the only measure? Why not appeal to the gospel, faith, or belief in Jesus Christ? *Why blatantly contradict the gospel?* Are positions reversed in the life to come? If wealth has no bearing on the subject, why did Abraham give this irrelevant answer? Are future blessings dependent on present poverty? Cannot one experience good things now and in the future? How much wealth is considered rich? Does this paint a bad picture of wealthy America since the average American is wealthier than the rich man could ever dream?

What is this "gulf" between the two? Is it a literal gulf? Why did not Abraham refer to any plain Bible passages rather than this gulf? Can those in the afterlife see those who are in torment? Is there open communication between them? Would this be a blemish on the afterlife when God makes all things new with no sorrow, crying or pain (Rev. 21:4)? Would this bother you to see unsaved loved ones? Where do Moses or the Prophets declare eternal torment? Why does the rich man want Lazarus to return to witness to his living relatives? Would they listen to him? Would the rich man believe if someone was resurrected? Why appeal to resurrection? Why does the story end abruptly?

What type of literary device is used in RMAL? Are you aware the Bible uses poetry, proverb, allegory, fable, humor, and satire as well as history and parable? Did you know fables in the Bible include inanimate objects speaking just like men? Have you read Jotham's fable in Judges 9? Did not Jotham tell his story like it really happened? Why did Elijah, God's spokesman, speak as if Baal really existed in 1 Kings 18:27? Could God speak in mockery as if it really happened to make a greater point for those listening? Are you aware Jesus used irony: **For it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem** (Luke 13:33); **Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt** (Matt. 23:32)? Was Jesus promoting sin? Did every prophet perish in Jerusalem? Was the Lord battling with words? When men use sarcasm, irony and satire they do not mean what they literally say. The Lord obviously could use ANY literary device He wanted. What literary device is used in RMAL? Why do people say parables cannot have names in them if Ezekiel 23 is a parable with names? Why limit RMAL to a parable? Do not parables have a strict order of representing figures? Did you know satires are more flexible? *Could RMAL be a satire?* Satires are often misunderstood because the history (of then-current erroneous doctrine) is often unknown. Satires ridicule outrageous beliefs.

Our interrogation results uncover a verbal war with Jesus and the rich ruling class. Generally, misunderstanding exists about how evil these rulers were. They were a rich minority who sat in Moses' seat as king (purple) and stole the priests' job teaching the people (fine linen). They developed a rich-poor caste system. God laid a responsibility (laid at his gate) on the rich to care for the poor; however, they threw the responsibility back on God (Lazarus = God, a help). For instance, they would devour widows' houses and then pray God would provide for them (Matt. 23:14). The poor were brutally oppressed; they desperately needed relief, but the elite gave them no help (no crumbs). Once in a while a few Romans (dogs) would