



BEACON

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A Message from the Dead

(Luke 16:19-31)

W. R. Craig

There is a common idea in the world that man at death enters immediately into his eternal destiny. We want to study this considering divine truth. Also, we shall show that there is no such thing as spirits of the departed returning to warn others, and that there is no direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of men.

Why should this impressive record of facts be called a parable? What is there in the narrative to indicate that it is a parable? If the history of the rich man and Lazarus be a parable, what does it teach? When one calls it a parable, he speaks not as the oracles of God.

Their Contrast

Here, there was a certain rich man, and there was a certain beggar. One clothed in purple and fine linen, and the other was laid at his gate full of sores. The first fared sumptuously, while the second desired crumbs from his table. The first was surrounded by the worldly great, while the second had only dogs as his companions. How truth to life! Shall we call a concrete example a parable?

Hereafter, the beggar died. The rich man died and was buried. The beggar was carried to Abraham's bosom. The rich was tormented and the beggar was comforted.

One Who Knows

God does not look on the outer man. He looks within at the heart of man. The fact that one is

rich or poor does not determine his eternal destiny. God sees beneath fine linen, as well as rags. What a contrast! The rich man cries for Lazarus to dip his finger in water and touch his tongue. He is tormented.

Character determines destiny. How dangerous to trust riches. It is just as fatal to think that poverty is a passport to heaven.

Where are They?

They are in Hades, the intermediate state of souls. They are in the spirit land where all the departed are and will remain until the resurrection. They have eyes and can see. They have tongues and can talk. There they have spiritual bodies.

It was Hades where the Saviour went while His body was in the tomb. "He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell [hades], neither his flesh did see corruption" (Acts 2:31), and so went the thief on the cross, "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

The two men were comforted and tormented. How could Lazarus and the rich man both be in the same place, one tormented and the one comforted? Let us remember that it is what we **are**, not **where** we are that determines our happiness or misery. Misery and happiness come from within. Two men came in a beautiful garden, and

one was happy and the other was miserable. Paul and Silas could sing praise to God in prison.

Memory lives. Abraham told the rich man, “Son, remember” (Luke 16:25), on earth you received good things, and Lazarus received the bad. Remember the mouths you did not feed, remember the naked whom you did not clothe, remember the orphans and widows you ignored? In our days, souls will be lost because we did not carry the Gospel to them. All were remembered. No wonder that he was tormented. Oh, cruel memory! How different the memory of these: “I was hungry and ye fed me, naked and ye clothed me.” Such memories will bring comfort in the spirit land.

Abraham told the rich man:

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 (Luke 16:26). Not a gulf measured by feet, yards, or miles, but a **moral** separation. It was too late to cross the gulf. The die was cast, and the balance was made out. It is a delusion to think of another chance after death.

The rich man decided to become a “missionary.” He realized that his brethren were not following God. “For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment” (Luke 16:28). Here, misery does not love company. Abraham’s reply: “They have Moses and the prophets” (Luke 16:29). They were living under the Law of Moses. Let them heed it. God will not change for the whims of men, rich or poor.

Finally, the rich man pleaded for a direct spiritual operation. The answer: “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luke 16:31). How appropriate by the words of Hebrews 2:2-3:

For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*.

The Gospel is God’s only power to save man. Once rejected, God has no power to call men to Him (Rom 1:16).

Deceased

Why Islam is Growing

David King

According to sources, there are 4.5 million Muslims in the U.S., with a projected population of over 8 million by 2050. Islam is considered one of the fastest-growing religions in the country. With the current war on terror, interest in Islam has grown significantly among Americans.

A local newspaper recently carried an article that gave a hint why Islam is growing so fast among Americans. The article told the story of a young hip-hop artist’s struggle to give up his immoral lifestyle and embrace a new life of submission to Islam. The young man grew up in an African Methodist Episcopal church, a popular

Christian denomination among blacks. According to the article, the young man rejected the faith of his childhood because the emphasis on grace undermined personal responsibility. In Islam, he said, “there’s no free ride,” unlike the Christian teaching of Jesus bearing the sins of humanity.

To me, Islam has the answer to racism, discrimination, feminism, abortion, high murder rates, and drug selling, because it’s trying to show human beings how to live their lives “right.”

Now, I wonder: Where did this young man get the idea that Christianity offered a “free ride?” How did he come to believe that the vicarious

suffering of Christ negated personal responsibility? Why did he have to turn to Islam to find a religion that told him how to live his life right?

If the leaders of contemporary American Christianity are alarmed at the rapid growth of Islam under their noses, they need look at their own creed books for the explanation. Much of what passes for *Christianity* in our modern culture is a weak, watered-down version of the real thing. The Biblical concept of salvation by grace has been turned into an all-expenses-paid ticket to heaven that requires nothing of the recipient. You do not have to do anything except believe to get salvation, and once you get it, you cannot lose it, no matter what you do or do not do. Solid Biblical teaching on morality has been replaced by a feel-good pop-psychology that excuses sin and

minimizes self-discipline. It is no wonder that young people, hungry for meaningful spirituality, are looking elsewhere to find it.

Christian leaders dispute this characterization of their theology, but you need only read stories like this young convert to see the practical effect of what they are teaching. Much of modern Christianity is indeed a free ride that makes few demands on its followers. True Christianity is not a free ride. It offers all the structure and discipline that people need. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Tit. 2:11-12).

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A Case of Immersion

Cled E. Wallace

I recently preached a plain Gospel sermon and got a rise out of a Methodist preacher who was in the audience. He was agitated over my insistence that to be baptized a man must be immersed in water. There is nothing more clearly taught than this in the New Testament. This teacher of religion demanded that I point out just one clear case of immersion in the New Testament.

I patiently read to him in Acts 8 about the man who came to a certain water, went down into the water, was baptized, and came up out of the water. That was not sufficient to satisfy the demands of the critic. He readily admitted that the man went down into the water before he was baptized and came up out of the water after he was baptized, **but** “it does not say that he was immersed.” Who ever heard of a man going down into the water, and coming up out of it, just to have a little water applied to his head?! Even a Presiding Elder is not capable of such absurdity!

I patiently explained that Paul called baptism a burial in Romans 6, and that the word for *baptize* employed by New Testament writers, primarily

meant to dip or immerse, according to all Greek English dictionaries. No reason has ever been adduced why the primary meaning of the word should not be employed here, as it fits in perfectly. They came to a certain water, went down into the water, and he immersed him, and they came up out of the water. There is no reason, outside of prejudice, why it should not be this way. Did this satisfy the critic? It did not. He insisted that the eunuch was sprinkled and that he would not under any circumstances immerse a man.

This was a partial repudiation of his creed, and I asked him for a case of sprinkling for baptism in the New Testament, as clear as the case of immersion he insisted that I give. He quickly forsook Christ and the apostles and ran to Moses for some help. The sun is an immeasurable blessing, but if a man insists on walking down the middle of the road with his eyes tightly closed, the sun cannot do him much good. If he gets run over it is his fault!

Deceased

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Beacon

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Sick

Remember in your prayers:

Bill & Peggy Crowe

Nancy Travis

Linda Worley

Carla Burleson

Bill & Pam Busch

Linda Parks

Please Remember

August 16

Birthdays and Anniversaries Get-together will be held in the zone room after the afternoon service.

August 30

Fifth Sunday Dinner after the morning service. Singing and a devotional service at 1:00 pm.

Weekly Services

Sunday

Bible Classes for all ages — 9:00 a.m.

Morning Worship Service — 10:00 a.m.

Afternoon Worship Service — 1:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Classes for all ages — 7:00 p.m.

Bellview Church of Christ

Bishops: Paul Brantley
Michael Hatcher

Minister: Bill Busch
Tim Cozad