

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

A Section of Scripture which Is Self-Interpreting, If...

“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

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;

And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

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.

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.

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.

Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luke 16:19-31).

The account of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 is one of those sections of Scripture much like “inherit eternal life” in Mark 10:17-30 (“eternal life” is a *free gift, not inherited*), or “saved in childbearing” in I Tim. 2:9-15, or “if they shall fall away” in Heb. 6:4-6. There is some unanimity of interpretation on all four, though invariably skewed; and, as well, on all four, there are all types of off-shoot interpretations, resulting in a sea of misinterpretation.

The simple truth of the matter is that not any one of the four forms a complex text, in reality, no more so than understanding what almost any Bible student would consider a simple text, such as John 3:16.

And that statement may sound too over-simplified, even misleading. But, not so!

The Spirit of God *DID NOT* move men such as Mark, Luke, Paul, the writer of Hebrews, or any other writer to record *things which COULD NOT be understood*. But understanding *MUST be derived through the method and means that God has provided* — comparing Scripture with Scripture, comparing spiritual with spiritual.

And *the principle* which God set forth immediately following the fall in Genesis would continue to apply as well: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread” (Gen. 3:19a). Properly understanding Scripture, takes study and time, lots of study over time. A person has to continually be thinking about these things (*cf.* Josh. 1:8; Ps. 63:6; 119:148).

Nor did the Spirit of God do anything different with John through moving him to pen a gospel with numerous verses or sections, which some might look upon as simpler to understand than some Scriptures seen in one of the other three gospels. It is all part of one complete revelation providing one complete word picture.

That which John was moved to write in his gospel is no different in this respect than that which Matthew, Mark, and Luke were, individually, moved to write in their gospels, or Paul moved to write in his epistles, or the writer of Hebrews moved to record, or any other writer of Scripture moved to pen, with things seen in one gospel, in reality, no simpler or no more complex than things seen in any one of the other three.

Each has its own unique place *to ultimately form one complete*

word picture. And, apart from that seen in one gospel, or apart from that seen in any part of one gospel, *the picture would be incomplete*.

Each one of the four gospels has its own unique place among the other three, providing its own unique part in a complete word picture. And each must be understood in the light of the other three, along with the remainder of Scripture.

In Biblical interpretation, individuals talk about understanding that which is unclear in the light of that which is clear, or understanding the complex in the light of that which is simple.

And no one really knows for sure how anyone goes about determining which is which, but it doesn't matter. That is not how Scripture is to be interpreted anyway. *Scripture is ALWAYS to be interpreted in the light of itself, comparing Scripture with Scripture, apart from any regard to what some may consider unclear, clear, complex, or simple*.

If you want help one place in Scripture, refer to and study what God has provided other places in Scripture. *Scripture will open itself to a person's understanding ONLY ONE WAY — through the built-in method which God has designed, comparing Scripture with Scripture, coupled with "time" devoted to this type study*.

With the preceding in mind, note the passage in Luke 16:19-31, quoted at the beginning of this article. Properly understanding the passage is really quite simple, *IF a person goes about it the correct way, allowing Scripture to interpret the text for him*.

And, within this same manner of interpretation, an important aspect, seen in the text, is to have some understanding of what was happening at this point in Christ's ministry.

As well, the opposite of that is equally true. *Go about it in an incorrect manner, apart from comparing Scripture with Scripture and apart from correspondingly noting what was happening at this point in Christ's ministry, and a person can only find himself lost in a sea of misinterpretation*.

The Context, the Subject Matter at Hand

Luke chapter sixteen begins with a parable concerning a man's steward who, in one respect, was unfaithful, but in another, had

acted shrewdly, allowing him to collect monetary amounts which individuals owed his master (vv. 1-13). Other than introducing the covetous Pharisees (vv. 14-18), the story itself, though dealing with Israel, has little direct relevance to a proper understanding of the subsequent story about the rich man and Lazarus.

However, the introduction of the Pharisees between the two stories, leading into the story of the rich man and Lazarus, has *EVERYTHING* to do with the matter.

Note these five verses separating the story about the unfaithful but shrewd steward and the story of the rich man and Lazarus.

“And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.

And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.”

Immediately following the story about the steward, the Pharisees, who followed Christ about the country, began to ridicule and mock Him. In the parable, Christ drew spiritual lessons from certain actions of the steward, involving monetary values. But the Pharisees, lovers of money, among other things, probably saw Christ as a poor person, in no position to be dealing with any type monetary values as He was doing. Regardless, no matter what Christ said or did, the Pharisees usually found room for fault as they sought to quell the message through discrediting the Messenger.

The Pharisees were the largest of the religious sects in Israel. And, by their very numbers, they controlled the religious life of the people. The Pharisees were the legalistic teachers of Moses and the Prophets; and the Scribes, often mentioned with the Pharisees, were the corresponding keepers and interpreters of the Word.

The Pharisees — a group that would be seen as fundamental legalists if they were around today — followed Christ about the country, seeking to counter the different things which He said and/or did on practically every occasion (as seen in Luke 16:13-18). They, as a group, seemingly couldn't wait to see what Christ did or said next so that they would know what they were against.

(Note something very similar in political circles in this country today, emanating from what is often referred to as “the left,” as they watch and make negative comments on the actions of the nation's president, among others.

And if one moves over into religious circles, the same thing can also be seen today as well, emanating from religious leaders and other Christians, as they often oppose the truth [particularly as it relates to different facets of the central message of Scripture, *the Word of the Kingdom*].)

The end result of all this is the reason for the severe condemnation of the actions of the Scribes and Pharisees near the end of Christ's ministry, preceding His crucifixion, seen throughout the thirty-nine verses of Matthew chapter twenty-three. This religious sect (the Scribes, seen at times with the Pharisees in this respect, though one sect [a Pharisaical sect]), seated in Moses' seat (v. 2), governing the religious life of Israel, *had been DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE for the Jewish people rejecting Christ and His message* (an offer of the kingdom of the heavens by Israel's Messiah, God Himself, manifested in the flesh [Matt. 3:1ff; 10:1ff; John 1:1, 2, 14]).

They were the ones *DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE for the Jewish people's attitude at the time of the crucifixion* — the rulers and people together calling upon Pilate to release an incarcerated insurrectionist and murderer rather than their Messiah (Luke 23:18-24), pledging allegiance to a pagan Roman ruler, and calling for the crucifixion of the One “born King of the Jews” (Matt. 2:2; John 19:14-16, 19).

In the words of Matt. 23:13, the Scribes and Pharisees had “shut up the kingdom of the heavens in the presence of men” (literal rendering). They were not going to enter the proffered kingdom themselves, and they were doing everything within their power to prevent others from entering as well.

And in connection with the preceding, note the words “press-

eth into it" relative to the actions of the Pharisees in Luke 16:16, something expanded in Matthew's account of Christ's reference to the same thing.

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matt. 11:12).

With the corresponding verse from Matthew's gospel in view, note three words — "violence" and "violent" in Matt. 11:12 and "presseth" in Luke 16:16. All three words are translations of verb and/or noun forms of the same word in the Greek text (*biazo* or *biastes* [verb and noun forms respectively]). The word in either form has to do with "forceful actions," "violent actions."

To show what is involved through the use of this type expression to describe the actions of the Pharisees, note Matt. 18:1-7:

"At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"

The proffered kingdom is in view in all that has been referenced (Matt. 11:12; 18:1-4; Luke 16:16), and the actions of the Pharisees (among others) relative to the message surrounding this kingdom in Matt. 11:12 and Luke 16:16 are exactly the opposite of that set forth for entrance into the kingdom by Christ in Matt. 18:1-6).

The Pharisees, in Matt. 23:13, had no interest in entering the kingdom, and they were doing everything within their power to prevent any other Israelite from entering as well.

Then, a Second Story

In Luke chapter sixteen, Christ had just finished one story (the parable of the unfaithful but shrewd steward) when the Pharisees and things about them are brought into the picture. And Christ, immediately following these statements having to do with the Pharisees, then relates another story.

Now, what is this second story about? And why relate this story at this particular place in Luke's gospel? Then, again, why does only Luke among the gospel writers record this story?

1) The Commonly Held Interpretation

Individuals usually attempt to deal with the story of the rich man and Lazarus as an actual account of two individuals — one saved, the other unsaved — having to do with issues regarding eternal salvation or eternal damnation. Some form of the preceding is widely held throughout Christendom, and a fair amount of so-called theological teaching, concerning conditions of both the saved and the unsaved following death, is based mainly on this type understanding of the story.

However, any form of understanding this story after the preceding fashion can only be held through removing the complete story from its contextual setting and making the story and different things in the story stand alone, dealing with an overall subject not being dealt with at all in either the preceding or the following context.

And, as well, such an understanding of the passage would deal with some subject matter (particularly certain things about the current state of the dead) not dealt with any other place throughout the four gospels, or even elsewhere in Scripture.

Nonetheless, isolated Scriptures of the nature that any of this would portend — Scripture in the gospels having no connection with the context or the general subject matter seen in the gospels, apart from the existence of related, comparative Scripture elsewhere — *simply DO NOT exist, they CANNOT exist.*

The existence of such would militate against the way God has designed His revealed Word, incorporating His Own built-in interpretative method. And the fact that comparative Scripture

does not exist for an isolated interpretation of this nature should tell individuals something about this common interpretation which is widely held in Christendom.

Also, interpreting Scripture after such a fashion, which can only result in an erroneous understanding of the passage, will do away with that which the passage does deal with.

2) *But...*

So, if the common interpretation is incorrect, what is this story about? And what is the correct interpretation?

As stated at the outset of this article, if understood within context and the subject matter at hand in the context, it is really all very simple, again, as simple as understanding John 3:16.

To see this, we'll begin with the text, stay within the context, and remain with the central subject matter being dealt with, not only in the text and context but in all four gospels — the message being proclaimed to the Jewish people by Christ and His disciples.

And, putting all of this together, referencing other corresponding Scripture, the story, in reality, will be seen to interpret itself.

The Text

Note how the text begins: "There was a certain rich man..." (v. 19a). Then go back and note how the parable of the steward began: "There was a certain rich man..." (v. 1a).

Both begin *exactly the same way* (in both the Greek and English texts), and if the first story is a parable (no one questions this), why isn't the second story seen as a parable as well (numerous individuals do question this)?

There are two main reasons why individuals see this story as other than a parable, dealing with actual individuals and events:

- 1) The only thing that many Christians see in Scripture is saved-unsaved, heaven-hell issues. And, ascribing to this type understanding of the story, a person would normally object to any thought of this being a parable. Instead, individuals viewing Scripture after this fashion are often very

adamant about this being an account relating actual events.

2) And an individual is named in the story (Lazarus). If a parable, it would be the only parable with a named individual (*ref. indented data at the end of this section, beginning at the bottom of this page*).

The context with its subject matter, a subject matter seen not only in this context but throughout the four gospels as a whole, will address the former (dealt with beginning in the next section), and time will be spent at this place in the article to address the latter — an *individual's name being used in the story*.

But, is a particular individual really being named? Or, is a name which was commonly used of numerous individuals in Israel being used to reference a group of individuals in Israel? After all, in any correct understanding of the rich man in what can only be a parable (which will become increasingly evident as this article progresses), the reference is not to a single individual. Why should the matter be any different in the reference to Lazarus?

And proper names are used in a similar manner throughout Scripture. Note, for example, on names, that Judah in Gen. 38, 44, Ephraim in Hosea 4, 5, 14, or Lazarus in John 11, are used to represent *the entire Jewish nation*. Or note the use of Jezebel in Rev. 2:20 (evidently an allusion back to Jezebel during Elijah's day), with the name used *in a similar respect* to the way that the use of Lazarus in Luke 16 is evidently used. Or note something similar through the use of one or several named nations to represent *all nations* in Isa. 34 and Ezek. 38. Or note the use of Jerusalem to reference *the entire Jewish nation* (Matt. 23:37; Rev. 17:18).

Using a name after this fashion in a parable, or even elsewhere, would really say *nothing*. The use of names in this or a similar type manner is simply one of the ways Scripture is structured. Proper names are used throughout the parables, though this would be the only parable using an individual's name after the same fashion.

(Then, again, it could be open to question concerning this being *the ONLY parable where an individual is named, depending on how Heb. 11:19 is viewed*.)

Note the verse within context, vv. 17-19:

“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure [Gk., *parabole*, ‘in a parable’].”

The offering of Abraham’s son is looked upon in two senses in Scripture — *typical* and *parabolic*. And though the type is evident, attention is called to *the parabolic aspect of the matter* in the Book of Hebrews, leaving two individuals named in an account which Scripture itself associates with a parable.)

A Key Verse

Note something about the five verses in Luke 16:14-18 between the two parables. It is evident that the first four verses have to do with the actions of the Pharisees, but the fifth verse (v. 18) appears to be completely out of place, seemingly having nothing contextually to do with the subject matter at hand.

But, as will be shown, rather than the verse being out of place, the verse not only provides *A VERY GRAPHIC FINISH* to the description of the actions of the Pharisees but is *A KEY VERSE*, perhaps *THE KEY VERSE*, which will allow an individual to properly understand exactly what is involved in the continuing verses dealing with the rich man and Lazarus.

Note the referenced verse:

“Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.”

Then, to obtain the basics of what is involved, which will begin opening the matter to one’s understanding, a person has to refer back to an overall type in Genesis, that covered by Joseph’s life extending from Gen. 37 to Gen. 45. And the reason individuals haven’t picked up on this can undoubtedly be traced to the disdain

for and ignoring of Biblical typology among Bible teachers and Bible students today.

Thus, the CORRESPONDING KEY is back in Genesis. Miss it in Genesis, and you will probably miss it in Luke. But, see it in Genesis, and you can easily see it in Luke.

This overall type in Genesis (comprised of numerous individual types), in its antitypical framework, covers events extending from Christ's first coming to His second coming.

The type begins in chapter 37 with events surrounding Christ's first coming, extending to the time of His crucifixion and resurrection.

Then, exactly as in Luke 16:18, seemingly out-of-place events covering an entire chapter appear before the account at hand continues (the continuing account after Joseph, at the end of ch. 37, had been sold into the hands of the Ishmaelites [Midianites, descendants of Abraham through Keturah, though referred to as Ishmaelites in a general respect], taken down into Egypt, and sold to Potiphar [an official under the Egyptian Pharaoh]).

The preceding happens to Joseph at the end of chapter 37. Then chapter 39 begins and continues *EXACTLY* where chapter 37 leaves off (with Joseph in Egypt, a servant-slave owned by Potiphar), with events in chapter 38 lying between these two points (harlotry surrounding actions by Judah).

And this chronology of events, with a chapter lying between the events, is *EXACTLY* in line with that seen in Luke 16, where a verse, seemingly out-of-place, lies between the events.

In Luke 16, the actions of the Pharisees are dealt with in verses 14-17 (paralleling that seen in Gen. 37), then there is what appears to be strange verse (v. 18, paralleling what appears to be a strange chapter in Genesis, ch. 38), and Scripture then follows with a parable in Luke (which, within this parallel between Gen. 37-39 and Luke 16:14ff, can only be seen paralleling Gen. 39ff).

What is this all about? Well, it is all about *EXACTLY THE SAME THING*. And, it is about *comparing Scripture with Scripture*.

In Genesis, Scripture begins with an account of events surrounding Joseph and his brethren (ch. 37); then Scripture continues with a chapter concerning *harlotry* (ch. 38); and then Scripture picks

up in chapter 39 by continuing *EXACTLY* where chapter 37 left off, dealing with Joseph, later with his brethren as well.

Now note how this same thing is handled in Luke 16, *IN AN EXACT PARALLEL MANNER*.

The account begins with the actions of the Pharisees (vv. 14-17); then the account continues with a verse concerning *harlotry* (v. 18); then, remaining with the manner in which the parallel account in Genesis is structured, the continuing parable *CAN ONLY be about ONE THING* — *a continuation of that seen before the verse dealing with harlotry. Within this parallel, the parable which follows CAN ONLY be about THE PHARISEES on the one hand (the ones dealt with before the verse on harlotry) and THE JEWISH PEOPLE on the other (or, at least a segment of the Jewish people).*

This is the way matters are set forth in the Genesis parallel; and it can only become increasingly evident as one studies Luke 16:14-31 in the light of Gen. 37-39ff that matters are set forth *after EXACTLY the same parallel fashion* in Luke.

Gen. 38 is about *harlotry*; Luke 16:18 is about *harlotry*; *and both have to do with EXACTLY same thing, with the harlot, with Israel (or, in Luke's gospel, with a singled out segment of the nation).* Beyond that, *both appear EXACTLY where they should appear in their respective texts.*

In Gen. 38, Israel's harlotry is brought to the forefront at the beginning of the typology covering the nation's actions between Christ's first and second advents. Then, centuries later, the same Spirit which had previously moved Moses to write Genesis moved Luke to draw from this overall type in Genesis, singling out the actions of the Pharisees, and associating Israel's harlotry in a more direct manner with this religious group in Israel.

This is perhaps a main reason why Christ, at the Temple, singled out "the publicans [Jews aiding Rome, taxes, etc.] and harlots," telling the chief priests and elders of the people that "the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you" (Matt. 21:31).

Since this occurred at the Temple, these were probably mainly Sadducees (the second largest religious group in Israel), though the Sadducees traveled about with the Pharisees and were guilty of the same thing when it came to Christ's ministry to Israel and

the message being proclaimed.

Thus, it is not just the first four verses lying between two parables which have to do with the Pharisees (vv. 14-17), but all five verses (vv. 14-18), with the fifth verse, which deals with *harlotry*, somewhat forming an apex to the whole of the matter.

(Israel's harlotry is a major theme of both Testaments. The subject is introduced in a very graphic and unmistakable manner in Genesis, covering one complete chapter [ch. 38], dealt with numerous places throughout the Old Testament [e.g., Judg. 19; Isa. 1; Jer. 3-5; Ezek. 16; Hosea 1ff], and seen brought to an end in Revelation, occupying a major place in the book, covering two complete chapters, leading into a third [chs. 17-19a; cf. Isa. 1:25ff; Hosea 14:1ff].

For additional information on Israel's harlotry, with an emphasis on Rev. 17-19a, refer to the author's book, [*Mystery of the Woman*](#).)

The Parable Itself

The information which has been provided thus far should allow the parable of the rich man and Lazarus to be easily understood and interpreted.

(Note that *parables*, by their very name, are given to provide additional information to help explain previous revelation.

The word "parable" is an Anglicized form of the Greek word *parabole* [a compound word: *para*, meaning "alongside," and *bole*, meaning "to cast"]. Thus, a parable is simply *one truth cast or placed alongside of a previous truth to help explain the previous truth*.

In Luke 16:19ff, *the previous truth had to do with the actions of the Pharisees relative to the ministry of Christ and His disciples* [vv. 14-18]. And, understanding how and why Christ used parables extensively in His ministry, *that seen in these preceding verses could only be seen as the expected subject matter to be dealt with in the parable which follows*.

Relative to the account of Abraham offering his son in Gen. 22, seen as both *a type* and *a parable* [ref. bottom of p. 9, top of p. 10], *a type* points to Biblical truth in a reverse sense to that of a parable. A type appears *first* and points to a corresponding antitype out ahead [rather than, as a parable, appearing *last* and pointing to corresponding, previously

revealed truth]. But both types and parables are given for the same basic purpose — *to shed light upon and help explain that to which they relate.*

Abraham offered his son upon a mount of the Lord's choosing, though death itself occurred in a substitute [a ram caught in the thicket died in Isaac's stead (Gen. 22:9ff; Heb. 11:17-19)]. Isaac died in a substitute, and Abraham received his son from the dead *in a parable* [reflecting back on previously revealed truth (*e.g.*, events in Gen. 3, 4, where teachings pertaining to death and shed blood are introduced in Scripture)]. And events surrounding the offering of Isaac, as well, form *a type* [pointing forward to the antitype, where teachings pertaining to death and shed blood are climaxed in Scripture (Matt. 27:35ff)].

As previously seen, the rich man can only depict one group, with the beggar depicting the only group left. Both are Jews, part of a nation to which the kingdom of the heavens was being offered through the ministry of Christ and His disciples.

The parable CANNOT possibly have ANYTHING WHATSOEVER to do with issues surrounding a message pertaining to eternal salvation, the saved, or the unsaved.

The parable CAN ONLY have to do with THE SUBJECT AT HAND — with the message being proclaimed by Christ and His disciples, with the Jewish people and what was happening in the camp of Israel at that time relative to the actions of their religious leaders, and the result of these actions, both present and future.

Conditions seen through the actions of the rich man and the place occupied by Lazarus shows, among other things, an end result of the nation's harlotry, extending over centuries of time.

Israel's religious leaders (the rich man) were the ones which should have been supplying spiritual food to a starving nation (Lazarus). And, in this respect, one is described as "clothed in fine linen" faring "sumptuously every day" (a people faring well, in possession of the food), while the other lay "at his gate, full of sores, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table" (a people far less prosperous, starving for lack of food).

That's the picture depicted at the beginning of the parable, which could only be a true picture of *the entire nation — Israel's religious leaders on the one hand, and the people of Israel on the other.*

But, to stay with that depicted in the remainder of the parable,

which could be true of *only part of the nation* — *the Pharisees on the one hand, and the publicans and harlots (or others in the nation exercising faith) on the other hand* — it would probably be best to understand the first part of the parable as referring more specifically to these same two groups as well.

Then both individuals die, the beggar first.

The beggar finds himself transported by angels to a place referred to as “Abraham’s bosom,” which would signify close association with Abraham, the realization of promises and blessings made to the Jewish people through him, etc.

But the rich man found himself in *Hades*, the place of *the dead*, separated from Abraham and all involved therein, with torment rather than blessings accordingly involved.

Note the same thing pertaining to “life” and “death” in Christ’s statement to Martha surrounding her brother’s death in John 11:25, 26 (a statement within the seventh sign in John’s gospel):

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die [*lit.*, ‘...certainly will not die with respect to the age’]. Believest thou this?”

That being offered to the nation by Christ and His disciples was in view — *life in the kingdom during the coming age, NOT eternal life* (cf. John 8:51). And, as seen in John 11:25, 26, *life in the kingdom lay in store for any believing Jew, living or dead*. But the same thing *COULDN’T be said for an unbelieving Jew, living or dead*.

(Something must be clearly understood at this point, else one can only become hopelessly confused concerning what is involved in Christ’s statement in John 11:25, 26, among numerous other related places.

Everything in the parable in Luke 16:19ff, as well as John 11:25, 26, has to do with the subject at hand — *the proffered kingdom and life or non-life therein*.

Deliverance [life] and blessings for one individual has to do with THE KINGDOM; the opposite, non-deliverance [death] and loss for the other individual, has to do with THE KINGDOM as well.

Eternal verities — eternal salvation, eternal damnation — *ARE NOT,*

THEY CANNOT BE, in view. And any attempt to read these into the parable, or understand John 11:25, 26, contextually, in this manner, will only militate against and destroy that which is clearly stated and taught.

A saved people are being dealt with — both the ones depicted by the rich man and the ones depicted by the beggar, or Lazarus in John 11 [forming a “sign,” *dealing with the future resurrection of the Jewish people, with the kingdom in view*]. Salvation or loss in view *HASTO BE understood in relation to THE SUBJECT AT HAND, which, again, is THE KINGDOM.*

The Jewish people did not reject Christ as their Paschal Lamb. Rather, they rejected Christ as *their King*, claiming before Pilate to have no king but Caesar.

[Those comprising the Jewish nation *were dealt with (beginning with John, then Jesus, the Twelve, and the Seventy in the offer of the kingdom, then the Disciples in Acts in the re-offer of the kingdom) as a people WHOHAD ALREADY BEEN SAVED, though nothing is said about this per se.* It is seemingly taken for granted that *the reader would know and understand this from the past history of the nation, with the whole matter not even being an issue in the subject at hand.*

Those comprising the Jewish nation in the gospel accounts and in Acts are simply seen as a people who were continuing to sacrifice the paschal lamb year after year (sacrifices preceding Calvary), as seen 1,500 years prior to this time in the camp of Israel during Moses’ day. *And they would have been just as saved — saved on the same basis — as the generation during Moses’ day, or generations of Jews continuing to sacrifice the paschal lamb year after year at any other time in between.*

And, if one wants *a basis* for God recognizing efficacy in these slain lambs, that can be seen in Rev. 13:8].

In the preceding respect, Jews believing or not believing in Jesus, in accord with John 11:26, *ARE NOT* believing or not believing in Him with respect to eternal verities but with respect to that which He was offering, which had to do with *life in the kingdom.* *And life or non-life, accordingly, had to do with the subject at hand.)*

The beggar in the parable found himself in the place associated with *life*, not death; and this had to do with *the proffered kingdom, NOT with eternal verities.* He, in effect, found himself in the kingdom, associated with that which God had promised to

the Jewish people through Abraham.

On the other hand, the rich man in the parable found himself in the place associated with *death*, in *Hades* (note that this word is used of *the rich man ALONE*, not of the beggar, for *the beggar COULDN'T be associated with death, with Hades*).

Again, in both the beggar's case and the rich man's case, *their association with life or death had to do with the subject at hand, the proffered kingdom, NOT with eternal verities*.

One was *associated with the kingdom*, realizing that which God had promised the Jewish people through Abraham; the other was *separated from the kingdom*, separated from that which God had promised the Jewish people through Abraham.

One was *comforted*, realizing that which had been offered; the other was *tormented*, evidently knowing what he could have had but, instead, had forfeited (*cf. Matt. 8:11, 12*).

Moses and the Prophets

The rich man in the parable, realizing too late that which he had done and that which he had resultingly forfeited, remembered his five brothers, still living back on earth, calling upon Abraham to send him back to warn them before it was too late for them as well. But the simple response was that *they had already been warned, with the warning remaining ever before them*. And if they would not believe the existing warning, they would not believe him either, even though he had been raised from the dead and could furnish a personal, firsthand, eye-witness report.

Note this section, closing out the parable (vv. 27-31):

"Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

This man's five brothers already had in their possession what he had previously possessed, something which he now found himself separated from as well, *for the Word is living, and he is in the place of death.*

This man's five brothers (and previously he himself) already had something *far greater* than anything else which could ever be set before them. Even his returning from the dead, as a personal eye-witness, could not even begin to approach that which they already had.

Note the POWER of the Word as set forth in Abraham's statement. NOTHING supersedes the Word, which is why Abraham told the man what is recorded. In short, the man was told, If your brothers won't hear the Primary, they are not going to be persuaded through anything secondary.

And there is the reason for the "why" of II Tim. 4:2: "Preach the Word!" *Don't preach the secondary, preach the Primary; don't preach that which is dead, preach that which is Living.*

An illustration of the entire matter is seen in John 11, 12. The religious leaders in Israel wouldn't believe the proclaimed message by Christ and His disciples *before* Lazarus had died, and they didn't believe the message *after* he had been raised from the dead. In fact, they were so adamantly set against the whole of what was being proclaimed that they tried to kill Lazarus after he had been raised (12:9-11).

— In Summation —

The Setting for and That Dealt with in the Parable

The parable in Luke 16:19-31 has to do with spiritual truths surrounding the ministry of Christ and His disciples to the nation of Israel, the message being proclaimed, the reaction of Israel's spiritual leaders to the Messenger and this message, and how this affected the Jewish people in general.

1) *In Israel Then, Yet Future*

The parable takes one from the time when all these things were occurring to where all of it would ultimately lead.

Overall spiritual truths rather than a chronology of events is seen

in the parable. Otherwise, with the rich man seen at the time of the ultimate outcome of all which he had sown — which would be realizing, in relation to a future existing kingdom, that which he had sown during his lifetime (just payment for services rendered in the house, in the house of Israel) — how could he still have five brothers back on earth? But, with *spiritual truths alone* being taught, which, textually, can only be the case, a chronology of events of this nature does not enter into the matter.

Thus, as previously shown, textually, “a rich man” is used to represent *the Pharisees*, and “a beggar” is used to represent *the publicans, harlots, or anyone else in Israel exercising faith in their Messiah*. And in some respects, also evident through spiritual truths being drawn from the parable, *the entire nation could be seen under its religious leaders (e.g., the nation being starved spiritually under the control and sway of its self-righteous, hypocritical religious leaders)*.

The entire nation though could not be seen in the realm of *faith*, for most in the nation did not believe and could not be seen at the ultimate outcome in connection with the things which Abraham’s bosom portends.

That part of the nation not exercising faith could only be seen in an ultimate respect occupying a place with the unbelieving Pharisees, which is the only way that matters could ultimately be brought to pass.

2) *In Christendom Today, Yet Future*

Then, an application of all these things could easily be made in Christendom today. There are “spiritual leaders” *who will look with disdain upon and speak out against teachings concerning the Word of the Kingdom*, there are “Christians” *starving for lack of spiritual food*, and there are “believers and non-believers” in Christendom *relative to the counterpart of the message proclaimed 2,000 years ago by Christ and His disciples, which would be the Word of the Kingdom*.

And the ultimate outcome for Christians will be *the same as the ultimate outcome seen relative to Israel in the parable*, for, exactly as matters existed in Israel 2,000 years ago, *eternal life is a settled matter and ONLY things pertaining to the proffered kingdom remain*.