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Parables of Eternal Destiny (Part 2)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this continuation of his talk, Steve Gregg delves into a few specific biblical verses and parables to shed light on eternal destiny. He discusses the importance of repentance and the consequences of adultery in marriage, emphasizing the value of pleasing God rather than focusing solely on earthly desires. Gregg examines the story of the rich man and the beggar in Luke chapter 16, offering insights on the spiritual lessons of the parable and how it refutes certain beliefs such as soul sleep and spiritualism. He also explains the importance of works as a reflection of faith, rather than a means of earning salvation.

Transcript

What is highly esteemed among men? Well, in this context, money has been discussed. Certainly, we could say money is one of the major things in that category, things that are highly esteemed among men. Being rich, living a luxurious life, dressing fancy, and spending a lot of money on yourself, that's what shows that you are a person of prestige, a person to be reckoned with, a person who is important, and those are the things that are highly esteemed among men, but he says those things stink to God.

God is not the least bit impressed with those kinds of standards of judgment. In fact, they are an abomination to Him. Now, what he would be suggesting then, is since God is one who knows the heart, you'd be better off pursuing the kinds of riches that would make God happy than pursuing the kinds of things that are making your friends happy with you.

It'd be better to use your resources and your opportunities to make friends with God, so that He and His fellow inhabitants of heaven can receive you into everlasting habitations, rather than to keep the pleasure and the approval of your friends, your fellow Pharisees, who cannot receive you into eternal habitations. You're making a mistake just like this guy did, in the sense, although the guy did something right, in the sense that he had some foresight, yet he didn't make any provision for his eternal future. He was short-range vision was dominating him.

He wanted to know what he was going to do for the rest of his life, and therefore he just wanted to make friends on earth. And the Pharisees had done no better for themselves than that. They had never made friends with God, they just had their own circle.

In fact, in order to stay in it, they even stuck their noses up at Jesus to show their disdain for Him, because that was required to be a member in good standing of that circle. You've got to show that you think Jesus is ridiculous, and so they derided Him and so forth. They did that to justify themselves in each other's sight.

See, I'm just as orthodox as the rest, I think this heretic Jesus is ridiculous. But He says, listen, God knows your hearts, and you'd be better off changing your value systems, because God has entirely different values than you have, just the opposite, in fact. Now Jesus said in verse 16, The law and the prophets were until John.

Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. And it's easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail. Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery.

And whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery. Now this segment, verses 16 through 18, seems really out of place in the chapter. It wouldn't fit the discussion about money ended at verse 15.

But the discussion about money, or another parable about it, comes up in verse 19 and dominates the remaining verses of the chapter. So that all the chapter except for these little verses, 16, 17, 18, seems to be about money and one's attitude and use of money and stewardship of money. But it doesn't appear to be the case with these verses.

They seem to be out of place, especially the one about divorce. Now what Jesus says there about divorce is, we've encountered in the Sermon on the Mount, with the exception that in Matthew, who twice records the teaching of Jesus on this subject, once in Matthew 5 and once in Matthew 19. He records this very teaching of Jesus about divorce.

But in both cases Matthew includes a clause that Luke does not. And that is the clause except for the cause of fornication or sexual immorality. Luke leaves that out.

I do not know why. Mark also leaves it out. There has been much dispute as to whether the clause should be left out or included.

Matthew in both of his occurrences of this teaching includes it. Except for the cause of fornication. If a man divorces his wife and marries another, except for the cause of fornication.

Meaning that this teaching is true except in causes, except in cases, where there are grounds given for divorce in the form of sexual immorality on the part of the wife. Apart

from that, this is true. Now, that exception clause is not given in Mark or Luke's versions, but the question then is, did Jesus really say it and Mark and Luke omitted it? Or did Jesus not say it and Matthew inserted it? It's a good question.

I frankly think it does more justice to the honesty of the Gospel writers to say that Jesus did say it, as Matthew records that he did, and Luke and Mark simply omitted it because it's not uncommon to abbreviate what Jesus said. Gospel writers sometimes tell what he said in fewer words, but to suggest that the Gospel writers made up new phrases to change entirely the meaning of what Jesus said, like Matthew would have had to do if Jesus hadn't said that clause, is to suggest that they were not being very honest in their reporting. Now, it is possible, too, that Jesus on occasions did not mention the exception clause.

This occasion in Luke chapter 16 does not appear to be, it doesn't appear to correspond with either of the two cases in Matthew where Jesus spoke on it. It doesn't seem to be parallel. It seems to be a third instance where Jesus spoke on the subject.

And that being so, maybe sometimes Jesus did and sometimes Jesus didn't include the exception clause. In any case, because I accept the whole counsel of God that includes the Gospel of Matthew, I believe that the exception clause is legitimate, though it's omitted in some of the references. By the way, that is just like what we find often in the Old Testament, that many promises of God, though they are conditional, the conditions aren't stated in every place.

There are many places where the conditions are stated, other places they're not stated. It's assumed that since you've heard the conditions stated elsewhere, they don't have to be repeated all the time. Even when Jonah preached to Nineveh, he said, 40 days and Nineveh is going to perish, he didn't state any conditions.

He didn't say unless you repent, but those conditions were implied, and when the people repented, they didn't perish. And so it is, the Bible often will give a more extended discussion of the subject in some places than others. And the shorter one may leave out points which you need to look at the longer ones to know are there.

Now, why he brought up divorce in this particular context is difficult to know. Possibly because he was giving it as an example of the way in which the Pharisees manipulated the law or broke the law. And he's talking about the law, he says in verse 16, The law and the prophets were until John, but he says since that time the kingdom of God had been preached.

Now, what changed with John the Baptist? Well, the kingdom of God had been preached. In fact, the kingdom of God came into earthly reality during the lifetime of John the Baptist and Jesus. Jesus said in his lifetime that the kingdom of God had come among them.

That the kingdom of God had come upon them. And therefore, there was a new reality that transcends the law and the prophets. It does not obliterate them.

He says not one jot or one tittle of the law will fail. It's easier for heaven and earth to pass than for one tittle of the law to fail. But for it to fail, what does it mean to fail? Well, as we know, Jesus fulfilled the law.

The coming of the kingdom of God was a fulfillment of what the law predicted. Therefore, the law didn't fail, even though it was replaced. It came to fulfillment.

And what it was fulfilled in was a new system called the kingdom of God. The law predicted it, and it came. The law didn't fail, but it was fulfilled.

And he says since John's time, there's a new message. It's the message of the kingdom of God. Now, in the Old Testament, it's true.

Riches were associated with the blessing of God, and sometimes in Abraham's case and Job's case and David and Solomon's case, some could argue, well, you know, God blessed those men with riches because they were righteous men. Maybe. I think he did in Abraham's case because God said it would make him mighty and so forth, and his wealth was part of his earthly mind.

But that's just the thing. The law and the prophets in the Old Testament, which Jesus said only extended as far as John's preaching and not after, those things did not look beyond an earthly thing. The law and the prophets never talked about heaven.

The law and the prophets really didn't give much revelation about eternity. They talked about Israel's earthly fortunes. Would Israel be poor, or would they be rich as a nation? Would Israel be in bondage to oppressors, or would they be free and rule over their oppressors? Well, those were things the prophets talked about, and about the most desirable thing the Old Testament law ever revealed to people was to live long and peaceable and comfortably.

In the law and the prophets, there was not a manifestation of immortality and eternity. It says, I think, in Timothy, Paul said that Jesus brought immortality to life. Life and immortality he brought to life, which means that Jesus came to reveal to us something about forever that wasn't revealed before.

Now, in the Old Testament system, as far as values and blessings and so forth, they're all earthly in nature. In such a system, one might expect people like the Pharisees to say, well, I want to be rich, because that's a blessing from God. But that was until John the Baptist.

Something new has been preached there since then, a spiritual kingdom with spiritual values. Being rich in earthly things is not relevant any longer to the blessing of God. In

fact, God has a spiritual concern that he's revealed through John the Baptist when he told the soldiers to be content with their wages, when he told people who had two coats to give one to him who had none, and so forth.

John the Baptist was preaching a different attitude toward worldly things. The kingdom of God has its own value system that's somewhat different than that revealed in the law and the prophets, and that is spiritual values replace physical and material values. And so, Jesus is probably bringing that up for this reason.

The law and the prophets, that system by which you Pharisees judge yourselves as righteous and justify yourselves in having your money and being selfish and so forth, that system's passé. It was only up until John. But since John has come, well, the kingdom of God has been preached.

That's something else that's spiritual. And everyone who's going to get in it has to press into it. That's what I think that last line in verse 16 means.

Everyone is pressing into it. It means that anyone who's going to get in the kingdom is going to have to press in. It's not going to be easy.

You're not just going to fall in. You're not going to be born in as a Jew. You're not going to just kind of avoid scandalous sin and automatically be in.

You've got to press into it. It's going to take a certain amount of sacrifice. It's going to take a certain amount of effort.

It's going to take some priority given to it. That's what he's saying. And I think, again, I've always been perplexed when reading this chapter to see verse 18 there, why he'd bring up adultery.

But apparently adultery was an example of one of the ways that the Pharisees were not pressing into the kingdom. And that is divorce. They divorced their wives.

And they didn't make any effort to be faithful to their commitments to their wives. And that shows a concern more about earthly happiness than spiritual happiness and internal happiness. Obviously, if you divorce your wife, it's because you're not happy with her.

Why would you ever stay with a wife who you're not happy with? Well, because you're concerned about pleasing God, maybe. But if you're not happy with your wife and you're not interested in pleasing God, then you divorce her. Because happiness in this world is all that matters to you.

And therefore, divorce is a way of getting it from an unhappy marriage. But even an unhappy marriage is to be endured by those who want to demonstrate themselves faithful in that which is least so they can be entrusted with much later on. And so, here's

an example of how the Pharisees perhaps were making easy choices for happiness in this life.

Divorcing their wives rather than working things out and pleasing God by staying with their wives. Now, he gives another story that begins with the same words as the first one did. As in verse one, there was a certain rich man.

The focus of this story, however, is on the negligence of this rich man. The first parable, the rich man was the owner, and there's nothing negative said about him. Only his steward, whom he fired.

Here, the rich man is the culprit in this story. There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. Ate well.

But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid by his gate. Maybe a leper. Probably not a leper, or else he'd be further away from the guy's house than that.

But had problems with his skin and sores and so forth. He was a miserable guy. Couldn't work and therefore was a beggar.

What this steward in the previous parable was too proud to become, a beggar. This man had no choice. His physical condition rendered him incapable of work and therefore he had nothing that he could do but humble himself and beg for mercy from people who had money like this rich man.

And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table, he wasn't asking for a leg of lamb. He was just asking if he could have the crumbs that already were defiled by falling on the floor and the man wasn't going to eat anyway. Whether the man ever gave him the crumbs or not, we're not told.

Moreover, the dogs came out and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.

And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. And then 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'm tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, 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.

And besides all this, between us and you there's a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us. Then he said, I beg you therefore, Father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment. And

Abraham said to him, They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them.

And he said, No, Father Abraham, but if one goes to them from the dead, they'll repent. But Abraham said, If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rise from the dead. Now, this story too is about riches and the use of riches.

What this rich man failed to do, was use his money to make friends with someone who could receive him into eternal habitations, whether it be Abraham or the angels that could have carried him as they carried the beggar into Abraham's bosom, or even Lazarus himself. He could have made friends with Lazarus. The guy was that close, he was at his gates.

You see, the man was concerned about nothing but his own worldly comforts, his own worldly indulgence. And there was a man at his gate that he showed little or no pity to, whether the dogs came and licked Lazarus' sores at the master's behest, or whether they did so on their own, we're not told. In fact, it's a strange little detail that Jesus puts in.

It's possible, and some have felt, that the rich man in the story does refer to the Pharisees, the lovers of money. And they were carrying nothing for the spiritual poor, or the physical poor, it may be, in Israel. And the dogs, who may have represented Gentiles, we don't know that we want to make that application, but many times in Jesus' teaching he pointed out that the Gentiles often were more responsive to God and did the right thing, when Jews often did not.

Gentiles were regarded to be dogs, and maybe Jesus put in that little detail about the dogs coming to lick the wounds of the man, which would be a positive thing, not a negative. That the dogs showed more interest in this man's needs, or provided him more relief than his fellow Jew, his fellow son of Abraham. We know they were both Jews, because the rich man called Abraham his father.

Now, we're not told anything about the spiritual lives of these people, except what can be deduced from their circumstances. It is not said that the rich man was a violator of the law of Moses. At least, no specific violation is mentioned.

Nor are we told that Lazarus, the poor man, was necessarily a lover of God. But we can deduce it from their faiths. We can deduce that the rich man did not do what God expected him to do, and what he should have been known better than to do.

Actually, his five brothers were no doubt living similarly to himself, and he wanted them to be warned to change their ways. And Abraham says they have Moses and the prophets, indicating that if you really read Moses and the prophets correctly, you wouldn't live this way. They'll change their ways if they believe Moses and the prophets.

That's all the warning they need. You see, even though Moses and the prophets did not condemn wealth outright, many times in the law, many times in the prophets, and many times in Proverbs and Psalms, the Bible told the Jews to care for the poor, that God had compassion on the poor, and the Jews should make sure that the poor are relieved, and so forth. And here's a case of a guy.

He can do it, but he won't do it. He doesn't do it. He pays no attention to a poor man who's suffering at his gate.

So he's neglecting the law. And particularly, the great law, which Jesus identified on other occasions, you shall love your neighbors yourself. The way that Jesus paraphrased that in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7 was, what you would that men would do to you, do the same to them.

Also, that's love your neighbors yourself. But the way Jesus put it would make it very clear that this rich man in the parable was not loving his neighbor as himself. If he had been the poor man at the gate, longing for some relief, he would have wished for a rich man to help him.

But instead, he was the rich man, and he didn't do that for his neighbor. So he didn't love his neighbor as himself. He violated the law of Moses, and if he had read it, if he had been concerned to obey it, he would have lived differently than he did, and he got a rude awakening after death.

Now, talking about rude awakening after death, one thing that we need to make clear is that this story, more than any other in the Bible, tells us of a continuing conscious existence after death. Now, I realize that most people believe they're going to live forever in heaven, consciously. But many people are not sure whether people are conscious in the state of death.

That is, while your body is dead, and before you're resurrected from the dead, you're going to be asked on the last day, are you conscious or are you unconscious? The belief in soul sleep that's taught by some groups would say that you're unconscious, you know nothing, until the resurrection, then you live forever, when you're resurrected. But this was before the resurrection. Jesus is telling the story as if it's already passed.

It can't be after the resurrection, because this man still had five brothers who had not yet died, and had not yet faced judgment. When the resurrection occurs, everyone's going to face judgment. This man had five brothers who were still living out their normal lives.

There had been no interruption in their normal lives. In fact, no one had yet raised from the dead, because he argues that if someone would raise from the dead, it would cause them to be persuaded. So we're talking about a situation before the resurrection, before

the second coming of Christ.

So here's two men who died, three actually, because Abraham's in the picture too, and he was dead by this time. Three men died, and the end of time, the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead had not occurred, so they were living in what we call the intermediate state, between death and the resurrection. The state that we go into if we die today, and remain in until Jesus comes back and raises us from the dead.

That intermediate state is clearly depicted to be a state not of sleep, but of conscious awareness, of conscious recognition, of conscious torment, if that's the appropriate thing for a person, even of memory. This man could remember his life. Abraham reminded him of it.

In verse 25, Son, remember that in your lifetime you received good things? He could recognize Lazarus. He called him by name. He could remember that he still had friends on earth, brothers who had not died yet.

So, this man was dead physically, but he was alive in Hades. Now, this is a teaching from Jesus Christ. Now, some people, especially those who don't believe that the intermediate state is a conscious state, those who believe in soul sleep, they say, well, this story is just a parable.

You can't press the details of a parable. Well, maybe it's a parable, maybe it isn't a parable. We don't know.

We're not told that it's a parable. Jesus spoke as if it was a historic case. Of course, Jesus often spoke parables as if they were historic cases.

He often said a certain man without telling us whether it was a historical case or if this is only a parable. In any case, this story is very much unlike any other parable in that, one, it deals with a person that it calls by name, Lazarus. There's no other parable in all the parables of Jesus where a particular character in it is given a name, a proper name.

The fact that he says a certain beggar named Lazarus when there's no reason to give him a name and he doesn't give people names in other parables suggests that this might be an actual historical case, a true story, not a parable. Furthermore, it is different from all other parables in this respect. It talks about situations that are otherworldly.

All other parables that Jesus told are about things that happen in everyday life. Sowing seeds, making bread, putting yeast in it, buying a field, buying a pearl, going to a wedding feast, whatever. All the stories Jesus told that were parables, at least in all other cases, had to do with the ordinary mundane things in this life which were then applied to spiritual things.

This story is about something that happens not in this life but after this life is over. And

let me say this, even if it could be proven that this was a parable, I don't think it can be. I have a hunch this was a true story, not a parable.

But even if we decided it was a parable, we would still find in this an argument for continuing consciousness after the grave in this, that Jesus, to our knowledge, never told any parables that were not true to life. What I mean by that is while some of his parables might not have been talking about actual cases and actual historic events, he was talking about events that could happen and did happen frequently in life. Making bread, sowing seeds, those kind of things happen all the time.

They were very true to life. They weren't fantastic. They weren't silly little fables about trees talking and animals talking like Aesop's fables and stuff.

Jesus' parables were not fantasy. They were real life-like situations. And if this was a parable, then we would have to say maybe he's not talking about an actual case of a particular rich man, an actual case of a particular beggar.

But even so, if this is a parable and if it's to be like any of his other parables, we have to say it's true to life. And if it's not true to life, then he's giving a false impression because he doesn't tell us it's not true to life. He acts as if this really happened or at least really could happen.

He is presenting a vision of what some people at least experience and think after death, which either is an actual case or at least is very much like actual cases. And therefore it is, in principle, very much a true representation of what happens after death. Now, it's got quite a powerful message in it if that's the case because here's a rich man who had an opportunity in his lifetime to make friends who could invite him into everlasting habitations.

He could have stored up his treasures in heaven. How could he do that? Easy. He could have given money to Lazarus.

He was right there at the gate. There was a branch office of the heavenly bank right there at his gate. He didn't have to go far.

He could have sent out donations and laid them up for himself and made friends with the man of unrighteousness that he never attempted to. Therefore he was a poor steward of the opportunities he had and he had now forever to regret it. And the most poignant point of the parable is, of course, that he was now in Hades, in torment, now awakened to the reality of the stupid thing he had done, and he knew that there were brothers of his own who were totally as oblivious as he had been and he has no way to warn them.

Of course, the implication of that to earthly people listening to the story is who knows? Maybe some of your unsaved friends are down there wishing they could warn you too, but they can't get through to you. Good thing Jesus told us this story. It's kind of the best

way they can get the message to you, to the unbeliever.

It makes for good evangelism, not just for psychological impact, but it's a powerful message. Unbelievers whose loved ones who are unsaved and friends who are unsaved have died, no doubt their friends and loved ones who are dead and in hell are wishing that they could come back and warn them, but they can't, and thus the ones they would like to warn are here living oblivious to the danger, making the same mistakes their friends made who are now dead, and going to fall off the cliff just like their friends did and have no way of getting out of it, except if they read and take heed to what Jesus said, because Jesus gives us a peek to the other side of the fact that there are people like that with those very regrets and those very wishes that they could warn their friends and their loved ones. Now, a lot can be said about this story.

First of all, it seems to, like I say, it seems to refute views like those of, say, the Seventh-day Adventists who believe that there is no consciousness beyond the grave. It certainly indicates that there is. It also seems to refute the idea of purgatory.

If I'm not mistaken, I think certain Roman Catholic apologists have used this story to prove purgatory, to suggest that this is a case where we see men in purgatory. However, it doesn't seem to, it seems like if they want to apply this story to purgatory, it proves too much for their benefit, because the idea of purgatory in the Roman Catholic faith, as I understand it, is that some people are in purgatory, but they can be prayed out. If you light enough candles for them and pray for them often enough, their souls can be released from purgatory.

They can come over into heaven. But this story talks about a great gulf that is fixed between the two sides, and no one is able to pass from one side to the other. It's permanent.

There's no passage between the two. Therefore, like I say, the story proves too much to be of any value to those hoping to prove purgatory. These people died.

They did not go to some purgative temporary situation which they could escape from if enough people prayed for them. There is a great gap between them, and no one crosses either direction. The idea is once you've died, your fate is sealed, and there's not going to be any transportation between the two sides after you're dead.

You've had all your chances you're going to get. That's what he says in verse 26. Besides this between us and you, there's a great gulf fixed so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot.

Even if I wanted to send Lazarus down to dip his finger in water and relieve you, I couldn't do it. He couldn't get there. And, he says, nor can those from there pass to here.

There just isn't any bridge across. There was a bridge available before you died, but

you've let your last opportunity slip away. Furthermore, not only does this passage refute soul sleep and purgatory, it also refutes spiritualism or the idea of contacting the spirits of the dead through seances and so forth.

Because while some people say that they've contacted the spirits of the departed, and these people have come back and said, you know, oh, it's kind of nice over here and stuff on the other side. I mean, there's all kinds of claims that people have contacted the spirits of the departed ones. This story indicates that once people have left, they don't get to come back and make contact with their families and friends.

This guy actually wanted to, but it couldn't be done. Not only do you not pass again over into the other side of Hades, you also don't pass back into the world to warn your friends or communicate anything with them. They have all the communication they need in the Scriptures.

That's what the lesson is. God has spoken. Why should they need to hear from some departed spirit to know the truth? God has already told them the truth.

They have the Scriptures. Let them heed them. So there's all kinds of interesting and important lessons in this one story.

But certainly the principal lesson is none of those. The principal lesson is stewardship of money, just like the other one is. You have certain opportunities.

Your lifetime is your opportunity. Just like the steward in the first parable who knew his opportunity was limited, and he did make friends to receive him when his money failed, this man, this rich man, did not make friends who could receive him into everlasting habitation. And therefore he showed himself to be a fool who will live with his regrets forever.

That's the idea here. Now let's just make a few technical points on a few of these things. It says in verse 22 that the angels came and took this beggar into Abram's bosom.

First of all, Abram's bosom probably is not to be identified with heaven, because the dominant personality in heaven is God, not Abraham. That is, anyone who has ever caught up into heaven, whether it was Daniel in Daniel chapter 7, or whether it was John in the book of Revelation chapter 4, or Paul in 2 Corinthians 12, or anyone who's been caught up into heaven, or even Stephen who just saw the heavens open as he stood on earth. The first thing that people mention seeing there is God.

And sometimes the Lamb or Jesus standing next to the Father, in Stephen's case and so forth. But the point is, if this was heaven, the defining person of the location would not be Abraham. The defining person would be God.

This man, this beggar, was apparently not taken into the immediate presence of God.

But he was taken to the place where Abraham was. Now Abraham we should take as an example of the Old Testament faithful.

The father of the faithful. Every faithful Jew, and no doubt every Gentile who became faithful, like Ruth, and Naaman the Syrian, and so forth. They died in faith before the cross, and they all went to the same place.

Now Jesus, of course, was speaking before he died and rose again. And if he's talking about an actual case, we therefore have a situation where we now know where people went if they died saved, but before Jesus died for us. The book of Hebrews indicates that the access to heaven, the access to the immediate presence of God, was not available to people while the first tabernacle was standing, meaning while the Old Testament was around before Jesus came to fulfill it all.

I'm talking about Hebrews 9, I think. If I can find the thing I'm thinking of here. Okay, yeah.

Hebrews 9, it talks about the ritual of the Day of Atonement. And in verse 7 it says in the second part, the Holy of Holies, only the high priest went with blood to offer for sins. But verse 8 says, all of this ritual was something the Holy Spirit was using to teach a lesson.

The Holy Spirit was indicating this, that the way into the holiest of all, that is into the immediate presence of God, was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who does the service perfect in regard to the conscience. Then it says in verse 11, but Christ came as a high priest for the good things to come with a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands that is not of this creation.

Then if you turn over to Hebrews 10, verse 19, therefore brethren, having boldness to enter into the holiest of all, the Holy of Holies, the presence of God, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he consecrated for us through the veil, that is his flesh, and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, and so forth. Now, he says, while the first tabernacle was standing, while there was still the old covenant before Jesus died, God was saying, the Holy Spirit was saying through that ritual that you can't come in. The very restrictedness of access to the Holy of Holies and the tabernacle, the Holy Spirit was using that to say, listen, you can't get in here.

You can't come to God until God makes a new and living way for you to come. And that way is consecrated through the veil, that is through the flesh of Jesus. And we can now enter boldly into the holiest of all.

We can now approach God directly. The idea being that before Jesus died, there was no access to God, even through death, even for the faithful. Abraham, David, the rest of

them, and this beggar who died presumably in faith, they were saved, but they weren't in the presence of God.

Not yet. Not until Jesus died and rose again. Now, since then, that's a different story.

Since Jesus died and rose again, He has consecrated a new and living way into the Holy of Holies for us. And we can go directly there so that Paul, when he speaks about death, he says, we delight, we look forward to being absent from our body so we can be present with the Lord. He says, I have this desire to depart and be present with the Lord.

That's in Philippians 1 and 2 Corinthians 5 he talks that way. So that now, we don't have to go to some holding tank. We can go directly in the presence of the Lord.

When we die, when we're absent from our body, we go into the presence of the Lord. But it wasn't that way before Jesus died and rose again. There were still saved people before that.

They were saved by faith like Abraham was. Like this beggar was. But, they were not yet able to go into the presence of God.

So the place that they did go is here described as the place where Abraham was. The typical example of a faithful Old Testament guy who was saved. So this beggar went to where Abraham was.

That was not probably to be identified as heaven. Now, nonetheless, we're told that the angels carried him. Not his body, of course.

His body was in the ground. People who die, and by the way, Jesus knew that if someone understood him to refer to the body, that he'd quickly be proven wrong. Simply by going and digging up the body of some saint and finding it still there or it's remained.

Obviously, Jesus was not claiming that a person's body is carried away. Even though the rich man says, could Lazarus dip his finger in water and put it on my tongue? I'm tormenting these flames. This may be imagery.

I don't think we're to understand that the body of Lazarus with his finger and all and the tongue of this rich man and his body went to Hades because obviously it's the soul that goes to this place. The body rots in the grave and that's been known since long before Jesus' time. He knew it too.

In fact, that was the distinctive about him was that God didn't leave him there and he did not let him see decay. Everyone else did. So, I think what we're to understand is what was carried was this man's spirit or his soul was carried into Abraham's bosom to Abraham's presence until such a time as the death and resurrection of Christ would allow him to go into the presence of God which happened shortly after Jesus told the story.

Now, we, of course, don't go to Abraham's bosom. We go into the presence of God. But I have no doubt that the angels carry us there.

When we die, I believe the angels will come and that they will carry us into heaven. Anyway, while there, this man was able to see Lazarus. The rich man and Lazarus could see each other.

The man was in Hades. The King James says hell, but Hades is more generic and that's what it says in the Greek. It's just the undifferentiated place of the dead.

That's what Hades means. It's Sheol in the Old Testament, Hades in the Greek New Testament. But, in the place of the dead.

Now, both of these men were in Hades, it would appear. They were both in the place of the dead, but they were in very different circumstances. One was in flames, the other was apparently not in flames.

It was in a relatively comfortable place and one that was not at all unpleasant to be in. Both, no doubt, are to be understood as parts of Hades. Evangelicals have used this story for a long time, I think rightly so, to say that Hades had two compartments.

That which was occupied by the lost and that which was occupied by the saved before Jesus came. However, since Jesus died and rose again, all those that were in Abram's bosom, along with Abram himself, have gone into heaven. But, those who were with the rich man in flames are still there in all likelihood.

They're awaiting judgment there. Anyway, the conversation is interesting. The man calls Abram father.

So, Jesus stresses in telling the story that this man was a Jew, a rich Jew, just like the Pharisees. And he considered Abram his father. And Abram didn't deny.

He said, Son, he saw one of his own sons in flames, but he didn't offer him any hope. He said, Sorry, you've made your bed, you've got to sleep there. There's no passages between here and there.

The man begged for relief, but Abram simply said, Aren't you asking a lot? In your lifetime, you had all the things money could buy. You had your good things. You received them.

And likewise, Lazarus received evil things, but now he's comforted and you're tormented. Now, it's interesting. The way Jesus tells it in verse 25.

He said to this man, You received your good things in your lifetime. Remember back a couple of chapters where Jesus said in chapter 14, When you make a feast, don't invite all the people who can invite you back, because they'll invite you back and then you'll be

repaid. And you will have received your good things and you'll have no reward in the resurrection of the righteous.

But when you make a feast, invite those like Lazarus, the poor guy who could never pay you back. Then you'll receive nothing back in your lifetime for it, but you'll have something waiting for you, some relief, some reward in the resurrection. And Abram says, Hey, you're trying to have the best of both worlds, aren't you? You wanted to have all your good things.

You wanted to receive your good things in your lifetime and you want them now too? Let's be reasonable. It's a fair exchange. Lazarus was miserable during his lifetime and now he's going to be comforted forever.

You were comforted and comfortable and you made sure of it, but now you're going to be miserable forever. You had your choice. It's interesting that nothing is said here about faith, although of course a man's faith is always exhibited in his works.

And since the man did not obey God, it's clear that he didn't have a saving faith in God. He did not love his neighbor as himself, he didn't help the poor beggar as the Bible said he should, the law said he should, and therefore he was lost. Obedience would have shown his faith, just like James tells us.

And his disobedience showed that he had no faith, therefore he was lost. But rather than say, oh, you died without faith, that's why you're not with Abraham the faithful one. He said, you didn't obey, you did this, and that was your problem.

Remember Jesus said in Matthew 25, the sheep and the goats, everyone comes to judgment, and the sheep are commended for what they did and the goats are rejected for what they neglected to do. Nothing is said about faith. On the day of judgment, every man is judged according to his works.

The Bible says that probably half a dozen times in various places, that the judgment is of works. But that doesn't mean you're not saved on the basis of faith, but faith, if it's present, will have certain works, and those works will be evident. And on the day of judgment, God won't have to talk about ethereal, invisible things like whether you had faith or not, whether you thought you had faith in your heart.

He can point to your works and show whether you had faith or not. On the day of judgment, he's not going to say, you died without faith, so you're lost. He's going to say, you died without obedience, which showed you didn't have any faith, therefore you're lost.

Because there's a thousand people in the body of Christ for every... in the visible body of Christ, for every true saved person, there's about a thousand who say they have faith and don't. In this country alone, the Gallup polls show that 75 or more percent of

Americans say they're Christians, that they believe in Jesus. That can't be... there can't be one in a thousand of them that are real Christians in America, that are really following Jesus Christ.

But they think they are. They say they have faith, therefore for God, on the day of judgment, to say, I'm sorry you're lost because you didn't have faith, they protest, wait, what do you mean? I always believed. To save himself the trouble, he'll just say, listen, you didn't follow Jesus Christ.

If you'd had faith, you would have. You can talk about faith all you want, but if you didn't have the works, it tells whether you had faith or not, and you didn't, therefore you're out. So it's interesting that a man is not reminded of whether he had faith or not, he's reminded of what his works were.

This man didn't do what the Bible said he should do. So, the man said, well warn my brothers. I don't even ask to go back.

Send Lazarus back to warn my brothers. Abraham said, can't do that. Don't need to anyway.

God's already sent plenty of warning. He's got the scriptures there, the law and the prophets. Your brothers are Jews, they've got access to the scriptures.

And he waved that off like, oh, you can't expect them to listen to that, but if someone rises from the dead, they'll certainly be persuaded instead. And Abraham's last remark is rather interesting. He says, if they won't listen to the law and the prophets, they won't be persuaded even if one rises from the dead.

Now there's, this is, I believe, an actual conversation that took place in Hades. But there's some interesting things corollary to that in the gospels. Another gospel, John, in chapter 11, tells of another man named Lazarus who actually did rise from the dead.

The Lazarus in this story did not. The Lazarus in this story, you know, someone asked that he be sent back, but he wasn't. But it's interesting that there was another Lazarus who was a friend of Jesus that he raised from the dead.

And, sure enough, those opponents of Jesus who were not receiving his words also weren't convinced when Lazarus rose from the dead. In fact, it says in John they plotted to kill Lazarus too. The miracle will not make an appeal to people who are already rejecting truth.

Love of truth is not created by seeing miracles. Those who have love of truth will be seeking it already even without the miracles. They'll be searching the scriptures to know the truth.

If a person has no concern about truth, then seeing people rise from the dead aren't going to be convincing to them. Another thing that's interesting too, of course, is that Jesus rose from the dead. And that didn't convince all the people who were opposed to God.

Even the Pharisees, many of them listening to him at this moment, he may have been making a vague allusion to that. Even if I rise from the dead, you won't believe. If you don't listen to Moses and the prophets, you don't listen to me.

If you don't listen to Moses and the prophets, you won't be persuaded even if a man rises from the dead. And Jesus was shortly after this going to do so. But it would not make an impression on many of them.

And he was right. It didn't. Most of them were not converted.

But this shows this too, that signs and wonders are not necessarily the thing that brings about conversion. The Bible itself is capable of doing that. John the Baptist did no miracle, but just by preaching the word of God, he brought tremendous revival.

And likewise, signs and wonders can be used by God to confirm the word, but they alone don't bring revival. They don't necessarily convince people. The word of God itself brings conviction.

And if people are not heeding the conviction of the word already, signs and wonders aren't going to do them any good. But the point of these parables is that you've got to use the opportunities you have now to spend your money, to use your opportunities, to use your time in such a way that when you are finished with your stewardship, when you die, you won't have the kind of regrets this man did. And that's what these parables are about.