

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

A
WARNING

TO THE RICH

AND

SELF-JUSTIFIED

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Living Stream Ministry
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TEACHING ABOUT THE ENTRANCE INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In Luke 16:1-13 the Lord teaches about the prudence of a steward, in particular, about prudence in the proper handling of money. The Lord spoke this word purposely to touch the Pharisees, and His word was an arrow penetrating them.

“Now the Pharisees, being lovers of money, heard all these things, and they were sneering at Him” (v. 14). The Greek words translated “were sneering at” literally mean “were turning up the nose.” The Lord’s word penetrated the depths of their being. But instead of being convinced by it, they were stubborn. Because the Lord’s word touched them, they sneered at Him.

In verse 15 the Lord went on to say to the Pharisees, “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.” The self-justification

of the Pharisees was an exaltation of self in pride. Hence, it was an abomination in the sight of God. Here the Lord was telling the Pharisees that they were altogether an abomination in the sight of God.

In [verse 16](#) the Lord continued, “The law and the prophets were until John; from that time the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it.” The “law and the prophets” refer to the Old Testament. The words “until John” indicate the change of dispensation from law to gospel. This proves that the Old Testament dispensation was terminated by the coming of John.

The Lord told the Pharisees that from the time of John “the good news of the kingdom of God is preached.” The Savior preached here the gospel of the kingdom of God to the Pharisees, the moneylovers ([v. 14](#)). Money and sexual lust, incited by money, held them back from entering into the kingdom of God. Hence, the Savior’s preaching hit these two things purposely and strongly in [16:18-31](#).

In [verse 16](#) the Lord also spoke about forcing one’s way into the kingdom of God. For the Pharisees to force their way into the kingdom, they needed to humble themselves and divorce

their money, not their wives, that is, to overcome money and the lust incited by money.

Here the Lord Jesus seemed to be telling the Pharisees, “Don’t sneer at Me. The good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and you need to force your way into the kingdom. It is no longer the time of the law and the prophets. Now is the time of the jubilee of grace, and you need to force your way into it.”

In [verses 17 and 18](#) the Lord says to the Pharisees, “But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one serif of the law to fall. Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and he who marries one who has been divorced from a husband commits adultery.” A “serif” is a minute horn-like projection which distinguishes various Hebrew letters. Lest the Pharisees think that it was no longer necessary to keep the law since the law and the prophets were until John, the Lord told them that it was easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for the slightest part of the law to fail.

When the Lord Jesus saw that the Pharisees were sneering at Him, He was not disappointed or discouraged. Neither would He stop speaking. Instead, the Lord went on to speak to them

about being an abomination in the sight of God, about the kingdom of God, about keeping the law, and about divorce. In 16:15-18 the Lord seems to be saying, “You Pharisees are sneering at Me. You justify yourselves in the sight of men, but in the sight of God you are an abomination. You need to realize that now is no longer the dispensation of the law, but the dispensation of the acceptable year of the Lord. Now is the time for the jubilee, the good news of the kingdom of God. In a sense, the law and the prophets are over.”

When the Pharisees heard this, on the one hand they were unhappy. But, on the other hand, they were somewhat happy in that they may have thought that they no longer needed to keep the law. Now they were free to divorce their wives. Some of the rich Pharisees divorced their wives because they were indulging their lust. This lust was incited by their riches. Hence, the lust of the Pharisees to divorce their wives and marry another was incited by riches.

A poor man is less likely to divorce his wife than a rich man. Today a large percentage of wealthy professional men have been divorced at least once, and a number have been divorced more than once. This is an indication that riches

when used wrongly incite lust. This should warn us not to use riches to satisfy our lust. Instead, we should use our money for the benefit of others.

As lovers of money, the Pharisees were incited by their riches to indulge their lust. When one was not satisfied with his wife, he could divorce her and get another one. Knowing their situation and realizing that, in a sense, they would be happy to hear that the law was over, the Lord seemed to tell them, “Don’t think that it is no longer necessary to keep the law. The law will never pass away; it remains to condemn you. You are not free from the law in order to divorce your wives.” The Lord’s dealing with the Pharisees here actually touches their riches and their lust. His word deals with the matters of money and marriage.

WARNING THE RICH

Verse 19 begins with the word “now.” This conveys the meaning of furthermore and indicates that the Lord had more to say to the Pharisees. In 16:19-31 He went on to tell them the story of the rich man and Lazarus. This story was directed at the rich Pharisees, as money-lovers who were incited by their riches to indulge their lust.

Luke 16:19 says, “Now a certain man was rich, and clothed himself in purple and fine linen, making merry splendidly every day.” This story is not a parable, because it mentions the names of Abraham, Lazarus, and Hades. It is a story used by the Savior as an illustrative answer to the money-loving and self-justifying Pharisees (vv. 14-15). Through this story the Lord warns them by unveiling that their miserable future will be like that of the rich man. Such a future will result from their rejection of the Savior’s gospel because of their love for money.

In this story the rich man habitually clothed himself in purple and linen and made merry splendidly, sumptuously, every day. But a poor man named Lazarus “was cast at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be satisfied with the things falling from the rich man’s table; and not only this, the dogs came and licked his sores” (vv. 20-21). Then we are told that the poor man died and was carried away by angels into Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. “In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments” and saw “Abraham far off, and Lazarus in his bosom” (v. 23). The words “Abraham’s bosom” are a rabbinical phrase, equivalent to being with Abraham in Paradise (M. R. Vincent).

Hades, like Sheol in the Old Testament (Gen. 37:35; Psa. 6:5), is the place where the souls and spirits of the dead are kept (Acts 2:27).

THE TWO SECTIONS OF HADES

Abraham's bosom, or Paradise, is the pleasant section in Hades where Abraham and all the just are, awaiting the resurrection, and where the Lord Jesus went after His death and stayed until His resurrection (Luke 23:43; Acts 2:24, 27, 31; Eph. 4:9; Matt. 12:40). This Paradise differs from the paradise in Revelation 2:7, which will be the New Jerusalem in the millennium.

Often when Christians hear the word Hades, they think only of a bad place. Hades is not an eternal abode for people in the next life; Hades is a place where disembodied spirits are kept temporarily. There are two sections in Hades: the section of comfort, a pleasant section, for the saved, and the section of torment for the unsaved. By God's mercy and through His redemption, there is in Hades a pleasant section for His redeemed people. According to Luke 16:22-25, Abraham is in this section. No doubt, Isaac, Jacob, and all the other Old Testament saints are also there. Likewise, the poor man Lazarus went there after he died. Furthermore, the

Lord told the thief on the cross who begged the Lord to remember him in His kingdom that he would be with Him in Paradise ([23:42-43](#)). As we have pointed out, this Paradise is the pleasant section in Hades, a section of comfort for God's redeemed people.

According to God's way, whenever a person dies his spirit leaves his body and goes to Hades. The body is usually buried. A disembodied spirit is a sign of death and is therefore shameful. Hence, a place has been prepared for disembodied human spirits. Among these disembodied spirits, some are the spirits of the saved in Paradise, the pleasant place of Hades, and others are the spirits of the unsaved in the section of torment.

In the story recorded in [16:19-31](#) we see these two sections. We also see that there is a chasm between them: "And besides all these things, between us and you a great chasm has been firmly fixed, so that those wanting to pass from here to you cannot, neither may they cross over from there to us" ([v. 26](#)). This great chasm is a gulf that divides Hades into the pleasant section and the section of torment. These two sections are cut off from each other and have no bridge for thoroughfare. Yet those in the two sections

can see each other and even talk to each other (vv. 23-25). Therefore, the rich man could see Abraham and Lazarus, he could speak to Abraham, and Abraham could answer him.

The dead will remain in Hades until the day of resurrection. When the Lord Jesus comes back, the saved ones will be resurrected. This will take place before the millennium, before the thousand years of God's reign on earth. The unsaved ones will remain in the section of torment in Hades for another thousand years. At the end of the millennium the unsaved ones will be resurrected from Hades and, with a body, will stand before the white throne to be judged and condemned to eternal perdition. Then their entire being—body, soul, and spirit—will be cast into the lake of fire.

In this story of the rich man and Lazarus the Lord Jesus revealed to the rich Pharisees their destiny, their future. By telling them this story, He was saying, “Rich man, don’t indulge yourself in lust. You need to realize that your destiny will be the section of torment in Hades.”

THE NEED TO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD

According to Luke 16:27-28, the rich man

said to Abraham, “Then I ask you, Father, that you may send him to my father’s house—for I have five brothers—so that he may solemnly charge them, lest they also come to this place of torment.” To this Abraham replied, “They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them” ([v. 29](#)). “Moses and the Prophets” refer to the law of Moses and the books of the prophets, which are the word of God ([Matt. 4:4](#)). Whether one hears the word of God or not determines one’s salvation or perdition. The poor man was saved not because he was poor, but because he heard the word of God ([John 5:24](#); [Eph. 1:13](#)). The rich man perished not because he was rich, but because he rejected the word of God ([Acts 13:46](#)).

In the conversation between Abraham and the rich man we see why the rich man went to the section of torment. He went there because he did not listen to the word of God and believe it. He did not go there because he was rich. Likewise, Lazarus, the poor man, went to the section of comfort because he listened to the word of God conveyed in Moses and the prophets. He did not go to that section simply because he was poor. Abraham told the rich man that his

brothers had Moses and the prophets and should listen to them.

The rich man then said to Abraham, “No, Father Abraham, but if someone from the dead would go to them, they will repent. But he said to him, If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead” ([Luke 16:30-31](#)). If people do not hear what the word of God says, they will not be persuaded even by one who resurrects miraculously from the dead. The Savior’s word here implies that if the Jews represented by the Pharisees do not hear the word of God in the Old Testament, even though He will rise from the dead, they will not be persuaded. This very tragedy occurred after His resurrection ([Matt 28:11-15](#); [Acts 13:30-40, 44-45](#)).

[Luke 16:31](#) indicates that we should not have a mind of curiosity. Those with such a mind may pay attention to a person who claims to be resurrected from among the dead. We should not listen to things that arouse our curiosity. Instead, with a sober mind we should listen to the written Word of God. If we pay attention to the Word of God with a sober mind, not with a curious mind, we shall understand God’s

mercy and grace, and we shall be clear concerning His salvation.

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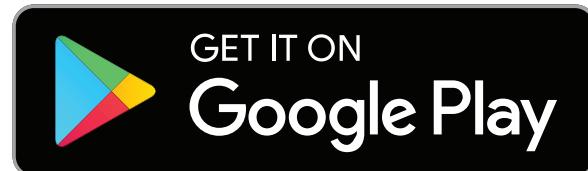
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