

## CHAPTER II

### AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF LUKE 16:19-31

Something in the human mind instinctively recoils from the account of the rich man and Lazarus. Yet, "it is a revelation of things eternal and necessary; and the Biblical Revelation would play false to human experience and understanding if it veiled some of these things from our eyes, because of reluctance to consider them."<sup>1</sup>

Christ uses a fascinating illustration to briefly lift the curtain covering the beyond of death. He gave this unique glimpse in discussing three problems of the Pharisees: their love of money, their love of self, and their disregard for God's Word. These three problems, unless corrected, will bring the Pharisees the same destiny as the rich man suffered. The problems are dealt with in the following discussion centered around the rich man in life, the rich man in death, and the rich man in Hades.

#### The Rich Man In Life: Luke 16:19-21

##### The Luxury of His Life

##### His spiritual condition reflected

A rich (πλούσιος) man is a wealthy man, one who does not have to work for a living.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the account, "rich" is the one

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<sup>1</sup>G. Campbell Morgan, The Parables and Metaphors of Our Lord (hereinafter referred to as Parables and Metaphors; New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1943), p. 222.

<sup>2</sup>Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon, p. 679.

thing identifying this unnamed fellow.<sup>1</sup> Is a rich man condemned because he is wealthy? Is nothing said about this man's spiritual condition?

One solution is to consider the rich man's attitude and lack of kindness towards Lazarus (verses 20-21) as proof of his wickedness. Then his sin would not be the fact that he possessed wealth, or how he got the wealth, but the fact that one in need lay unrelieved at his door while he lived in selfish luxury.<sup>2</sup>

Another possible solution to the problem is to recognize the Lord's silence concerning the rich man's spiritual state:

The Lord leaves untouched some deep and interesting matters. . . . It is not said that the rich man was irreligious and impious, but only that he was callous. Does this alone assure so severe a punishment? The Speaker left His hearers to solve such problems by the Scriptures, as can be done. He was too skillful a Teacher to weaken the appeal and warning by diverting the minds of hearers to but subordinate topics.<sup>3</sup>

A third solution to this problem is much more satisfactory. The Lord, rather than being silent on the issue, allows the rich man's words in the last part of the passage to indicate his spiritual condition. He requests that someone be sent to warn his brothers, to

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<sup>1</sup>The rich man is often called "Dives," the Latin name for a man of wealth. According to H.J. Cadbury, "A Proper Name for Dives (Lexical Notes on Luke-Acts VI)," Journal of Biblical Literature, 81:IV (December, 1962), pp. 399-402, one ancient manuscript does give the rich man a name. The Bodomer Papyrus of Luke (P75), which is the earliest Lukan manuscript, gives "Nebes" as the name of the rich man. He gives other names for the rich man in Christian tradition as Ninevis, Phinehas, and Amonophis.

<sup>2</sup>Charles R. Eerdman, The Gospel of Luke (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1921), p. 150.

<sup>3</sup>G.H. Lang, The Parabolic Teaching of Scripture (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955), p. 267.

"testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment" (verse 28). The rich man insists as well that "if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent" (verse 30). The natural conclusion is that the rich man had not repented and therefore realized full well why he was in Hades. His luxurious, selfish use of wealth is only an outward evidence of his inner spiritual poverty and need of repentance. For "as the poverty of Lazarus was not his righteousness, so the riches of the Rich Man were not his sin."<sup>1</sup> Luxurious selfishness, an evidence of the rich man's internal problem, is used as an appropriate illustration of the Pharisees' outward covetousness (verse 14) and hypocrisy (verse 15).

### His clothing

The Lord described the rich man as being "clothed in purple and fine linen" (verse 19). The word for "clothed," *ἐνεδύσκετο* (imperfect middle indicative) indicates that this was his habitual attire; he characteristically dressed this way. The middle voice carries the meaning of putting (clothes) on oneself.<sup>2</sup> The rich man habitually fixed himself up in affluent attire (not just on special occasions).

What did he wear? "Purple" was a costly dye made from the purple color found in a vein around the neck of a species of shellfish.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Brownlow North, The Rich Man and Lazarus (3rd ed.; London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 214.

<sup>3</sup>Vincent, Word Studies, p. 201. This dye was permanent and is probably that "scarlet" referred to in Isaiah 1:18.

Since so much labor was involved in extracting the dye, only the rich and royalty could afford the resulting garments.<sup>1</sup> It became such a mark of distinction to wear a costly robe of purple that in ancient Sumerian civilization the lower class was forbidden "on pain of punishment" to wear it.<sup>2</sup> In Revelation 17:4 and 18:12 the word is used to picture the wealth of the harlot and of economic Babylon. However, it is going too far to say that the purple clothing of the rich man represented kingship.<sup>3</sup> Because kings were wealthy, extravagant purple clothing (and the color purple itself) became associated with kingship (cf. Mark 15:17,20).

The rich man also wore *βύσσον*, a linen "very costly, delicate, soft, white, and also of a golden color."<sup>4</sup> This linen was sometimes dyed purple or crimson<sup>5</sup> and was associated with the very wealthy. Pliny tells of kinds of this linen, which grew along the Nile, that could be exchanged for their weight in gold.<sup>6</sup> Also a robe of fine linen is said to have been worth six times its weight in

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<sup>1</sup>Merrill F. Unger, Unger's Bible Dictionary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), p. 904.

<sup>2</sup>Merrill C. Tenney, ed., "Purple," The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), p. 700.

<sup>3</sup>Many errors in allegorizing this passage stem from the assumption that purple here represents royalty.

<sup>4</sup>Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 106.

<sup>5</sup>Archibald Thomas Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, Vol. II (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), p. 144.

<sup>6</sup>H. Louis Baugher, Annotations on the Gospel According to Luke (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1896), p. 308.

gold.<sup>1</sup> The only other New Testament usage of *Βύσσον* is Revelation 18:12 where wealth is also being described. The rich man, then, was lavishly and expensively clothed.

#### His sumptuous fare

The rich man not only decked himself out in lavish apparel, but he "fared sumptuously every day" (verse 19). The word "fared" (*Εὐφραϊνόμενος*) as a passive participle means to be glad, enjoy oneself, or rejoice. This interesting word can mean to rejoice for a good or bad reason. It appears in places such as Luke 12:19: "eat, drink, and be merry," and Revelation 11:10 where those on earth will make merry when God's two witnesses are slain. This expression appears also in Revelation 12:12, for example, where Satan has been cast out and the reaction is "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens."

The rich man's festive lifestyle is further described by the adverb *λαμπρῶς* (sumptuously). The corresponding adjective means shining, brilliant, gorgeous, bright.<sup>2</sup> It is used to describe an angel's "bright clothing" in Acts 10:30, the "goodly" or "gay" clothing of the rich in James 2:2,3, and the "bright and morning star" of Revelation 22:16.

The rich man dressed and lived in this bright and splendid fashion *καθ' ἡμέραν*, "daily."<sup>3</sup> This understanding of the

<sup>1</sup>Morgan, Parables and Metaphors, p. 224.

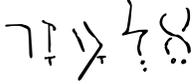
<sup>2</sup>Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 371.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 278.

rich man's habitual extravagant life is important background for an understanding of his utter destitution in Hades. There, after the "great reversal" (where his life situation and priorities are "greatly reversed"), the poor rich man gains a true perspective of life.

### The Beggar at His Gate

#### His name

Just as there was "a certain rich man," there was "a certain beggar named Lazarus" in the account which the Lord told. The name Lazarus is apparently the same as , a common name meaning "whom God helps."<sup>1</sup> The term "lazar" has passed into many languages and means "a person afflicted with a repulsive disease, especially a leper" (Webster). Trench notes:

It is a striking evidence of the deep impression which this parable [Trench has assumed the account to be a parable] has made on the mind of Christendom, that the term lazar should have passed into so many languages as it has, losing altogether its signification as a proper name.<sup>2</sup>

The question arises as to why the Lord gave Lazarus a name. Possibly everyone knew the prominent rich man and it was not necessary to mention his name. This little detail which the Lord gives is a reminder that the Lord knows His own and calls them by name (2 Tim. 2:19; Jn. 10:14).

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<sup>1</sup>Vincent, Word Studies, p. 221.

<sup>2</sup>Richard Chenevix Trench, Notes on the Parables of Our Lord (hereinafter referred to as Parables; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1948), p. 208, note.

### His condition

Lazarus is further described as a *πτωχός*, a "poor man" (NASV). The word *πτωχός* is a general word, covering many levels of want. The word is used in reference to contributions for the poor saints (Rom. 15:26) and the poor and wretched state of the Laodicean church (Rev. 3:17). It is also used in the beatitudes (Lk. 6:20), and in other places where the meaning is "those in need." Only in Luke 16:20,22 is *πτωχός* translated to be a "beggar." It is thus correct to consider Lazarus a "poor man" rather than necessarily a "beggar."

While this word does convey the needy state of Lazarus, the further description shows his utter destitution. He was laid, *ἐβέβλητο*, a word meaning in the passive voice "to lie sick abed, be prostrated by sickness."<sup>1</sup> Lazarus lay at the *πυλῶνα*, the porch or gateway of the rich man's house. This porch was often found at the entrance of temples or palaces and indicates (at the very least) that the rich man's house was a fancy place.

Lazarus was also *εἰλκωμένος*, "covered with sores."<sup>2</sup> Probably no one wanted to touch or help Lazarus because of his miserable condition. The only medical dressing which he received came from the dogs who licked (*ἐπέλειχον*, indicating durative action in its imperfect tense) his sores (verse 21).

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<sup>1</sup>Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 93.

<sup>2</sup>Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon, p. 251. This word is used by Galen, Hippocrates, and other medical writers but is found only here in the New Testament.

Furthermore, Lazarus pathetically desires (ἐπιθυμῶν) "to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table" (verse 21). The word ἐπιθυμῶν (present tense) indicates a constant state of hunger and means "to keep the *θυρός* turned upon a thing . . . to have a desire for, to lust after, to covet."<sup>1</sup> Lazarus desires to be fed, the passive form *χορτασθῆναι* meaning to "eat one's fill, be satisfied."<sup>2</sup> The fact that Lazarus could be full and satisfied from the crumbs<sup>3</sup> of the rich man's table "throws light upon the utter waste that went on at the table of the latter. The crumbs that fell would provide no small meal."<sup>4</sup> These crumbs may have been the pieces of bread which were used by the guests and then thrown into the streets.<sup>5</sup> The falling crumbs could have resulted from the reclining manner in which people ate. While there was an abundance which should have been shared with Lazarus, he was left hungry and suffering.

The rich man, then, is a fitting reminder to the listening Pharisees of their covetous and selfish living. He lived in fantastic luxury in life, dressed in very expensive clothing of purple and fine

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<sup>1</sup>Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 238.

<sup>2</sup>Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon, p. 892.

<sup>3</sup>A textual variant is found here. Probably the critical text, carrying a "B" rating, is right: τῶν πιπτόντων, or "the falling things." Metzger suggests the more picturesque expression τῶν ψιχίων (τῶν πιπτόντων) was introduced from Matthew 15:27 by copyists. Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), p. 166.

<sup>4</sup>Vine, Expository Dictionary, p. 88.

<sup>5</sup>G.H.P. Thompson, The Gospel According to Luke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 215.

linen, and habitually made merry in a bright and splendid fashion. His luxury is accented by the stark contrast of Lazarus lying on his front porch covered with sores. Only the dogs take an interest in the utter destitution of this suffering man. However, the situation abruptly changes when scene two opens. The rich man in death is a different subject altogether.

The Rich Man in Death: Luke 16:22

"And (δέ) it came to pass, that the beggar died . . . (δέ) the rich man died also." Death is no respecter of persons: the rich and poor alike will die. The Lord, however, gives an interesting perspective on these two deaths (verse 22).

A Contrast: The Beggar Dies

Angelic care

"It came to pass" (ἔγένητο) is an aorist form, followed by the infinitive ἀποθάνειν ("to die"). This infinitive following emphasizes "the actual occurrence of the action denoted by the verb"<sup>1</sup>-- i.e. his death was a fact.

Lazarus not only died an actual death, but also was "carried by the angels." The word "carried," ἀνεβέχθη is from ἀποφέρω and means simply to carry away. In Revelation 17:3,21 an angel is said to have carried away John in the Spirit. The only other two New Testament uses of the word refer to a carrying from one place to another

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<sup>1</sup>Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon, p. 158.

(Mk. 15:1 and 1 Cor. 16:3). On the basis of this passage in Luke 16, angels are said to "conduct the blessed dead into heaven."<sup>1</sup>

#### Abraham's bosom

The picture of Lazarus at his death is indeed a beautiful one. He is given an angelic escort from his solitary life of suffering at the rich man's gate to the comforting bosom of Abraham.

What is meant by "Abraham's bosom?" Bosom, *κόλπον*, is used in various ways in extrabiblical sources and in the Old and New Testaments. In extrabiblical usage, *κόλπον* could refer to the mother's womb, or "the fold or swell formed by a loose garment, especially as it fell over the girdle." This fold was sometimes used as a pocket for carrying things<sup>2</sup> (cf. Prov. 17:23). *κόλπον* was also used of a sepulchre (2-1 B.C.) and could refer to the "bosom" of Mother Earth.<sup>3</sup> Extrabiblical uses of *κόλπον*, then, carry the sense of closeness, examples being the womb of a mother or the fold of cloth on the body.

Old Testament occurrences of this word concern (1) taking a child into the bosom and nursing it (Ruth 4:16; 1 Ki. 17:19; Num. 11:12); (2) conjugal love (Gen. 16:5; Dt. 13:6; 28:54,56; 2 Sam. 12:8); (3) a place of hiding money (Prov. 17:23); and (4) the Lord carrying the lambs in His Bosom (Isa. 40:11). The bosom seems to be a place of refuge, comfort, and safety.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon (Oxford: University Press, 1855), pp. 755-56.

<sup>3</sup>James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament (hereinafter referred to as The Vocabulary; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1930), p. 353.

In the New Testament, *κόλπον* usually means the chest, breast, or bosom. Figuratively, "being in someone's bosom denotes the closest communion"<sup>1</sup> or an honored position.<sup>2</sup> John 1:18, where the only begotten Son is said to be "in the bosom of the Father," and John 13:23, where John "was leaning on Jesus' bosom" both illustrate the closeness and fellowship conveyed by *κόλπον*.<sup>3</sup>

The term "Abraham's bosom" is also found in the writings of Josephus:

. . . the countenance of the fathers and of the just, which they see, always smiles upon them, while they wait for that rest and eternal new life in heaven, which is to succeed this region. This place we call "The Bosom of Abraham."<sup>4</sup>

Another interesting reference is found in the "Treatise of the Maccabees" ( § 13). Seven brothers are encouraging each other to endure death and torments for their religion, "for then Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will after our death receive us into their bosoms." The allusion seems to be to meals of the ancients where each person's head rested on the bosom of the one next to him.<sup>5</sup>

These references seem to indicate that "Abraham's bosom" was

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<sup>1</sup>Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon, p. 443.

<sup>2</sup>Vine, Expository Dictionary, p. 171.

<sup>3</sup>The other two New Testament uses of *κόλπον* are Luke 6:38 and Acts 27:39 (KJV "creek").

<sup>4</sup>Josephus: Complete Works, trans. by William Whiston (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1960), p. 637.

<sup>5</sup>John Parkhurst, Hugh James Rose, and J.R. Major, A Greek and English Lexicon to the New Testament, rev. by G.R. Major (London: Gilbert & Rivington, Printers, 1851), p. 331. According to the editors of this book, the "Treatise of the Maccabees" is ascribed to Josephus but was probably written by a Jew.

a "Jewish designation for heaven."<sup>1</sup> It was considered the highest bliss to be honored with Abraham's intimacy, since he was the father and founder of the Hebrew nation.<sup>2</sup>

From a study of this passage one may conclude that

- 1) Christ considered Abraham's bosom an actual place;
- 2) Lazarus was taken there by angels at his death;
- 3) It is a place of comfort; Abraham is there;
- 4) A great gulf separates this place from the place where the wicked are in torment; and
- 5) It is impossible for a person to go from Abraham's bosom to the place of torment in Hades.

#### The Rich Man Also Dies

With poignant simplicity the Lord reports the rich man's final scene on the stage of life: he "died, and was buried" (verse 22). His burial was "apparently in contrast with the angelic visitation to the beggar."<sup>3</sup> (There is no record as to what happened to Lazarus' body.)

The word for burial is *ἐτάφη*, the usual word for interment (Mt. 8:21,22; 14:12; Lk. 9:59, etc.). While no details are given, the rich man's burial was no doubt "with pomp corresponding to his social

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<sup>1</sup>R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel (hereinafter referred to as St. Luke's Gospel; Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1946), p. 849.

<sup>2</sup>Merrill C. Tenney, ed., "Abraham's Bosom," The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, II, 222.

status."<sup>1</sup> The rich man is apparently a richly-celebrated person until the moment of his death. His body and memory receive respect and "honor" until his death (in stark contrast to Lazarus). But his spiritual destitution is a grim reminder to the self-exalting Pharisees who loved to make a luxurious show in this life. The rich man's spiritual poverty becomes increasingly evident in the description of the rich man in Hades.

#### The Rich Man in Hades (Luke 16:23-31)

Hades will be studied in light of what can be known about it (1) from this passage, and (2) from a lexical study. Much controversy has surrounded the implications of Luke 16:19-31 concerning Hades. However, what the Lord says about Hades in this account is simple and clear. An examination of the usual and natural meaning of the words is not difficult. The immediate discussion is an explanation of what can and cannot be known about Hades from this passage.

What the Lord means when He speaks of Hades here is developed into a complex problem by some interpreters. In a later section of the paper the question of interpretation will be studied.

#### Environment of Hades described (verses 23ff.)

##### Sensual perception

Several things about Hades can be clearly seen from this passage. First of all, the rich man perceived with his senses. He

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<sup>1</sup>Lang, The Parabolic Teaching of Scripture, p. 263.

"lift up his eyes" and saw Abraham (verse 23). The expression  
 ἔπιδραῖς τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ("lift up his eyes") does not imply that  
 Abraham was up and the rich man was down. It is a semitism for  
 אָרָא וַיִּשְׂא אֵינָיו<sup>1</sup> and means "to look up."<sup>2</sup>

When he lifts up his eyes, or looks, "now no longer blinded by  
 a veil of flesh,"<sup>3</sup> the rich man sees (ὁρᾷ) Abraham and Lazarus. In  
 verse 22 the words "died" and "was buried" are both in the aorist  
 tense. Now, the rich man is seeing. The present tense of ὁρᾷ is  
 sometimes called the "historic present," where a "past event is viewed  
 with the vividness of a present occurrence."<sup>4</sup> The rich man, then, had  
 eyes and could see about him.

The rich man could not only see, but could hear and speak  
 (verses 24-31). He "cried"-- φωνήσας meaning to "call or cry out,  
 speak loudly"<sup>5</sup> (verse 24). He spoke to Abraham and responded when  
 Abraham spoke to him. Without question, the rich man is depicted as  
 having some kind of body: a body with at least eyes (he sees), ears  
 (he hears), a mouth (he speaks), and a tongue.

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<sup>1</sup>See K. Grobel, ". . . Whose Name was Neves," New Testament Studies, 10:3 (April, 1964), p. 379. In 2 Samuel 18:24 the watchman on a roof is said to look down into the plain. However the expression he "lifted up his eyes" is still used.

<sup>2</sup>Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 228.

<sup>3</sup>North, The Rich Man and Lazarus, p. 59.

<sup>4</sup>H.E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (Toronto: The MacMillan Company, 1955), p. 185.

<sup>5</sup>Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon, p. 878.

### Torments

Not only did the rich man have conscious sensual perception but he was "in torments" (verses 23-25). Thus, Hades must be a place of severe discomfort. Two interesting words are translated "torment" in this passage. The first is *βάρανος*, found in verses 23 and 28. *βάρανος* was originally used of the touchstone<sup>1</sup> with which gold and other metals were tested. It was also used of "the rack or instrument of torture by which one is forced to divulge the truth" and came to mean "torture, torment, acute pains."<sup>2</sup>

*βάρανος* is used in several interesting ways in extrabiblical literature. In the Apocrypha is found the statement, "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment (*βάρανος*) shall touch them" (Wisdom of Solomon 3:1). *βάρανος* is used "of slaves after the murder of their master" in 6 B.C. In a legal code (3 B.C.) it is used of judges who are given the power to use "torture" if necessary in having slaves give evidence of their involvement in crime.<sup>3</sup> This word was also used of the persecutions of Christians.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A touchstone, according to Webster, is the rock (like flint) on which metals were rubbed to determine their purity. Hence, a touchstone became a test or criteria for determining the genuineness of something.

<sup>2</sup>Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 96. For a discussion of the development of the word from the idea of touchstone to the testing of men idea see Johannes Schneider, "*βάρανος*," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 1, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p. 562.

<sup>3</sup>Moulton and Milligan, The Vocabulary, p. 104.

<sup>4</sup>Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon, p. 134.

The corresponding verb *βαρύνω* means "to question by applying torture to, to torture, rack."<sup>1</sup> It is used in such cases as physical sickness (Mt. 8:6), and of demons speaking to Christ (e.g. Mark 5:7, "torment me not"). The word can refer to the soul's internal anguish, as it does in 2 Peter 2:8 where Lot's righteous soul was vexed ( *ἐβαρύνισεν* ) from day to day from being in wicked Sodom.<sup>2</sup>

*Βάσανος*, then, is used primarily of physical but also of mental torment. The rich man was "being ( *ὑπάρχων* : 'existing') in torments" (pl.). He pleads for mercy and begs for relief (verse 24). In verse 28 the rich man describes Hades as a "place of torment ( *Βασάνου* )," and desires that his five brothers be spared.

The second word translated "torment" is *ὀδυνᾶσαι*, meaning in the middle and passive voice "to suffer pain, be in anguish, be greatly distressed."<sup>3</sup> A verb form of *ὀδυνάω* is used four times in the New Testament: in Luke 2:48 the Lord's parents sought him "sorrowing;" in Acts 20:38 the Ephesians elders were "sorrowing" because they would not see Paul's face again; and in verses 24 and 25 of this passage the rich man is tormented. The noun form is used in Romans 9:2 of the sorrow Paul had in his heart for the Jews who would not believe, and in 1 Timothy 6:10 of the sorrow brought about by the

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<sup>1</sup>Liddell and Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, p. 240.

<sup>2</sup>Other uses of this word can be found in Matthew 8:29; 14:24 ("tossed"); Mark 6:48 ("toiling"); Revelation 9:5; 11:10; 12:2 ("pained"); 14:10; and 20:10.

<sup>3</sup>Vine, Expository Dictionary, p. 58.

love of money. The word *ὄδυνάωμαι*, then, further describes the rich man's anguish. While his intense mental pain could be in view, the mention of fire indicates some kind of bodily pain as well.

The rich man says he is "tormented in this flame" (verse 24). "Flame" (*φλογί*) is used in Acts 7:30 in reference to the burning bush which Moses saw, and also in 2 Thessalonians 1:8: "In flaming fire taking vengeance."<sup>1</sup> While something more than the natural kind of fire may have been involved, the bush appeared to be on fire to Moses, and God's vengeance is pictured as a fiery judgment. Luke sixteen does not mention the word fire but the most natural understanding of "flame" is that fire must be present. The rich man describes his environment in the best and most accurate way he knows.

The rich man's torment, then, can best be thought of as both bodily and mental pain. Both words, *βάσανος* and *ὄδυνάωμαι*, mean intense anguish. *βάσανος* means primarily physical suffering but is also used of great vexation of soul. *ὄδυνάωμαι* means deep sorrow in its other New Testament uses. However, it is often considered to be descriptive of physical pain, and is here used with the word "flame."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This word is also found in Hebrews 1:7 and in Revelation 1:14; 2:18; and 19:12.

<sup>2</sup>Hauck, in fact, defines *ὄδυνάωμαι* as "the physical torments of the damned" (verse 24) as well as "the spiritual torture of remorse" (verse 25). F. Hauck, "*ὄδύνη, ὄδυνάωμαι*," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. V, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 115.

The rich man's tormented state in Hades can be further understood by a study of his plea for relief and mercy (verse 24). Evidently a Jew, the rich man refers to his earthly ethnic relationship to Abraham and uses a term of closeness and endearment when he addresses him as "Father Abraham." The rich man's plea is not for justice, not "Be fair to me." Rather, he recognizes that God has been fair and he begs for *ἐλέησον*, for mercy. *Ἐλέησον* indicates a feeling of "sympathy with the misery of another, and especially sympathy manifested in act."<sup>1</sup> The torment in Hades, then, is a suffering which would cry out for mercy and pity.

The rich man, however, wants Abraham to act as well as to feel, and to send him some "first aid." Before, this man of luxury could not have cared less about Lazarus. Now, he needs him desperately. "Send Lazarus," the rich man pleads, "that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue" (verse 24).

*βάψη*, "to dip," is related to the word "baptize" and is used of the dipping of the sop (Jn. 13:26; cf. Rev. 19:13). The rich man asks that merely the tip, "the topmost point, the extremity" (*ἄκρον*)<sup>2</sup> of Lazarus' finger be dipped in. A cup of water is almost the least he could have given Lazarus at his gate. Now, he begs for what would go on a finger's tip. Before, he would not lift a finger to help Lazarus. Now, he craves the slightest bit of Lazarus' help.

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<sup>1</sup>Vine, Expository Dictionary, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup>Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 24. Another interesting use of this word is found in Hebrews 11:21: "The top of his staff."

"Where was the water?" some have asked. "How can there be physical elements in a nonphysical world?" However, if the interpreter assumes the account is a parable, and that the water is not literal, there is no basis for knowing what the water might represent. As Strong said so well: "The figurative language of Scripture is a miniature representation of what cannot be fully described in words. The symbol is a symbol; yet it is less, not greater, than the thing symbolized."<sup>1</sup> The rich man needed real relief--a clear indication that the torment was real as well.

Furthermore, this distressed man asked that Lazarus come to "cool" (*καταψύχω*: "cool off, refresh"<sup>2</sup>) his tongue. His tongue must have been parched and dry, and must have been a real tongue. A symbolic tongue would not have needed to be refreshed. These brief details given by the Lord serve to accent the agonizing nature of the rich man's suffering and torment.

#### Abraham and Lazarus in view

Not only the rich man's sensual perception and his tormented state, but a third fact about Hades emerges from this account: the rich man could see "Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom" (verse 23). The term *μακρόθεν* means from far away, from a distance.<sup>3</sup> It is used in such cases as Peter's following the Lord "afar off"

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<sup>1</sup> Augustus Hopkins Strong, Systematic Theology (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1907), p. 1035.

<sup>2</sup> Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon, p. 422.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 489.

(Mt. 26:58), the feeding of people who came "from afar" (Mk. 8:3), and the women watching the cross "afar off" (Mt. 27:55). Abraham and his bosom, then, are close enough for the rich man to see and close enough for him to converse with Abraham, yet still at a distance. More information is not given.

### A great gulf present

A fourth evident fact about Hades is the presence of a great gulf (verse 26). In verse 25, Abraham has explained that the reversal of circumstances is only fair and just. He says to the rich man, "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." Abraham goes on to say, however, that "beside all this," he cannot grant the rich man's request for mercy. Present circumstances--the "great gulf fixed"--are a final and unchangeable fact.

This chasm, *χάσμα*, can be understood as "an intervening space."<sup>1</sup> It is used of an open mouth and of the sky and sea--"any wide space or expanse."<sup>2</sup> Used only here in the New Testament, *χάσμα* occurs once in the Septuagint in 2 Samuel 18:17. Absalom was cast into "a great pit," identified as "a yawning abyss, or precipice, with a deep pit at the bottom into which the body was cast."<sup>3</sup>

This large (*μέγα*) chasm was fixed: *ἑστῆρικται*. This

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<sup>1</sup>Alexander Souter, A Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1916), p. 282.

<sup>2</sup>Vine, Expository Dictionary, p. 186.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

verb is in the perfect tense (a great gulf was fixed and continues to be fixed) and means "to make stable, place firmly, set fast, fix."<sup>1</sup> The same word is used in Luke 9:51 where the Lord "stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

This firmly placed chasm results (ὅπως: "so that," "to the end that") in a fact: those who would pass from Abraham's bosom to the rich man cannot, and those who would pass from the rich man's abode to Abraham cannot (verse 26).

Two words are translated "pass" in this verse. The first is the word διαβῆναι ("they which would pass") meaning "to pass through, cross over."<sup>2</sup> In its two other New Testament uses, διαβαίνω refers to an actual physical passage.<sup>3</sup> The second word used is διαπερῶναι ("neither can they pass to us"), meaning "to pass over, cross over."<sup>4</sup> This word also is used of physical movement from one place to another (Mt. 9:1; Acts 21:2). Those, then, who would cross over from Abraham's bosom to Hades have not the power (μη δύνανται). It is an impossibility, as well, for those to pass from Hades: ἐκείθεν, "from there." Every New Testament usage of ἐκείθεν speaks of a literal place (e.g. Acts 13:4: "from thence they sailed to Cyprus"). The thrust of this statement in verse 26 is clear: An impassable and

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<sup>1</sup>Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 588.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>3</sup>In Acts 16:9 the word is used as "Come over into Macedonia" and in Hebrews 11:29: "By faith they passed through the Red Sea."

<sup>4</sup>Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 140.

unchangeable gulf separates Abraham (and Lazarus) and the rich man.

The preceding discussion has dealt with four aspects of Hades which can be learned from Luke 16:19-31: (1) sensual perception occurs; (2) torment is present; (3) Abraham and Lazarus could be seen; and (4) an impassable chasm is there.

There are many things which cannot be known about Hades from this passage. Two examples are the closeness of the rich man to Abraham's bosom and the nature of the rich man's body. (1) The proximity of the rich man to Abraham's bosom is not given. Hades, where the rich man is, may include Abraham's bosom; the Lord simply does not say.

(2) The nature of the rich man's body is not explained. Interpreters have gone to all ends in an attempt to account for a body in a spirit world. Lenski, for example, insists that as a disembodied spirit, Abraham does not have a bosom and the rich man does not have eyes or a tongue:

To argue from this language that these spirits have some kind of an impalpable body is unwarranted. To go farther and to say that God creates these bodies for men as they die one by one, or that these bodies now await us is to increase the confusion of the thought.<sup>1</sup>

Any attempt to fully explain the nature of an intermediate body is confusing. The best solution is to accept the Lord's statement that there is some kind of intermediate body and to realize that He has given the essential information. The hearers would no doubt have understood Christ to be speaking of some kind of actual bodies.

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<sup>1</sup>R.C.H. Lenski, St. Luke's Gospel, p. 850.

This section, then, has dealt with aspects of Hades which can (and cannot) be known from a study of Luke 16:23 and the following verses.

#### Some lexical observations

From the use of Hades in this passage and elsewhere in the New Testament,<sup>1</sup> lexicographers have given some general definitions. The word ἡδης may have been derived from ἀ , "not," and ἰδεῖν , "to see," and therefore would have come from the idea of "the unseen world,"<sup>2</sup> "the invisible land."<sup>3</sup> Other definitions sometimes given include "the underworld as the place of the dead;"<sup>4</sup> "the netherworld, the grave, death;"<sup>5</sup> and "the common receptacle of disembodied spirits."<sup>6</sup> The background of the word ἡδης is of minor importance in comparison to its use and meaning in Scripture.

While Hades is often given a general meaning in light of its overall Scriptural usage, in this passage a more specific meaning is

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<sup>1</sup>A study of ἡδης in relation to its usage in parallel passages is beyond the scope of this paper. Rather than even generalize about its meaning elsewhere, the writer has attempted to show what this passage, Luke 16:19-31, contributes to a correct understanding of ἡδης. For other uses of ἡδης see Matthew 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; Acts 2:27; 1 Corinthians 15:55; Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13.

<sup>2</sup>Vincent, Word Studies, p. 58.

<sup>3</sup>Hermann Cremer, Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek (hereinafter referred to as Biblico-Theological Lexicon), trans. by William Urwick (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895), p. 67.

<sup>4</sup>Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup>Liddell and Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup>Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 11.

clear. "Ἅδης is a "place," Τόπον (verse 28). (This same word is used in John 14:3 where the Lord says He goes to prepare a "place" for believers.) Furthermore, it is a place where conscious perception occurs (verses 23 ff.); a place of torment (verses 23-25; 28); a place somewhat close to Abraham's bosom (verse 23); and a place containing a great chasm or gulf (verse 26). The following chapter, a hermeneutical study, will deal with literal versus non-literal interpretations of Hades in this passage.

#### Abraham Entreated

This chapter on "the rich man in Hades" began with a general consideration of Hades. A second aspect of the study will consider the rich man's entreaties to Abraham (verses 24-31).

#### Request for relief (verse 24)

The rich man's first request can be seen as a selfish wish--he is concerned about himself foremost (verse 24).<sup>1</sup> Before death, he could not have cared less about Lazarus. Now, he needs him desperately. The rich man seems to think that Lazarus "should be placed at his beck and call in 'hades,' which, in a sense, would be a continuation of their relative positions on earth."<sup>2</sup> The rich man realizes his need and begs Abraham to send Lazarus for aid in getting the tiniest bit of water to cool his tongue. This entreaty reflects the dire suffering

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<sup>1</sup>For a more detailed discussion of this verse see supra., pp. 27ff.

<sup>2</sup>Francis D. Nichol, ed., The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. V (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1956), p. 833.

of the rich man, and also a misunderstanding of his complete separation from Abraham's bosom.

Situation fair and final (verses 25-26)

Abraham's answer is twofold: the reversal of their circumstances is just and fair, and secondly, a fixed gulf makes the granting of the request impossible.

Abraham explains the reversal of circumstances in tenderness, addressing the rich man as "son," *τέκνον*.<sup>1</sup> "Remember," Abraham says--a solemn indication that those in Hades will have the distressing capacity to recall what has happened on earth. Abraham goes on to tell him what he is to remember: "that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things" (*τὰ ἀγαθὰ σου*), i.e. "comforts and delights which thy wealth procured for thee in abundance."<sup>2</sup> These good things were probably plenty of food, clothes, and material possessions in general.

Lazarus, on the other hand, received evil things--*τὰ κακά* (not his evil things). These misfortunes were probably pain, discomfort, hunger, sickness, and rejection by men.

But "now," Abraham says, for "now" (*νῦν*) is the important consideration. Not the earthy "now," which is for a moment, but the never-ending "now" of eternity. Now, Lazarus is comforted (*παρὰ καλῆς τῆς*), he is consoled, encouraged, strengthened by conso-

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<sup>1</sup>Compared with *υἱός*, ("son"), *τέκνον* (often "child") gives prominence to the fact of birth, whereas *υἱός* "stresses the dignity and character of the relationship." Vine, Expository Dictionary, p. 187. It would be logical for Abraham to say *τέκνον* in light of his ethnic (but only his ethnic) relationship to the rich man.

<sup>2</sup>Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 3.

lation<sup>1</sup> (cf. Mt. 5:4,5; Acts 20:12; 2 Cor. 1:4; 7:13). Likewise (ὁμοίως, "in the same way") the rich man is tormented (ὀδυνάω). Justice is evident; Abraham goes on to explain that it is final as well.

The inescapable finality of the state of the rich man is further accented by the existence of the great gulf (verse 26). Before, Lazarus was outside and unhelped. Now, the rich man is left out and no help is possible. Although "to you" (πρὸς ὑμᾶς) is plural in verse 26, and the rich man is technically with others, one senses that this man feels very much alone. Apparently, his brothers' coming would not be a comfort or help to him; rather, he is anxious that they be kept from a like fate (verses 27-31).

Request for Spectacular evangelism (verses 27-28)

When the rich man realizes that any personal help from Lazarus is out of the question, he twice begs Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers (verses 27-28; 30). This poor rich man has accepted the fact of the gulf. Therefore, the logical step is to warn those on earth who still have a chance. He still addresses Abraham as "father," wishing<sup>2</sup> that Lazarus be sent to his father's house (verse 27).

An interesting question at this point is why the rich man did not ask God directly for this request. While the rich man's access to Abraham is not explained, apparently he has no access to God. He is

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 482-83.

<sup>2</sup>"I pray" in verse 27 is ἑρωτᾶ , meaning to "ask, i.e. to request, entreat, beg, beseech." Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 252. This word is used in Luke 7:3 where the centurion sent elders "beseeching" Christ to come and heal his servant.

separated from God and has totally rejected the Scriptures. He wants Lazarus "sent" (πέμψας) [God, "sending His Own Son" (Rom. 8:3) had done the ultimate "sending."] Those who would reject the Word and Way of the Everloving and All-just God, would likewise be left without help or hope.

The rich man is anxious that Lazarus be sent to his father's "house" (οἶκον), verse 27. An οἶκος may be a dwelling place, "an inhabited house," or even "all the persons forming one family."<sup>1</sup> The rich man is concerned about his whole family--which is good--but he has waited until too late.

In verse 28 the rich man explains more specifically what he wants Lazarus to do. He says that he presently has (ἔχω: present tense) five brothers--a suggestion that earthly relationships are still recognized in the after life. The rich man wants Lazarus to "testify" to his brothers. The word used here is διαμαρτύρηται (an intensive form of μαρτύρομαι), meaning "to testify or protest solemnly"<sup>2</sup> or "to bear full and complete witness."<sup>3</sup> The sense here is to give a solemn warning. The rich man does not want the message watered down, abbreviated, or softened. He does not want his brothers to "come" (the same general word is used here for "come" as in verse 21: "the dogs

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<sup>1</sup>Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 441.

<sup>2</sup>Vine, Expository Dictionary, p. 120.

<sup>3</sup>Ethelbert W. Bullinger, A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament (9th ed.; London: Samuel Bagster and Sons Limited, 1969), p. 894.

came and licked his sores). His desire is that his brothers may never enter the place of torment where he himself is.

Existing revelation enough (verse 29)

Abraham's answer is conclusive: They have (<sup>11</sup>ἔχω: are now having) Moses and the prophets--all the revelation they need. A figure of speech, metonymy, is used here where "Moses" stands for "the writings of Moses" and "the prophets" stands for "the writings of the prophets." Here, the Lord strikes at one of the main problems of the Pharisees: their failure to take God's Word as they should (cf. verses 17,18).

Christ Himself is unmistakably portrayed in these Old Testament writings. Luke 24:27, for example, says "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He (Christ) expounded . . . in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself." Because the rich man's brothers (and the Pharisees) rejected these Old Testament Scriptures, they rejected the Christ foretold in them. These brothers did not need more revelation; rather, they needed to "hear" the revelation available to them. Obviously, more is involved here than hearing with the ears (more than the mere comprehension in Lk. 16:14 where the Pharisees "heard" what the Lord was saying).

The word for "hear," ἀκούσάτωσαν often means "to attend to," "to understand, perceive the sense of what is said," to "comprehend."<sup>1</sup> Had the rich man's five brothers comprehended or attended

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<sup>1</sup>Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon, pp. 22-23.

to the writings of the Old Testament Scriptures, they would have feared God.

Request for evangelism  
repeated (verse 30)

The rich man strongly objects to Abraham's statement that the writings of Moses and the prophets are enough (verse 30). He sees the final means of persuasion as being not the message or God behind it, but rather the medium. If a prophet is persuasive or spectacular enough, for example, he will be successful. The rich man asks again that one (probably Lazarus) be sent, one who would go "unto them from the dead" (ἀπὸ νεκρῶν). He wants evangelism done his way (he is sure it will work) rather than God's way.

He is certain, then, that if a person is resurrected and returned his brothers will repent. In the New Testament *μετανοέω* ("to repent") always "involves a change for the better, an amendment, and always, except in Luke 17:3,4, of repentance from sin."<sup>1</sup> Apparently, then, the reason the formerly rich man was in Hades was that he had not repented. He understands that if his brothers repent, they will not come to this place.

Unbelief untouched by spectacular  
evidences (verse 31)

Abraham's statement in verse 31 is conclusive: "If (εἰ) they hear not Moses and the prophets" (a first class conditional sentence and therefore assumed to be true), "neither will they be

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<sup>1</sup>Vine, Expository Dictionary, p. 280.

persuaded, though (ἔάν) one rose from the dead" (a third class conditional sentence: one may or may not rise from the dead). The rich man's five brothers, as Jews, had Moses and the prophets--all the revelation they needed. Yet, they were "not persuaded" (οὐδ' πεισθίζονται). This word is from πείθω and means "to yield assent to, to follow, obey, or trust in," probably even "to commit or surrender oneself."<sup>1</sup> This meaning of "obey" is found in an A.D. 192 fragment reading "being obedient to my native city."<sup>2</sup> Not even the most outstanding evidence would bring about a change in these blinded to existing revelation.

It is interesting that the rich man, in verse 30, speaks of one going from the dead as ἀπό, or "from the outside." Abraham, however, speaks of one rising from the dead as ἐκ νεκρῶν, "from within," "out of." Vincent observes that "Abraham's preposition (ἐκ, 'out of') implies a more complete identification with the dead than Dives' ἀπό 'from.' A rising 'from among' the dead was more than a messenger going 'from' the dead."<sup>3</sup>

The statement of verse 31 relates to the Pharisees in a striking way. Both Christ and the other Lazarus mentioned in the New Testament (Jn. 11,12) did arise from the dead. The Pharisees had before them the Lord Jesus Christ, Who was the fulfillment of the

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<sup>1</sup> Cremer, Biblio-Theological Lexicon, pp. 474-75.

<sup>2</sup> Moulton and Milligan, The Vocabulary, p. 501.

<sup>3</sup> Vincent, Word Studies, p. 202.

writings of Moses and the prophets. They, the Pharisees, stood as living examples of unbelief.

#### Summary

This chapter has been a study of the poor rich man--in life, in death, and in Hades. The rich man in life is insensitive--selfish, extravagant, and oblivious to Lazarus lying helpless at his gate. This description is uncomfortably personal for the money-loving and self-exalting Pharisees (verses 14-15).

The rich man in death is impoverished--suddenly his earthly "good things" have vanished and his spiritual destitution becomes obvious. His abrupt end to worldly comfort is shown in stark contrast to Lazarus' beginning of consolation and companionship. This formerly destitute man is carried by the angels to the comfort of Abraham's bosom. Again, the Pharisees are shown a true perspective of their passing love of self and love of money. The rich man died; these Pharisees would also face the great and solemn reality of death.

The formerly rich man of Hades is in agony and entreating. The information given about Hades shows that (1) sensual perception occurs there; (2) the unrepentant rich man was tormented; (3) Abraham and Lazarus could be seen; and (4) an impassable chasm exists, dividing those in torments from those in Abraham's bosom.

Many things are not explained about Hades, such as its closeness to Abraham's bosom and the nature of the rich man's body. From the passage it is evident that Hades is near Abraham's bosom. Whether

or not Hades includes Abraham's bosom is not explicitly stated in this passage.

Luke 16:19-31 does not say that Hades has two compartments. It does say, however, that Hades is a place, that Abraham's bosom is a place, and that they are at least near enough for some communication to have taken place. If there are not two compartments in Hades itself, Hades and Abraham's bosom are pictured as being in the same general region and separated by an unbridgeable gulf. This passage, therefore, allows for a two-compartment understanding of Hades but is not conclusive in itself. While other passages seem to indicate that a two-compartment understanding is correct, a study of parallel teaching on Hades is beyond the scope of this paper.

The study of the rich man's conversation with Abraham shows that he desires mercy, his condition cannot be changed, and no spectacular appearances to his brothers on earth will bring them to repentance. If they ignore the plain teachings of Scripture, they are without help. These sobering words were directed to the Pharisees. They professed an unbending adherence to God's Word, which was correct (verse 17), but practiced a lifestyle contrary to the teachings of Scripture.

This chapter, then, has been an exegetical study of Luke 16: 19-31, of the rich man in life, the rich man in death, and the rich man in Hades. This graphic account of the rich man was given as a warning to the covetous, self-loving, and spiritually-blind Pharisees. The following chapter deals with the basis of interpreting this passage in light of what the Lord says in the account and what others say about it.