

# THE UNJUST STEWARD AND THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

BIBLE TEXT : Luke 16 :1-31

LESSON 179 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10).

## BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

### Luke 16:1-31

<sup>1</sup> And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

<sup>2</sup> And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

<sup>3</sup> Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

<sup>4</sup> I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

<sup>5</sup> So he called every one of his lord's debtors *unto him*, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

<sup>6</sup> And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

<sup>7</sup> Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

<sup>8</sup> And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

<sup>9</sup> And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

<sup>10</sup> He that is faithful in that which

## BIBLE REFERENCES:

### I The Unjust Steward

1 The steward was called to give an account of his stewardship, Luke 16:1, 2;

#### **Ecclesiastes 12:14**

<sup>14</sup> For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil.

2 The steward conceived a plan whereby he would not have to dig or beg when he lost his position, Luke 16:3, 4;

#### **John 12:36**

<sup>36</sup> While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

#### **Ephesians 5:8**

<sup>8</sup> For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

3 He put his plan into action to purchase favor by lowering the bills of his master's debtors, Luke 16:5-7

4 The steward was commended by his lord because of his prudence in doing something about his plight, Luke 16:8

5 The children of this world are wiser than the children of light, Luke 16:8, 9

6 He that is faithful in small things will be faithful in greater things, Luke 16:10-13;

#### **Luke 19:17**

<sup>17</sup> And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

#### **Matthew 25:21**

<sup>21</sup> His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

### II The Pharisees' Derision

1 The covetous Pharisees derided Jesus, but He told them that God knew their hearts, Luke 16:14, 15;

#### **Matthew 23:14**

<sup>14</sup> Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

2 The Law and the prophets were until John, but not one tittle of the Law will fail, Luke 16:16, 17;

#### **Matthew 11:12-13**

<sup>12</sup> And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

<sup>13</sup> For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

3 Jesus denounced the sin of adultery, Luke 16:18;

#### **Matthew 5:32**

<sup>32</sup> But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

#### **Matthew 19:9**

<sup>9</sup> And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another,

is least is faithful also in much:  
and he that is unjust in the least is  
unjust also in much.

<sup>11</sup> If therefore ye have not been  
faithful in the unrighteous  
mammon, who will commit to  
your trust the true *riches*?

<sup>12</sup> And if ye have not been faithful  
in that which is another man's,  
who shall give you that which is  
your own?

<sup>13</sup> No servant can serve two  
masters: for either he will hate  
the one, and love the other; or  
else he will hold to the one, and  
despise the other. Ye cannot serve  
God and mammon.

<sup>14</sup> And the Pharisees also, who  
were covetous, heard all these  
things: and they derided him.

<sup>15</sup> And he said unto them, Ye are  
they which justify yourselves  
before men; but God knoweth  
your hearts: for that which is  
highly esteemed among men is  
abomination in the sight of God.

<sup>16</sup> The law and the prophets *were*  
until John: since that time the  
kingdom of God is preached, and  
every man presseth into it.

<sup>17</sup> And it is easier for heaven and  
earth to pass, than one tittle of  
the law to fail.

<sup>18</sup> Whosoever putteth away his  
wife, and marrieth another,  
committeth adultery: and  
whosoever marrieth her that is  
put away from *her* husband  
committeth adultery.

<sup>19</sup> There was a certain rich man,  
which was clothed in purple and  
fine linen, and fared sumptuously  
every day:

<sup>20</sup> And there was a certain beggar  
named Lazarus, which was laid at  
his gate, full of sores,

<sup>21</sup> And desiring to be fed with the  
crumbs which fell from the rich  
man's table: moreover the dogs  
came and licked his sores.

committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is  
put away doth commit adultery.

#### **Mark 10:11**

<sup>11</sup> And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his  
wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against  
her.

#### **1 Corinthians 7:10-11**

<sup>10</sup> And unto the married I command, *yet* not I, but the  
Lord, Let not the wife depart from *her* husband:

<sup>11</sup> But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be  
reconciled to *her* husband: and let not the husband put  
away *his* wife.

### **III The Rich Man and Lazarus**

1 A rich man fared sumptuously and a beggar lay at his gate,  
Luke 16:19-21;

#### **Job 2:7**

<sup>7</sup> So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and  
smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto  
his crown.

#### **1 Peter 4:3-4**

<sup>3</sup> For the time past of *our* life may suffice us to have  
wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in  
lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings,  
banquetings, and abominable idolatries:

<sup>4</sup> Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with *them*  
to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of *you*:

2 The beggar died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's  
bosom; the rich man died and was buried, Luke 16:22;

#### **Ecclesiastes 9:2**

<sup>2</sup> All *things* come alike to all: *there is* one event to the  
righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the  
clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to  
him that sacrificeth not: as *is* the good, so *is* the sinner;  
and he that sweareth, as *he* that feareth an oath.

#### **1 Peter 4:17**

<sup>17</sup> For the time *is* come that judgment must begin at the  
house of God: and if *it* first *begin* at us, what shall the  
end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God?

3 The rich man went to hell, a place of torment; Lazarus went  
to a place of bliss, Luke 16:23

4 Being tormented in the flame, the rich man begged for  
solace and relief, Luke 16:24;

#### **Mark 9:44**

<sup>44</sup> Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not  
quenched.

5 Abraham told him to remember his and Lazarus' lifetime;  
now Lazarus is comforted and the rich man is tormented,  
Luke 16:25;

#### **Job 21:13**

<sup>13</sup> They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go  
down to the grave.

#### **Isaiah 66:24**

<sup>24</sup> And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of  
the men that have transgressed against me: for their  
worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched;  
and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

### **IV No Passing from Heaven to Hell**

1 No one can pass from one place to the other, Luke 16:26

2 The rich man begged Abraham to warn his five brothers, Luke  
16:27, 28

3 "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them,"  
Luke 16:29;

#### **Isaiah 8:20**

<sup>20</sup> To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not  
according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in

<sup>22</sup> And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

<sup>23</sup> And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

<sup>24</sup> And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

<sup>25</sup> But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

<sup>26</sup> And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence.

<sup>27</sup> Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

<sup>28</sup> For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

<sup>29</sup> Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

<sup>30</sup> And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

<sup>31</sup> And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

them.

**John 5:39**

<sup>39</sup> Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

**John 5:45**

<sup>45</sup> Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is *one* that accuseth you, *even* Moses, in whom ye trust.

**Acts 15:21**

<sup>21</sup> For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

4 The rich man insisted that a miracle would cause them to repent, Luke 16:30

5 "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead," Luke 16:31;

**John 12:9-11**

<sup>9</sup> Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.

<sup>10</sup> But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death;

<sup>11</sup> Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

### **NOTES:**

We have an account of a man who was steward for a very wealthy and influential man. This steward was accused of wasting his master's goods, and when he heard that he was going to be called to give an account of his stewardship, he began at once to scheme how he could avoid being thrown out into the world without a place to stay. He was ashamed to beg and too proud to dig for a living.

Arriving at a plan, he calls his lord's debtors and asks how much each one owed his master. It was the custom in those days for the debtor to write the contract and the steward to sign it. The steward always had absolute and complete control of the goods of his master.

One debtor said he owed the master an hundred measures of oil. The steward told him to sit down quickly and write fifty, thereby decreasing the indebtedness. Another said he owed an hundred measures of wheat. The steward told him to make it fourscore. The lord of the steward commended the steward for acting wisely in his own behalf. The steward had, on his own principles, made a very prudent provision for his support.

### **The Children of Light**

The Jews were the children of light, and they designated the Gentiles as the children of this world or the children of darkness. Jesus brings out the fact that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. This unjust steward used the means at hand to provide for his future welfare. The Gospel of God was brought to the Jews. They had a chance to look forward and provide for their eternal welfare; but, unlike the steward in this parable, they were slow to use the means God had provided for them.

The unjust steward was not commended for his false dealing. He was commended because when he saw the plight in which he was soon to be placed he did something about it. When people see the awful plight sin has wrought in their lives, and the eternal consequences of continuing in that way, if they would act as the children of light should act and use the means God has provided for their deliverance, they would be laying in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come.

"Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness." Jesus told the disciples here that they, as children of light, were not to seclude themselves from the world but to show love toward the people that they might have an opportunity to tell them the story of Jesus and by that means win them to Jesus. They were to go to all the world and preach the Gospel (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8).

### **The Unrighteous Mammon**

Money is called the unrighteous mammon here. We need money to supply our daily needs, but the love of it and the unwise struggle for it, referred to here, is that which can find a place in our hearts and cause us to lose our souls. It is the love of money that is the root of all evil (**1 Timothy 6:10** <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows).

The Pharisees were covetous at heart, and the Lord was driving these truths home to them. They derided Jesus, refusing to accept the message He gave them, but He said unto them, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."

### **Faithfulness**

Jesus makes it very plain that if we are faithful in the little things, we will be faithful in greater things; if we are unjust in the least, we will be unjust in much. In the parable of the talents He said to the one who had correctly used his talents: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21). We may not be able to do great things, but we can faithfully do the little things for Jesus. He said the giver of a cup of cold water would not lose his reward, if he gave it in Jesus' name and for His glory and honor.

### **The Law and the Prophets**

Jesus said the Law and the Prophets were until John. The Law had served its purpose and Jesus had come to fulfill it. The Law was a type and shadow of good things to come, and John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ, who introduced the Gospel dispensation. Christ came preaching repentance. Repentance is godly sorrow for sin, and is the principal requirement for entrance into the Kingdom. Godly sorrow for sin will bring a cry from the heart for mercy, and mercy brings justification. Justification gives the sinner a new heart, and he is made a new creature in Christ Jesus. Those in the dispensation of the Law received the same salvation as we, through faith in the Blood which was, for them, yet to be shed.

### **Divorce**

Jesus said divorce was tolerated under the Law of Moses, because of the hardness of their hearts, "but from the beginning it was not so" (Matthew 19:8). If a person is divorced and remarried while the first companion is living, that person is living in adultery and under the condemnation of God, because he is living contrary to the teachings of His Word. (See also the Apostolic Faith tract on Divorce and Remarriage - or download it from <http://www.apostolicfaith.org.uk/index.php?m=tr> or copy the url below onto your browser -

<http://www.apostolicfaith.org.uk/uploads/tracts/pdf/The%20Bible%20on%20Marriage.pdf>

## Beyond the Grave

In this next scriptural incident the Lord draws aside the curtain that obscures our view and gives us a glimpse of the life after death. The final scene of the incident is a rich man in hell being tormented in the eternal flames and a poor man being comforted in Abraham's bosom — the place of bliss to which all the righteous go. The rich man, in this life, had dressed in gorgeous robes and fared sumptuously every day. The poor man was laid at the rich man's gate that he might receive a few crumbs of bread from the rich man's table. Jesus tells us that the name of the poor man was Lazarus. For reasons of His own, Jesus did not tell us the name of the rich man, but we do know that he lived solely for himself while in this world, not caring for the poor beggar who lay at his gate. He did not exhibit the spirit of even a nominal Christian, but only a selfish heart and a self-centered life.

The rich man and Lazarus both died. No doubt the rich man was buried in the pomp and glory of this world, but Lazarus had a far more wonderful funeral procession. Unseen by mortal man, the angels carried the soul of Lazarus to Abraham's bosom, the place where the departed saints await the great Resurrection morning.

## Conversation Between Abraham and the Rich Man

The rich man begged Abraham to send Lazarus to dip his finger in water and come and touch his parched tongue, for he was tormented in the flames. When on earth he would have recoiled at the mere thought of the diseased and despised Lazarus even touching his garments, much less his tongue. What a change! Abraham told him there is a great gulf between them, and that it is fixed. No one can pass from one place to the other.

Then the rich man begged for Abraham to send Lazarus back to this earth to warn his five "brethren" lest they would also come to that place of torment. But he became interested in the salvation of his household at too late an hour. Far too many people are interested after it is too late! Abraham told him that they have Moses and the prophets, the infallible Word of God, let them hear them. But the rich man insisted that if one rose from the dead they would believe. Abraham, knowing better the inclinations of the unregenerated heart than the condemned rich man did, told him that if they would not hear Moses and the prophets they would not believe though one rose from the dead. How true are those words! Jesus rose from the dead — and yet many people do not believe. What a warning we have in this lesson, because Jesus gives us here a glimpse of hell, shows us that those who go there are tormented, and shows us their attitude toward God's plan even while in eternal torment! This man, as eager as he seemed to be to have his people saved from, a fate like his, still wanted a way for their salvation different from God's way (**John 10:1-18** <sup>1</sup> Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup> But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. <sup>4</sup> And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. <sup>6</sup> This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. <sup>7</sup> Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. <sup>9</sup> I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he

shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. <sup>10</sup> The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly. <sup>11</sup> I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. <sup>13</sup> The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. <sup>14</sup> I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine. <sup>15</sup> As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup> And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd. <sup>17</sup> Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. <sup>18</sup> No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father).

### Realities of Hell

Hell was real to the rich man. He still possessed the faculties that he had while here on earth. He knew Abraham and he knew Lazarus. He could see them. He could talk, for we see that he talked with Abraham. He could remember, for we read that he remembered his five brethren, back in his father's house, who were traveling the same road he had traveled — the broad road to destruction. He could feel, for he was tormented in those flames. He was conscious of everything. Abraham told him to remember that he had good things in his lifetime and Lazarus evil things. Now he was tormented and Lazarus was comforted. There is no soul-sleeping in hell or in Heaven. People are conscious in both places and are in full possession of all their faculties. Lazarus was not saved because he was poor, but because he believed in God. The rich man was not lost because he was rich, although Jesus said: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" (Mark 10:23) ; but he was lost because he failed to believe and obey the Word of God.

It is not true that some people are born to be saved and others born to be lost, as certain people teach. "Whosoever will" may come and "take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). "Choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24:15). "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." There is a real hell to shun and a real Heaven to gain.

This little insight that Jesus gives us into hell and its terrors should make us flee to the Blood for our eternal salvation, in order that we may escape that awful place of torment, and live forever with the Lord. We should put our fingers in our ears and run for the wicket gate — which we may envision as being the entrance into salvation — as Christian of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress did, crying "Eternal life! Eternal life!" Time is only a short span, but eternity is forever and ever.

### QUESTIONS

- 1 What means did the steward use to gain favor with his lord's debtors?
- 2 Why did his lord commend him for what he did?
- 3 Why did Jesus consider the children of this world wiser than the children of light?
- 4 Why cannot We serve two masters?
- 5 After their death what separated the rich man and Lazarus?
- 6 Could the rich man see after his death? Could he talk?
- 7 Why did the rich man want to send Lazarus back to this earth?
- 8 Did anyone ever rise from the dead and talk to people on this, earth?
- 9 What does the Bible say is the root of all evil?