

# Abraham's Bosom

Luke 16:22 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; 23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 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. 25 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.

In Luke 16:19-31, Jesus spoke a short story, an anecdote, concerning two men, a rich man and Lazarus. There have been many books written regarding the interpretation of this short story. These verses have been used to establish false doctrines such as the eternal punishment and purgatory, a stage of purification where certain sinners are purged of their iniquities after which they may enter into heaven. This is not the subject of this pamphlet. The purpose of this pamphlet is to provide the reader with some study suggestions not usually thought through which the reader hopefully may gain a more complete understanding of the short story.

## Bible Interpretation

Isaiah 28:1 For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. 12 To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. 13 But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon

precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

Psalms 49:3 My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. 4 I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my dark saying upon the harp. See also Hosea 12:10

William Miller's Rules of Interpretation #4. To understand doctrine, bring all the Scriptures together on the subject you wish to know; then let every word have its proper influence, and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in an error. Isa. 28:7-29; 35:8; Prov. 19:27

The methodology described in this rule is very important to gaining a complete and accurate understanding of the Bible. Isaiah 28:10 specifically states that precept must be upon precept. God communicates precepts, principles to His people. Next, is the phrase "here a little, there a little." God's word is extremely broad. Hence, multiple accounts are required to express a more complete understanding. "Line upon Line" means we must compare scripture with scripture, as William Miller describes in rule 4. Finally we know that the Bible is in harmony with itself, does not contradict itself.

## The Narrative Begins

Luke 1:1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,

Many acknowledge the gospel of Luke as a chronology of Jesus' life on this earth. The gospel of Luke, serves as a guide from which may identify the same account in other

scripture to apply the interpretation method of "here a little, there a little." We begin our analysis of short story of the Rich man and Lazarus by tracing back in the previous verses, to determine where does this discourse begin from which this short story is a part? The answer is it starts in Luke 14:15

Luke 14:15 And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

When one ponders this event Jesus foretells, the question naturally arises in one's mind, "what must I do to be at that dinner" or stated differently "what must I do to be saved?" The rest of the discourse addresses this question. In response, Jesus spoke the parable of the great supper. Then next:

Luke 14:25 And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them,

Jesus begins a discourse on the prerequisites to serve Him. The discourse is very short, distinct, and yet very detailed. It is clear that His mind is focused on clarifying those whom would be accounted worthy to "eat bread in the kingdom of God." Many people had a wrong idea of the moral standard required to be one whom is worthy to "eat bread in the kingdom of God." Jesus made the answer to this question very clear in this short discourse: "**a total surrender to Him, forsaking all.**"

## The Audience

Luke 15:1 Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. 2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man

receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. 3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

Jesus continues his discourse in parables. Notice the audience whom Jesus is speaking to. In verse 14:25, the audience is described as “great multitudes.” Luke 15:1-2, the audience is describes as “publicans and sinners”, and “Pharisees and scribes”. Then Luke 15:3 states “And he spake this parable unto them.” The audience is important in understanding the context of the scripture.

Luke 16:14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.

Luke 17:1 Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! Luke 17:5 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

There are two more similar changes in whom Jesus is addressing. The first in Luke 17:1 where Jesus is addressing all His disciples Then in Luke 17:5 Jesus is only addressing the 12 apostles. True, the same people made up the audience as a whole throughout the discourse, which began in Luke 14:15 to Luke 17:10. True, all the people heard the same words spoken by Jesus. Further, just because Jesus might have addressed only certain groups of the audience at one moment, does not mean that the words spoken to the specific groups does not apply to all people in the audience.

## Applying Miller’s Rules

So far we have laid a ground work from which we make some brief comments which

may enhance our understanding of “The rich man and Lazarus.” Luke Chapter 14 ends:

Luke.14:34 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? 35 It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

This statement could be very depressing, what hope then is there for man. Chapter 15:1 is the next verse which immediately follows. Chapter 15 is dedicated solely to redemption. The three positions which a person can be in: in the world outside the church, in the church, and the final one whom had been in the church, but left. We call this one the prodigal son. The chapter describes in the parables God’s desire of salvation for all men.

The 16<sup>th</sup> chapter begins with the account of the unjust steward. He who is faithful in the least will be faithful also in much. No one can serve two masters. You cannot serve God and mammon. Remember here the audience, the Jews; especially the Pharisees and scribes.

Notice in Luke 16:14 the change in whom Jesus is addressing this to; “And the Pharisees also, who were covetous.” Ponder heavily Jesus’s response:

15 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.

This scripture is in parallel to the account in the Matt. 15:1-20, the debate over tradition of men. Jesus declared the immutability and eternity of God’s law. Then just before the short story begins Jesus states whosoever puts away his wife and marries another committeth

adultery. We have referenced the account of the rich man as a short story. The reason for this is because when Jesus is address the Pharisees, He is no longer speaking to them in parables. Jesus is stating their wretched, apostate condition to them in unmistakable language; “meeting them on their ground.”

## The Crux of the Matter

Then after the short story, Jesus addresses his disciples: about the consequences which result by whom the offenses come. If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, and if he repenteth, forgive him. The discourse ends with Jesus speaking to the apostles only. The twelve asked Jesus “to increase our faith.” Jesus responded

**Luke 17:10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.**

We have seen that the verses from Luke 14:15 to Luke 17:10 are one discourse. The whole discourse shows that in this life men decide their eternal destiny. The discourse draws a sharp contrast between those who have totally surrendered their will to God, and those whom have not yet. Yet, those whom have not surrendered are not without hope. God has clearly made known to every man His requirements of salvation.

Sister White has written an excellent treatise on this short story in the Book *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 261-272 of. The conclusion of the whole matter is in Luke 17:10, **Humility**. God be with you toward this end.