

PARABLE OR LITERAL HISTORY

11-24-05

The story of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke 16:19-31, is the subject of this study. For years I passed it by thinking of it as a historical record of actual events. Yet I was uneasy and not at all comfortable that I understood it correctly. In 2001 my attention was drawn there for a closer study. I was studying Ephesians 4:7-11 where the Lord Jesus was said to "lead captivity captive." A commentary explained this passage suggesting that the Lord Jesus, between His death and resurrection, had visited the infernal realm of the dead in order to free the captives from the good part of hell [hades], which at that time was supposedly known as Abraham's Bosom. The dead people in that realm were also portrayed in Luke 16, taken literally. The "good people" among the dead were thought to reside in Abraham's Bosom and were said to be prisoners until Christ secured their release "during His visit." The commentary further suggested that these newly released captives were transported with Christ to Paradise and connected them with the Lord's promise to the thief on the cross, "to day thou shalt be with Me in paradise" (Lk 23:43). This assumed visit to this "realm of the dead" by the spirit of Christ before His resurrection sounded somewhat "strained." Reference was also made to Luke 16 for further description of that place before Christ died.

A closer study of Ephesians 4 and Paul's quotation there of Psalm 68:18 brought the help I needed. Evidently Paul was describing a parallel between Christ freeing the members of the body of Christ from captivity to sin (and Satan) and Moses freeing the captive Israelites from the bondage of Pharaoh in Egypt. In Psalm 68 David described Moses going up to the heights of Mt. Sinai where he would meet God and receive "gifts for men," and then take the law of God to bless the nation Israel, the newly freed captives. In a parallel manner the ascended Lord Jesus Christ, having first descended to "the lower parts of the earth," (that is, the earth where we live. See Psalm 138:13-15 where the "lower parts of the earth" are right where we live, not a subterranean realm.) Contrast the earth with the heights of heaven to which the Lord finally ascended. Seeing it was the risen, ascended and glorified Lord that received gifts from God to give to members of the church which is His body, Paul continued, "And He gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints to the work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:11-12). Understanding Ephesians 4 in this light severs any imagined scriptural link with Luke 16, Abraham's Bosom, or anything else described there.

What about Luke 16? If it has no connection with Ephesians 4, what does it mean? Did the Lord intend that we should understand that He was drawing aside the curtain and giving a new revelation of "life beyond the grave"? And, if so, is it scriptural to assume that He would give such a "new revelation" about the "afterlife" or Abraham's Bosom to the scribes and Pharisees, **men who were "deriding Him"**? Was that His intent with this story?

THE SETTING

Luke 15:1 begins the Lord's address to an audience of "publicans and sinners who drew near to hear Him," and also scribes and Pharisees who "murmured, saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.'" To this divided audience the Lord began with the parable of the 100 sheep, how the shepherd left the 99 in the wilderness to seek to find one lost sheep, and the rejoicing that ensued upon finding it. He followed with a second parable (although not specifically called a parable) about a woman with 10 coins, laboring diligently to find the lost one and the joy of finally finding it. His third parable (but not called a parable) was of "the prodigal son," his profligate life and his final restoration to his father. In all three parables the Lord pictured the self righteous Pharisees who felt no need of repentance and the publicans and sinners who could well recognize themselves pictured by the lost sheep, the lost coin, and prodigal son. All were once lost but now found, once dead but now alive.

The Lord continued in Luke 16 with a fourth parable about an Unjust Steward. Since this parable was directed to His disciples (not the publicans and sinners) it was followed with an explanation and application. He concluded that "No man can serve two masters... Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16:13). Although addressed to His disciples, these remarks made in the hearing of the scribes and Pharisees were more than the scribes and Pharisees could bear. They reached their limit, and "derided Him" (Luke 16:14).

The Lord answered them, "Ye are they who justify yourselves before men..." which had been their attitude so far while listening to all four parables. He continued, "God knows your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men [their show of piety and traditions] is abomination in the sight of God" [because they should have been repenting]. The "law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presses into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. Whosoever puts away his wife and marries another commits adultery, and whosoever marries her that is put away from her husband commits adultery" (Luke 16:16-17).

These verses demand an explanation lest their meaning be missed in this setting. "The law and the prophets were until John..." But how had the scribes and Pharisees responded to this ministry? Mark 7:8-9 says it best, "For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men... Full well [with full knowledge] ye reject the commandment of God that ye may keep your own tradition," which traditions were contrary to the scriptures!

Since that time John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus had come preaching the kingdom. How had the Pharisees reacted to them? Luke wrote, "the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presses into it." The meaning of this passage is much clearer in it's "sister verse," Matthew 11:12, "from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force." It seems that one kind of violence meets another, but the meaning is still not fully clear until we add Matthew 23:13 where Christ said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." Thus every man who "presses into" the kingdom of God must "press to overcome" (or get past) the opposition of the wicked scribes and Pharisees. They not only opposed but blocked others from the preaching of John and Christ.

The Lord did not expand His teaching on the subject about divorce and remarriage but simply cited this issue as another example where their traditions had "made the word of God of no effect." To THIS GROUP the Lord continued His discourse of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Luke 16:19-31.

CHRIST'S MINISTRY OF PARABLES, THEIR PLACE AND PURPOSE?

Parables are found only in certain places of the Lord's ministry. They are not included in the "Sermon on the Mount." We see no parables in Matthew until after "the Pharisees went out and held a council against Him, how they might destroy Him" (12:14)! His ministry of "mighty works" had been done and had met rejection as typified by Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. These favored cities had been "exalted unto heaven" by the miracles and ministry of Christ, but under the leadership of the scribes and Pharisees they would "be brought down to hell (hades, the grave)." They had found fault with the ministry of John and also the Lord. Finally their leaders planned to kill the Lord. From THAT POINT ON His ministry changed drastically. Matthew 13 begins His ministry of parables, and no group was more surprised than His disciples. They had never heard anything like this before. Amazed they asked, "Why speakest Thou to them in parables?" (13:10). Let us give close attention to His answer.

As a child in Sunday School I was told that the Lord's parables were earthly stories with heavenly meanings. Perhaps they thought it appropriate for a child. But even now men who should know better tell us that the Lord used parables to "illustrate His meanings," etc. While these answers might be well intentioned, we must read the Lord's answer.

He answered the disciples, "Because it is given unto YOU [His disciples] to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to THEM (the unbelieving multitude) it is NOT given. For whosoever hath (understanding), to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance (in understanding); but whosoever has not (understanding), from him shall be taken away that he has. **Therefore speak I unto them (the unbelieving multitude) in parables** because seeing they see not (they do not want to see) and hearing they hear not (because they do not want to hear), neither do they understand" (13:11-13).

PARABLES - TO HIDE OR TO HELP?

Every parable requires an interpretation and the observant reader will notice that the Lord interpreted parables to His disciples, but intentionally withheld His interpretations from the multitudes who had rejected Him. Therefore parables were not intended to illustrate or explain but to **HIDE** the Lord's meaning. Some have mistakenly concluded because of the Lord's omission of an interpretation following Luke 16:31 that the passage could not be a parable. Such a conclusion misses the fact that He intentionally did not explain His parables to scribes or Pharisees – here or anywhere else in the Gospels!

In Matthew we find His statement: "All these things spake Jesus **unto the multitude in parables**; and **without a parable spake He not unto them**: in order that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet... I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 13:34-35). The Lord's parables still **hid** these "things which have been kept secret" EXCEPT to those the Lord chose to explain His hidden meanings!

Based on the Lord's teaching about His use of parables, should we expect that in Luke 16 (or anywhere else) the Lord would give a new and special revelation, as some have suggested, to scribes and Pharisees as they "derided Him" in Luke 16? Do we not have solid biblical statements clearly expressing that Christ would speak **ONLY in parables** to this part of His audience, for "**without a parable spake He not unto them**" (Matt. 13:34). In this light let us examine OUR TEXT IN QUESTION, Luke 16:19-31 KJV.

19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: 20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 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 [hades] 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. 26 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. 27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: 28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. 29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. 30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. 31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

Some say IT CANNOT BE A PARABLE because the story contains proper names: Lazarus, Abraham, and Moses. This idea is probably drawn from a note in the center margin of the Original Scofield Reference Bible, page 1008: "*In no parable is an individual named.*" (italics his). This comment contradicts Scofield's own heading at Ezekiel 23, "The parable of Aholah and Aholibah." See his page 864. He listed the proper names of two ladies and yet called the passage a parable. Therefore the use of proper names in Luke 16 in

no way prohibits the story being a parable. Whether this idea was Scofield's or suggested by someone else we do not know. It cannot be a deciding factor for a Berean in this case.

Another writer suggested that Luke 16:19-31 "does not have the **normal form of a parable** with an introduction, analogy story, and application. Instead it is in the form of the narration of a real-life story given by the purpose of illustration." This idea misses the Lord's stated purpose of His parables and further presumes that parables have a "**normal form.**" We have shown the Lord's stated reason for His refusal to explain His hidden meaning to scorners.

Without continuing to address the many and varied suggestions why this passage must be taken as a literal, historical, true-to-life-and-death story, let us be Bereans and examine the text itself and the context of the passage in question, Luke 16:19-31!

OBSERVATIONS ON THE PASSAGE

We are told only the skimpiest information about both men, the rich man and Lazarus. Their situations in life are briefly described. We are given no clue as to what either man believed (or did not believe) or anything they had done (or failed to do), good or bad. We do not know if the rich man came into his wealth by hard work and honest means or if he was a crook. We do not know of the reasons for Lazarus' pitiful condition, whether his poverty was due to great misfortune or if he were lazy and lacked industry.

Next we are told that both died and it would seem their deaths were close together in time. We read that angels carried Lazarus to Abraham's bosom and that the rich man was simply buried. Immediately they are both seemingly alive and responding to vastly different surroundings! The rich man's situation and plight is described first:

"...in hell [hades] he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 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." (16:23-24)

The rich man is described with functional body parts: eyes, mouth and apparently all the rest. His senses are sight, feeling, touch, and we presume taste and smell. With all these "operational faculties," some conclude that he must have an "intermediate body" (their term) which functions much the same as the body before death. If this gives a true picture of dead persons, does it not seem that death was simply a change of address and situation? He is conscious of his situation and explains his misery to Father Abraham. Although Lazarus does not participate in the conversation of the rich man with Abraham, it is clear that he is supposed to have an equally functional body and personal awareness of his surroundings and capacity to enjoy his blissful situation. He just seems to have a change of address and situation!

If the story were intended to be literal, are we also to believe that the wicked dead experience great thirst and that physical water has the potential to relieve such thirst? Is the rich man's call for water due to his intense feelings of heat and pain? Might even Lazarus appreciate a nice cool drink once in a while? Is water, as we know it, available to the dead? If so, can they really drink it?

If taken literally this story of the rich man and Lazarus gives information found nowhere else in the Bible. Where in scripture do we find that the dead are not only aware of their own situation but are equally aware of the plight of those in "the other place"? Where do we find the dead, like this rich man, expressing awareness and concern for relatives in the earth-life situation he had just left? Such awareness by "dead people" is shocking. Nowhere in the Bible can such things be found concerning the dead. Furthermore there seem to be two locations separated by an impassable gulf and yet in some way connected so there can be

sight and conversations between the residents. Where else in the Bible do we read about such activities of the dead?

THEIR CONVERSATIONS

We are told of only one conversation between a rich man and Abraham. But if these dead are conscious and aware of their own surroundings, should not the same be true for others? Might we not also assume that the rich man could just as easily have talked to Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Noah, and myriads of the faithful who ought to be sharing the same place with Abraham? With all these candidates for conversation, would it be too much to think that such an after-death scene would be a "bee hive" of activity and lively conversation? Why should these dead "hope for the resurrection" when they have so much already?

Father Abraham explained that the rich man's request for relief could not be granted nor could there be travel in either direction between these imagined compartments, even if the residents desired to travel. Failing this, the rich man began to think of his brothers back on earth. The last thing he knew about his brothers was that their attitude and situations were much like his had been. But he seems to be current with their situation and aware that they have still had no recent change of heart for the better. Could he really be sure that some touching remark by the preacher at his own funeral might not already have led his brothers to repentance? Do the dead keep up-to-the-minute on the family situations "back on earth"? Is it not questionable to suppose such ideas when no hint of such activities of the dead can be found in the Old Testament?

The rich man pled with Abraham to send Lazarus back from the dead for he was sure that the appearance of the "resurrected beggar" would command his brothers' attention and convince them to make whatever change was necessary to avoid joining the rich man in his misery. Father Abraham explained that they had Moses and the prophets to which they should give heed. But the rich man argued as though he knew better than Abraham what it would take. This drew forth Abraham's second and final reply with great emphasis on Moses and the prophets and the assurance that seeing one raised from the dead would not be the solution. The words of Abraham do not allude to the resurrection of Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha in John 11, but to the resurrection of Christ Himself. How did the Lord's audience respond to that?

THE POINT OF THE STORY

The Lord's point in the story must not be missed. His emphasis on Moses and the prophets did not escape His audience, the scribes and Pharisees, nor should it escape us. These Jewish leaders had paid lip service and gave honor to Moses with their lips, but their heart was far from the Scriptures. **“Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?...thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition”** (Mt. 15:3,6, Mk. 7:3-13). The Lord's point was to emphasize the importance of believing Moses and the prophets, and not their traditions: **traditions which included Abraham's Bosom, angels superintending the dead, and the dead interaction with the living back on earth**, etc. Such notions came from the Greek, Babylonian, and Roman mythologies which had corrupted the Jewish Rabbis! The corrupt writings of Rabbis in the centuries before Christ made it abundantly clear that their traditions were actually esteemed far above the writings of Moses and the prophets. **“God knows your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men (their tradition) is abomination in the sight of God”** (Luke 16:15). When we read the Lord's words against the traditions of the Jews, does the modern Christian have even a foggy notion of just what those traditions were? I certainly did not until I recently read Lightfoot's Works and Edersheim. (Quotations from Josephus and John Lightfoot are in Appendices at the end of this paper.)

FURTHER STUDY

Early in 2004 I shared a 6 page paper describing problems I had encountered with the story of Luke 16:19-31 such as explained above and gave reasons why I did not think the Lord intended His words and this story to be taken literally. I objected to the notion that the Lord Jesus pulled aside the curtain of the true scene after death and revealed to scribes and Pharisees all sorts of new information about the state of the dead and the conditions to be experienced in the imagined "compartments" of hell (hades). (More recently I came to see that Jews in general and the apostles in particular were well aware of the then popular notions about Abraham's Bosom and other such rabbinical traditions.)

I believed the blessings of the rich man in his purple and fine linen pictured the blessings of God on Israel. And the poor beggar, Lazarus, (whose Hebrew name would be Eliezer of Damascus, the name of Abraham's servant in Genesis) pictured the Gentiles who would come into the blessings of God that Israel was on the verge of losing. Rather than restate my paper here, the reader can find it in Appendix 3.

My explanation and interpretation of Luke 16 met with disdain and ridicule by leaders in the Berean Bible Fellowship. They said that my explanation did not even merit consideration as a parable but that my explanation was "extremism," a myth, and branded it "basic fundamental error!" They further identified my teaching as akin to that of the Jehovah's Witnesses. They considered their literal view of the passage to be the only acceptable understanding consistent with the BBF Doctrinal Statement in the paragraph on the State of the Dead and demanded my resignation under threat of excommunication. The rest is history.

Certain "Berean leaders" strenuously protested that they "could not preach the gospel without threatening unbelievers with the fate of the rich man hanging over their head," that is, the agonizing punishment to be immediately experienced upon death, just like the rich man depicted in Luke 16! Does our apostle, Paul, make any such claim? Did Paul ever use any of the Greek words for hell!

THE REST OF THE STORY

Having personally been charged with teaching heresy such as they associate with Jehovah's Witnesses, I felt the need for further investigation. I visited our local Kingdom Hall where I obtained literature that explained Luke 16:19-31 to be a parable. They certainly did not take it literally as did the "Berean leaders." But their explanation resembled mine only in the matter of it being a parable. Even the Witnesses could see it was not intended to be taken as literal history! But that was not all.

I visited the library of Covenant College and Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, and scanned every commentary they had on the Gospel of Luke. Of their 25 books on Luke's gospel, only one by H. A. Ironside suggested the story be taken literally. The other 24 were similar and all 24 understood the Lord was telling a parable. They were equally clear and definite that the story should not be understood literally. So much for my understandings being unique with the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Late in 2004 a brother sent me **THE DEATH OF HIS SAINTS**, written by Fred Bachand, a grace believer now deceased but formerly of Phoenix, AZ. In the article he had much to say about Abraham's Bosom and how many writers of the past equated it with Paradise, even before the cross! He quoted Harper's Bible Dictionary which said Abraham's Bosom was "a figure of speech for paradise," and further that "...it being popularly conceived that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, would be the welcoming committee for the souls of the righteous." Harper also attributed **the origin of**

Abraham's Bosom to IV Maccabees 13:17. Bachand wrote, "Interestingly enough, all the popular conceptions of some form of life or consciousness after, or more accurately, 'during' death, see to be perpetuated in the apocryphal books, but not in the scriptures." What an indictment!

Roman Catholic Bible lists only I & II Maccabees. A search of the Internet found IV Maccabees immediately. These books were written after the close of the Old Testament and never recognized by the Jews nor quoted by any book accepted in the canon of Scripture. Roman Catholics presently include only I & II of the Maccabees among their apocryphal books. IV Maccabees 13 is pasted below for your reference.

IV Maccabees 13

1: Since, then, the seven brothers despised sufferings even unto death, everyone must concede that devout reason is sovereign over the emotions. 2: For if they had been slaves to their emotions and had eaten defiling food, we would say that they had been conquered by these emotions. 3: But in fact it was not so. Instead, by reason, which is praised before God, they prevailed over their emotions. 4: The supremacy of the mind over these cannot be overlooked, for the brothers mastered both emotions and pains. 5: How then can one fail to confess the sovereignty of right reason over emotion in those who were not turned back by fiery agonies? 6: For just as towers jutting out over harbors hold back the threatening waves and make it calm for those who sail into the inner basin, 7: so the seven-towered right reason of the youths, by fortifying the harbor of religion, conquered the tempest of the emotions. 8: For they constituted a holy chorus of religion and encouraged one another, saying, 9: "Brothers, let us die like brothers for the sake of the law; let us imitate the three youths in Assyria who despised the same ordeal of the furnace. 10: Let us not be cowardly in the demonstration of our piety." 11: While one said, "Courage, brother," another said, "Bear up nobly," 12: and another reminded them, "Remember whence you came, and the father by whose hand Isaac would have submitted to being slain for the sake of religion." 13: Each of them and all of them together looking at one another, cheerful and undaunted, said, "Let us with all our hearts consecrate ourselves to God, who gave us our lives, and let us use our bodies as a bulwark for the law. 14: Let us not fear him who thinks he is killing us, 15: for great is the struggle of the soul and the danger of eternal torment lying before those who transgress the commandment of God. 16: Therefore let us put on the full armor of self-control, which is divine reason. 17: **For if we so die, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob will welcome us, and all the fathers will praise us.**"

JOSEPHUS

"The Works of Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews and a History of the Jewish Wars," were brought to my attention since he had an interesting article on HADES. On page 927 I found AN EXTRACT OUT OF JOSEPHUS'S DISCOURSE TO THE GREEKS CONCERNING HADES. Flavius Josephus, was a truly remarkable and brilliant Jewish writer. He was one of very few historians who mentioned New Testament persons John the Baptist, James the Just, and Jesus Christ. He lived from AD 37 to 100. After investigating all the sects of the Jews he became a Pharisee. He could even have been an acquaintance of Saul of Tarsus since both were taught by Gamaliel. Josephus' explanation of HADES was gleaned from the writings and oral traditions of Jewish Rabbis such as are found in their Talmud and perhaps other sources. The reader cannot help but think of Luke 16 while reading Josephus' summary of rabbinic writing **before** the time of Christ. I urge every reader to pause here and give several close, attentive readings of this EXTRACT by Josephus. It is presented in its entirety in Appendix 1. The reader may verify all this by searching the Internet under the name Josephus. Excerpts from Josephus are quoted below and placed along side verses from Luke 16 for comparison. It is stunning!

LUKE 16 VERSES

"it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom

[How striking that both the Lord in Luke 16 and Josephus present Abraham's Bosom and a ministry of angels to the dead. ILB]

"the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell [hades] he lift up his eyes, being in torments... 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

[Both show hades as a place where punishment or reward is applied immediately before judgment corresponding to the life they led. ILB]

"he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom

EXCERPTS FROM JOSEPHUS' HADES

Hades "is allotted as a place of custody for souls, in which angels are appointed as guardians to them, who distribute to them *temporary punishments*, agreeable to every one's behavior and manners...

"there is one descent into this region, at whose *gate* we believe there stands an archangel with an host; which *gate* when those pass through that are conducted down by the angels appointed over souls...,

"the just are guided to the *right hand*, and are led with hymns, sung by the *angels* appointed over that place, unto a region of *light*, in which the just have dwelt from the beginning of the world; not constrained by necessity, but ever enjoying the prospect of the good things they see...

"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*.

"NOW as to Hades, wherein the souls of...the righteous and the unrighteous are detained, it is necessary to speak of it. Hades is a place in the world... a *subterraneous* region, wherein the light of this world does not shine...

"This region is allotted as a place of custody for souls, in which angels are appointed as guardians to them, who distribute to them *temporary punishments*, agreeable to every one's behavior and manners

"...they [the unjust] have a near view of this spectacle, as of a terrible and exceeding great prospect of fire, they are struck with a fearful expectation of a future judgment, and in effect punished thereby: and not only so, but where they see the place [or choir] of *the fathers* and of the just, even hereby are they punished;

"Father Abraham have mercy on me... I am tormented in this flame..."

"Now those angels that are set over these souls drag them into the neighborhood of hell itself; who, when they are hard by it, continually hear the noise of it, and do not stand clear of the hot vapor itself..."

"...send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue... 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."

"...a *chaos* deep and large is fixed between them; insomuch that a just man that hath compassion upon them cannot be admitted, nor can one that is unjust, if he were bold enough to attempt it, pass over it."

These comparisons are but a few samples of the many similarities between the teachings of the Jewish rabbis as summarized by Josephus and the Bible story of the rich man and Lazarus. Remember that Josephus was not a believer in Jesus as the Christ. Every reader is urged to read carefully the entire essay of Josephus several times and compare it with Luke 16.

Everyone admits that nowhere in the rest of the Bible do we find such a description of the dead as here. Therefore to suggest that the Lord was putting His divine stamp of approval on these teachings of rabbinical traditions is unthinkable! These very rabbinical teachings were the target of the Lord's scorn and condemnation.

FURTHER INVESTIGATION

E. W. Bullinger made frequent reference to the WORKS of John Lightfoot in his marginal notes in the Companion Bible. One such reference is in Luke 16. Our quest to find the writings of John Lightfoot at first seemed to be Mission Impossible. To our amazement and delight our local public library finally found them and we were able to check out volumes 11 and 12, the WORKS of JOHN LIGHTFOOT. Our efforts were further rewarded when we found his commentary on the New Testament also republished and available in a four volume set on sale for bargain prices. [CBD has them for \$39.99 + \$5 S & H.] A check of the Internet found the writings of both Josephus and John Lightfoot easy to read, scan, and print out desired portions such as my Appendices.

Bishop John Lightfoot (AD 1602-1675) had read all the writings of the Jewish Rabbis in their original languages and shared his findings. On Luke 16 and HADES it is easy to see where Josephus gleaned his information as to the teachings of the Jewish Rabbis at the time of Christ. In fact, Lightfoot shared so much of the rabbis' comments that the reader can easily share the Lord's dismay and contempt for the perversions of the rabbis at that time. It is hard to believe that the scribes and Pharisees greatly esteemed these rabbinical teachings far above the scriptures as is pointed out by Lightfoot in so many places. Sadly, such was (and is) the case.

Recently I had reason to check Matthew 15 in the passage where the scribes and Pharisees scolded the Lord because His disciples did not follow the traditional requirements in the manner of washing their hands. I could not dream or imagine the excessive attention and the great importance the rabbis

placed upon what seems so trivial a matter! They even had excommunicated some of their own people who had neglected to follow their hand-washing rituals. Lightfoot's findings in the rabbinical inter-testamental writings reveal just how much emphasis the Pharisees placed on the practice! I urge the reader, by whatever means, to buy and read Lightfoot's comments on all sorts of New Testament passages, especially those involving scribes and Pharisees!

Lightfoot's comments on Luke 16:19-31 are copied from the Internet and presented in Appendix 2. The reader will never again wonder why the Jews were so far from and opposed to the mind of God when the Lord came into this world. He will only wonder in amazement why these damnable teachings of the rabbis have not been exposed and presented by every commentary on the Gospel records!

If we think the Greeks held their "wise men" like Plato, Socrates, and the wise men of Ancient Greece in such high esteem, the Jewish followers of their rabbis leave them in the dust. Little wonder that the Apostle Paul repeated Isaiah's challenge, "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world?" and again, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise..." (1 Cor. 1:19-20). He was not talking about Gentile philosophers. Isaiah was relating God's contempt for the rabbinical distortions of his time, and Paul felt it applicable to the situation at Corinth!

What about today? Should we not feel disappointed and embarrassed when Christians are taken in by such rabbinical teachings and incorporate them in their teachings and Doctrinal Statements? Can it be that a "Berean leader" has written that without Luke 16 and the literal interpretation of the Rich Man and Lazarus, we would not have that paragraph about the state of the dead in our Doctrinal Statement? Could it be that we need to review everything we have taken in on the say of others and put them to the true "Berean test"? Based on our search of the Bible on the subject of the state of the dead, we conclude that Luke 16 CANNOT be understood literally!

WHERE ARE YOU GOING WITH THIS?

Many times I was asked, "Ivan, Where are you going with this...?" They were sure of one thing, that I had a hidden agenda and just would not come clean and admit it. I have given that question more thought and this is my answer.

Had someone asked me in 1953 when I was first confronted with the gospel of salvation, "Ivan, where are you going with this?" I would not have known what to say. As I clung to the new truths of the gospel of grace and the Eternal Security of the believer and rejoiced in my new Savior, my own father was convinced that I was mentally unbalanced and made an appointment for me with a psychiatrist. I had not foreseen that the gospel would take me out of the only church I had ever known. Little did I anticipate the heartache and sorrow that severance would bring. Where was I going? I did not know. I just followed truth.

Fifteen years later I began to see what we now know as the "grace message." Had you asked me then, "Ivan, where are you going with this...?" How could I have answered? Did I have a clue then that this truth would separate me from so loving and devoted a group of Christians as the Plymouth Brethren? These were the saints that first shared with me the gospel of my salvation. They helped bring me out of the darkness of Protestant Religion into the light of the gospel of grace. But when I shared with them the "grace message" and the distinctive Pauline revelation as I learned it little by little, they were convinced that, "Satan had cracked my head open and put in there all this nonsense about the Mystery!" One of them said it well, "I don't see no Mystery!" Recently I was reminded by one of them that they "are still praying for me."

Now 35 years later, here we go again. I awakened out of slumber and lethargy to see the truth that Luke 16 is, and always was, intended only as a parable and that it must never be taken literally! It seems as though I stepped on a land mine! There were no sober, thoughtful exchanges of doctrinal debates - no real exchanges of deep Bible discourse or free sharing thoughts and ideas. Where were the Bereans when we really needed them? Instead, an emergency, closed board meeting (aka a heresy trial) was immediately called! Let's us not consider these issues and plan meetings and invite public discussion of our findings. Let's do it behind closed doors and say as little as possible about what transpired, even when asked afterward.

My answer to the question, "Where am I going with this...?" has been, and I pray will continue to be, "wherever the truth of God's word leads." So far God has not seen fit to shine His light any further down my path until I walk in the light He has already given. Our Lord was putting the teachings of the rabbis to the test. Surely the rich man anticipated that he would be the one enjoying the rabbinical invention of Abraham's bosom, not that miserable beggar! So the Lord couched their same rabbinical teachings in such a way that He put God's word in Father Abraham's mouth, that only Moses and the prophets were the ones speaking God's true message. Out of their own mouths He judged them, and - because it was a parable to the unbelieving scribes and Pharisees - He gave them no further explanation.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

There is always time to tell the Lord, and then to admit to one another, when we have erred and taken a wrong turn. However busy we might be, we can never be too busy to set right what we have done in haste or error. That principle works for the writer just as well as the reader. Is my parabolic view of Luke 16 a matter of "basic fundamental error" as alleged? Is it a matter so serious as to break fellowship?

Consider Paul's admonition, "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:26-27). If Paul were true to his statement, how can it be that - in all Paul's letters - there is not a hint of anything like Luke 16 taken literally? Could it be that "literal Luke 16" is NOT the "counsel of God"? Paul was also silent regarding hell (hades), for in all his writings it appears but one time, 1 Cor. 15:55, and even there the better Greek texts replace it with death, (Gk. thanatos). Can Luke 16, taken literally, be so important for grace believers when there is no hint of such teaching by Paul who had "not shunned to declare all the counsel of God"?

I welcome sincere replies from everyone who reads this paper. Now that the passage has been thoroughly explained and the reader made aware of the writings of Josephus, the gleanings of the rabbis by John Lightfoot, and IV Maccabees, can there be any biblical support for taking Luke 16 as a literal record of real history? Does it picture the real situation and circumstance of the dead? Obviously, I think not. What do you think?

Sincerely by God's grace,

Ivan L. Burgener, August 2004 (Final Revision November 2005)

Appendix 1: An Extract Out Of Josephus's Discourse To The Greeks Concerning Hades

1. NOW as to Hades, wherein the souls of the righteous and the unrighteous are detained, it is necessary to speak of it. Hades is a place in the world not regularly finished; a *subterraneous* region, wherein the light of this world does not shine; from which circumstance, that in this region the light does not shine, it cannot be but there must be in it perpetual *darkness*. This region is allotted as a place of custody for souls, in which angels are appointed as guardians to them, who distribute to them *temporary punishments*, agreeable to every one's behavior and manners.

2. In this region there is a certain place set apart, as a *lake of unquenchable fire*, whereinto we suppose no one hath hitherto been cast; but it is prepared for a day afore-determined by God, in which one righteous sentence shall deservedly be passed upon all men; when the unjust, and those that have been disobedient to God, and have given honor to such idols as have been the vain operations of the hands of men as to God himself, shall be adjudged to this *everlasting punishment*, as having been the causes of defilement; while the just shall obtain *an incorruptible* and never-fading *kingdom*. These are now indeed confined in Hades, but not in the same place wherein the unjust are confined.

3. For there is one descent into this region, at whose *gate* we believe there stands an archangel with an host; which *gate* when those pass through that are conducted down by the angels appointed over souls, they do not go the same way; but the just are guided to the *right hand*, and are led with hymns, sung by the *angels* appointed over that place, unto a region of *light*, in which the just have dwelt from the beginning of the world; not constrained by necessity, but ever enjoying the prospect of the good things they see, and rejoice in the expectation of those new enjoyments which will be peculiar to every one of them, and esteeming those things beyond what we have here; with whom there is no place of toil, no burning heat, no piercing cold, nor are any briars there; but 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*.

4. But as to the unjust, they are dragged by force to the *left hand* by the angels allotted for punishment, no longer going with a good-will, but as prisoners driven by violence; to whom are sent the angels appointed over them to reproach them and threaten them with their terrible looks, and to thrust them still downwards. Now those angels that are set over these souls drag them into the neighborhood of hell itself; who, when they are hard by it, continually hear the noise of it, and do not stand clear of the hot vapor itself; but when they have a near view of this spectacle, as of a terrible and exceeding great prospect of fire, they are struck with a fearful expectation of a future judgment, and in effect punished thereby: and not only so, but where they see the place [or choir] of *the fathers* and of the just, even hereby are they punished; for a *chaos* deep and large is fixed between them; insomuch that a just man that hath compassion upon them cannot be admitted, nor can one that is unjust, if he were bold enough to attempt it, pass over it.

5. This is the discourse concerning Hades, wherein the souls of all men are confined until a proper season, which God hath determined, when he will make a resurrection of all men from the dead, not procuring a transmigration of souls from one body to another, but raising again those very bodies, which you Greeks, seeing to be dissolved, do not believe [their resurrection]. But learn not to disbelieve it; for while you believe that the soul is created, and yet is made immortal by God, according to the **doctrine of Plato**, and this in time, be not incredulous; but believe that God is able, when he hath raised to life that body which was made as a compound of the same elements, to make it immortal; for it must never be said of God, that he is able to do some things, and unable to do others. We have therefore believed that the body will be raised again; for although it be dissolved, it is not perished; for the earth receives its remains, and preserves them; and while they are like *seed*, and are mixed among the more fruitful soil, they flourish, and what is *sown* is indeed sown *bare grain*, but at the mighty sound of God the Creator, it will sprout up, and be raised in a *clothed* and *glorious* condition, though not before it has been dissolved, and mixed [with the earth]. So that we have not rashly believed the resurrection of the body; for although it be dissolved for a time on account of the original transgression, it exists still, and is cast into the earth as into a potter's furnace, in order to be formed again, not in order to rise again such as it was before, but in a state of purity, and so as never to be destroyed any more. And to every body shall its own soul be restored. And when it hath *clothed itself* with that body, it will not be subject to misery, but, being itself pure, it will continue with its pure body, and rejoice with it, with which it having walked righteously now in this world, and never having had it as a snare, it will receive it again with great gladness. But as for the unjust, they will receive their bodies not changed, not freed from diseases or distempers, nor made glorious, but with the same diseases wherein they died; and such as they were in their unbelief, the same shall they be when they shall be faithfully judged.

6. For all men, the just as well as the unjust, shall be brought before *God the word*: for to him hath the *Father committed all judgment*: and he, in order to *fulfill the will of his Father*, shall come as Judge, whom we call *Christ*. For Minos and Rhadamanthus are not the judges, as you Greeks suppose, but he whom *God and the Father hath glorified*: CONCERNING WHOM WE HAVE ELSEWHERE GIVEN A MORE PARTICULAR ACCOUNT, FOR THE SAKE OF THOSE WHO SEEK AFTER TRUTH. This person, exercising the righteous judgment of the Father towards all men, hath prepared a just sentence for every one, according to his works; at whose judgment-seat when all men, and angels, and demons shall stand, they will send forth one voice, and say, JUST IS THY JUDGMENT; the rejoinder to which will bring a just sentence upon both parties, by giving justly to those that have done well an *everlasting fruition*; but allotting to the lovers of wicked works *eternal punishment*. To these belong the *unquenchable fire*, and that without end, and a certain fiery *worm, never dying*, and not destroying the body, but continuing its eruption out of the body with never-ceasing grief: neither will sleep give ease to these men, nor will the night afford them comfort; death will not free them from their punishment, nor will the interceding prayers of their kindred profit them; for the just are no longer seen by them, nor are they thought worthy of remembrance. But the just shall remember only their righteous actions, whereby they have attained *the heavenly kingdom*, in which there is no sleep, no sorrow, no corruption, no care, no night, no day measured by time, no sun driven in his course along the circle of heaven by necessity, and measuring out the bounds and conversions of the seasons, for the better illumination of the life of men; no moon decreasing and increasing, or introducing a variety of seasons, nor will she then moisten the earth; no burning sun, no Bear turning round [the pole], no Orion to rise,

no wandering of innumerable stars. The earth will not then be difficult to be passed over, nor will it be hard to find out the court of paradise, nor will there be any fearful roaring of the sea, forbidding the passengers to walk on it; even that will be made easily passable to the just, though it will not be void of moisture. Heaven will not then be uninhabitable by men, and it will not be impossible to discover the way of ascending thither. The earth will not be uncultivated, nor require too much labor of men, but will bring forth its fruits of its own accord, and will be well adorned with them. There will be no more generations of wild beasts, nor will the substance of the rest of the animals shoot out any more; for it will not produce men, but the number of the righteous will continue, and never fail, together with righteous angels, and spirits [of God], and with his word, as a choir of righteous men and women that never grow old, and continue in an incorruptible state, singing hymns to God, who hath advanced them to that happiness, by the means of a regular institution of life; with whom the whole creation also will lift up a perpetual hymn from *corruption, to incorruption*, as glorified by a splendid and pure spirit. It will not then be restrained by a bond of necessity, but with a lively freedom shall offer up a voluntary hymn, and shall praise him that made them, together with the angels, and spirits, and men now *freed from all bondage*.

7. And now, if you Gentiles will be persuaded by these motives, and leave your vain imaginations about your pedigrees, and gaining of riches, and philosophy, and will not spend your time about subtleties of words, and thereby lead your minds into error, and if you will apply your ears to the hearing of the inspired prophets, the interpreters both of God and of his word, and will believe in God, you shall both be partakers of these things, and obtain the good things that are to come; you shall see the ascent unto the immense heaven plainly, and that kingdom which is there. For what God hath now concealed in silence [will be then made manifest,] *what neither eye hath seen, nor ear hath heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him*.

8. *In whatsoever ways I shall find you, in them shall I judge you entirely*: so cries the END of all things. And he who hath at first lived a virtuous life, but towards the latter end falls into vice, these labors by him before endured shall be altogether vain and unprofitable, even as in a play, brought to an ill catastrophe. Whosoever shall have lived wickedly and luxuriously may repent; however, there will be need of much time to conquer an evil habit, and even after repentance his whole life must be guarded with great care and diligence, after the manner of a body, which, after it hath been a long time afflicted with a distemper, requires a stricter diet and method of living; for though it may be possible, perhaps, to break off the chain of our irregular affections at once, yet our amendment cannot be secured without the grace of God, the prayers of good men, the help of the brethren, and our own sincere repentance and constant care. It is a good thing not to sin at all; it is also good, having sinned, to repent; as it is best to have health always, but it is a good thing to recover from a distemper. *To God be glory and dominion for ever and ever Amen*.

Appendix 2: Comments of John Lightfoot's WORKS, Luke 16:19-31

Chapter 16

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

[*There was a certain rich man.*] Whoever believes this not to be a parable, but a true story, let him believe also those little friars, whose trade it is to shew the monuments at Jerusalem to pilgrims, and point exactly to the place where the house of the 'rich glutton' stood. Most accurate keepers of antiquity indeed! who, after so many hundreds of years, such overthrows of Jerusalem, such devastations and changes, can rake out of the rubbish the place of so private a house, and such a one too as never had any being, but merely in parable. And that it was a parable, not only the consent of all expositors may assure us, but the thing itself speaks it.

The main scope and design of it seems this, to hint the destruction of the unbelieving Jews, who, though they had Moses and the Prophets, did not believe them, nay, would not believe, though one (even Jesus) arose from the dead. For that conclusion of the parable abundantly evidenceth what it aimed at: "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

20. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

[*Lazarus.*] I. We shew in our notes upon St. John 11:1, in several instances, that the word *Lazar* is by contraction used by the Talmudists for *Eleazar*. The author of *Juchasin* attests it: *in the Jerusalem Talmud every R. Eleazar is written without an Aleph, R. Lazar.*

II. In *Midras Coheleth* there is a certain beggar called *Diglus Patragus* or *Petargus*: *poor, infirm, naked, and famished*. But there could hardly be invented a more convenient name for a poor beggar than *Lazar*, which signifies *the help of God*, when he stands in so much need of the help of men.

But perhaps there may be something more aimed at in the name: for since the discourse is concerning Abraham and Lazarus, who would not call to mind Abraham and Eliezer his servant, one born at Damascus, a Gentile by birth, and sometime in posse the heir of Abraham; but shut out of the inheritance by the birth of Isaac, yet restored here into Abraham's bosom? Which I leave to the judgment of the reader, whether it might not hint the calling of the Gentiles into the faith of Abraham.

The Gemarists make Eliezer to accompany his master even in the cave of Machpelah: "R. Baanah painted the sepulchres: when he came to Abraham's cave, he found Eliezer standing at the mouth of it. He saith unto him, 'What is Abraham doing?' To whom he, *He lieth in the embraces of Sarah*. Then said Baanah, 'Go and tell him that Baanah is at the door,'" &c.

[*Full of sores.*] In the Hebrew language, *stricken with ulcers*. Sometimes *his body full*

of ulcers, as in this story: "They tell of Nahum Gamzu, that he was blind, lame of both hands and of both feet, and in all his body full of sores. He was thrown into a ruinous house, the feet of his bed being put into basins full of water, that the ants might not creep upon him. His disciples ask him, 'Rabbi, how hath this mischief befallen thee, when as thou art a just man?'" He gives the reason himself; viz. Because he deferred to give something to a poor man that begged of him. We have the same story in *Hieros Peah*, where it were worth the while to take notice how they vary in the telling it.

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;

[*He was carried by the angels.*] The Rabbins have an invention that there are three bands of *angels* attend the death of wicked men, proclaiming, "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked." But what conceptions they have of *angels* being present at the death of good men, let us judge from this following passage:

"The men of Tsippor said, 'Whoever tells us that Rabbi [Judah] is dead, we will kill him.' Bar Kaphra, looking upon them with his head veiled with a hood, said unto them, 'Holy men, and *angels* took hold of the tables of the covenant, and the hand of the *angels* prevailed; so that they took away the tables.' They said unto him, 'Is Rabbi dead then?'" The meaning of this parabolizer was this; Holy men would fain have detained R. Judah still in the land of the living, but the *angels* took him away.

[*Into Abraham's bosom.*] ...The Jewish schools dispose of the souls of Jews under a threefold phrase, I can hardly say under a threefold state:--

I. *In the garden of Eden, or Paradise.* Amongst those many instances that might be alleged, even to nauseousness, let us take one wherein this very Abraham is named: "He shall be as a tree planted by the rivers of waters.' This is Abraham, whom God took and planted in the land of Israel; or, whom God took and planted *in Paradise.*" Take one instance more of one of equal fame and piety, and that was Moses: "When our master Moses departed *into Paradise*, he said unto Joshua, 'If thou hast any doubt upon thee about any thing, inquire now of me concerning it.'"

II. *Under the throne of glory.* We have a long story in *Avoth R. Nathan* of the angel of death being sent by God to take away the soul of Moses; which when he could not do, "God taketh hold of him himself, and treasureth him up under the throne of glory." And a little after; "Nor is Moses' soul only placed under the throne of glory, but the souls of other just persons also are reposed under the throne of glory." Moses, in the words quoted before, is in *Paradise*; in these words, he is *under the throne of glory*. In another place, "he is in heaven ministering before God." So that under different phrases is the same thing expressed; and this, however, is made evident, that there *the garden of Eden* was not to be understood of an earthly, but a heavenly paradise. That in Revelation 6:9, of 'souls crying under the altar,' comes pretty near this phrase, of being placed *under the throne of glory*. For the Jews conceived of *the altar* as *the throne* of the Divine Majesty; and for that reason the court of the Sanhedrim was placed so near the altar, that they might be filled with the reverence of the Divine Majesty so near them, while they were giving judgment. Only, whereas there is mention of the souls of the martyrs that had poured out their blood for God, it is an allusion to the blood of the sacrifices that were wont to be poured out at the foot of the altar.

III. *In Abraham's bosom:* which if you would know what it is, you need seek no further than the Rhemists, our countrymen (with grief be it spoken), if you will believe

them; for they upon this place have this passage: "The bosom of Abraham is the resting-place of all them that died in perfect state of grace before Christ's time; heaven, before, being shut from men. It is called in Zachary a lake without water, and sometimes a prison, but most commonly of the divines *Limbus patrum*; for that it is thought to have been the *higher part* or *brim* of hell," &c.

If our Saviour had been the first author of this phrase, then might it have been tolerable to have looked for the meaning of it amongst Christian expositors; but seeing it is a scheme of speech so familiar amongst the Jews, and our Saviour spoke no other than in the known and vulgar dialect of that nation, the meaning must be fetched thence, not from any Greek or Roman lexicon. That which we are to inquire after is, how it was understood by the auditory then present: and I may lay any wager that the Jews, when they heard *Abraham's bosom* mentioned, did think of nothing less than that kind of *limbo* which we have here described. What! Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, &c., in a lake without water, in prison, on *the very brim of hell!* Is this to be *in paradise?* is this to be *under the throne of glory?* And was Lazarus carried *thither* by *angels* when he was carried into *Abraham's bosom?*

We meet with a phrase amongst the Talmudists; *Kiddushin*, fol. 72: it is quoted also from *Juchasin*, fol. 75. 2. Let us borrow a little patience of the reader, to transcribe the whole passage:

"Rabbi [Judah] saith to Levi, *Represent the Persians to me by some similitude*. He saith, They are like to the host of the house of David. *Represent to me the Iberians*. They are like *to the angels of destruction*. Represent to me the Ismaelites. They are *like the devils of the stinking pit*. Represent to me the disciples of the wise, that are in Babylon. they are like to ministering angels. *When R. [Judah] died*, he said, *Hoemnia is in Babylon*, and consists of Ammonites wholly. *Mesgaria is in Babylon*, and wholly consists of spurious people. *Birkah is in Babylon*, where two men interchange their wives. *Birtha Sataia is in Babylon*, and at this day they depart from God. *Acra of Agma is in Babylon*. *Ada Bar Ahava is there*. *This day he sits in Abraham's bosom*. *This day is Rabh Judah born in Babylon*."

Expositors are not well agreed, neither by whom, nor indeed concerning whom, those words are spoken, *This day he sits 'in the bosom of Abraham.'* And for that reason have I transcribed the whole period, that the reader may spend his judgment amongst them. The author of *Juchasin* thinks they may be the words of Adah Bar Ahavah spoken concerning Rabbi Judah. Another Gloss saith, They are spoken of Adah Bar Ahavah himself. Let us hear them both: "The day that Rabbi died, Rabh Adah Bar Ahavah said, by way of prophecy, *This day doth he sit in Abraham's bosom*." "There are those indeed that expound, *This day doth he sit in Abraham's bosom*, thus; that is, *This day he died*. Which if it be to be understood of Adah Bar Ahavah, the times do not suit. It seems to be understood therefore, *This day he sits in Abraham's bosom*: that is, *This day is Adah Bar Ahavah circumcised, and entered into the covenant of Abraham*."

But the reader may plainly see, having read out the whole period, that these words were spoken neither *by* Adah nor *of* him, but by Levi, of whom we have some mention in the beginning of this passage, and spoken concerning Rabbi Judah that was now dead. It is Levi also that saith, that in his room, on that very selfsame day, was Rabh Judah born in Babylon, according to the common adage of their schools, which immediately follows; "A just man never dies, till there be born in his room one like him." So saith R. Meir; "When R. Akibah died, Rabbi [Judah] was born: when Rabbi Judah died, Rabh Judah was born: when Rabh Judah died, Rabba was born: when Rabba died, Rabh Isai

was born."

We have here, therefore, if we will make up the story out of both Talmuds, another not very unlike this of ours. In the Jerusalem Talmud, Rabbi Judah is conveyed by angels; in the Babylonian, he is placed *in Abraham's bosom*: neither would the Glosser have doubted in the least either of the thing, or of the way of expressing it, so as to have fled to any new exposition, had he not mistook the person concerning whom these words were uttered. He supposeth them spoken of Adah Bar Ahavah (wherein he is deceived): and because the times do not fall in right, if they were to be understood of his death, he therefore frames a new interpretation of his own, whiles, in the mean time, he acknowledgeth that others expound it otherwise.

We may find out, therefore, the meaning of the phrase according to the common interpretation, by observing, first, that it was universally believed amongst the Jews, that pure and holy souls, when they left this body, went into happiness, to *Abraham*. Our Saviour speaks according to the received opinion of that nation in this affair, when he saith, "Many shall come from the east and from the west, and shall sit down with *Abraham*."

Give me leave to transcribe a story a little more largely than usual: "There was a woman the mother of seven martyrs (so we find it also 2 Maccabees 7)." When six of her sons were slain, and the youngest brought out in order to it, though but a child of two years and a half old, "the mother saith to Caesar, '*by the life of thy head*, I beseech thee, O Caesar, let me embrace and kiss my child.' This being permitted her, she plucked out her breasts and gave it suck. The she; '*By the life of thy head*, I entreat thee, O Caesar, that thou wouldest first kill me and then the child.' Caesar answered, 'I will not yield to thee in this matter, for it is written in your own law, The heifer or sheep, with its young one, thou shalt not kill on the same day.' To whom she; '*O thou foolishhest of all mortals*, hast thou performed all the commands, that this only is wanting?' He forthwith commands that the child should be killed. The mother running into the embraces of her little son, kissed him and said, '*Go thou, O my son, to Abraham thy father*, and tell him, Thus saith my mother, Do not thou boast, saying, I built an altar, and offered my son Isaac: for my mother hath built seven altars, and offered seven sons in one day,'" &c.

This woman, questionless, did not doubt of the innocence and purity of the soul of this child, nor of its future happiness, (for we will suppose the truth of the story) which happiness she expresseth sufficiently by this, that her son was going to his father *Abraham*. There are several other things to the same purpose and of the same mould, that might be produced, but let this suffice in this place: however, see notes upon verse 24.

Now what this *being in Abraham's bosom* may signify amongst the Jews, we may gather from what is spoken of the manners and the death of this R. Judah; concerning whom it is said, *This day he sits in Abraham's bosom*. "Rabbi Judah had the toothache thirteen years; and in all that time there was not an abortive woman throughout the whole land of Israel." For to him it is that they apply those words of the prophet, "He was a man of sorrows, and hath borne our griefs." And for these very pains of his, some had almost persuaded themselves that he was the Messiah. At length this toothache was relieved by Elias, appearing in the likeness of R. Chaijah Rubbah, who, by touching his tooth, cured him. When he died, and was to be buried on the evening of the sabbath, there were eighteen synagogues accompanied him to his grave. "Miracles were done; the day did not decline, till every one was got home before the entrance of the sabbath."

Bath Kol pronounced happiness for all those that wept for him, excepting one by name; which one when he knew himself excepted, threw himself headlong from the roof of the house, and so died, &c. But to add no more, for his incomparable learning and piety he was called R. Judah *the holy*. And whither would the Jew think such a one would go when he went out of this world? Who amongst them, when it was said of him that was *in Abraham's bosom*, would not without all scruple and hesitancy understand it, that he was *in the very embraces of Abraham*, (as they were wont at table one to lie in the other's bosom) in the exquisite delights and perfect felicities of *paradise*? not in 'a lake without water,' 'a prison,' 'the very brink of hell.'

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

[*He seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus.*] Instead of commentary, take another parable: "There are wicked men that are coupled together in this world. But one of them repents before death; the other doth not: so the one is found standing in the assembly of the just; the other in the assembly of the wicked. The one seeth the other, [this agrees with the passage now before us] and saith, 'Woe! and alas! here is accepting of persons in this thing: he and I robbed together, committed murder together; and now he stands in the congregation of the just, and I in the congregation of the wicked.' They answer him, '*O thou most foolish amongst mortals that are in the world!* Thou wert abominable, and cast forth for three days after thy death, and they did not lay thee in the grave: the worm was under thee, and the worm covered thee: which when this companion of thine came to understand, he became a penitent. It was in thy power also to have repented, but thou didst not.' He saith unto them, 'Let me go now and become a penitent,' But they say, 'O thou foolishest of men, dost thou not know that this world in which thou art is like the sabbath, and the world out of which thou camest is like the evening of the sabbath? If thou dost not provide something on the evening of the sabbath, what wilt thou eat on the sabbath day? Dost thou not know that the world out of which thou camest is like the land, and the world in which thou now art is like the sea? If a man make no provision on land for what he should eat at sea, what will he have to eat?' He gnashed his teeth and gnawed his own flesh."

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.

[*And he cried and said.*] We have mention of the dead discoursing one amongst another, and also with those that are alive. "R. Samuel Bar Nachman saith, R. Jonathan saith, How doth it appear that the dead have any discourse amongst themselves? It appears from what is said, And the Lord said unto him, This is the land, concerning which I swore unto Abraham, to Isaac, and Jacob *saying: What is the meaning of saying?* The Holy Blessed God saith unto Moses, Go thou and say to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, The oath which I swore unto you, I have performed unto your children." Note that: "Go thou and say to Abraham," &c. "There is a story of a certain pious man, that went and lodged in a burying-place, and heard two souls discoursing amongst themselves. Said the one unto the other, 'Come, my companion, and let us wander about the world, and listen behind the veil, what kind of plagues are coming upon the world.' To which the other replied, 'O my companion, I cannot; for I am buried in a cane mat: but do thou go, and whatsoever thou hearest, do thou come and tell me.' The soul

went, and wandered about the world," &c.

"The year following he went again, and lodging in a place of burial, he heard two souls discoursing between themselves. Saith the one unto the other, 'O my companion, come, let us wander about the world, and hearken behind the veil, what kind of plagues are coming upon the world.' To which the other, 'O my companion, let me alone; for the words that formerly passed between thee and me were heard amongst the living.' 'Whence could they know?' 'Perhaps some other person that is dead went and told them.'"

"There was a certain person deposited some *zuzees* with a certain hostess till he should return; and went to the house of Rabh. When he returned she was dead. He went after her to the place of burial, and said unto her, 'Where are my *zuzees*?' She saith unto him, 'Go, take it from under the hinge of the door, in a certain place there: and speak to my mother to send me *my black lead, and the reed of paint* by the woman N., who is coming hither tomorrow.' But whence do they know that such a one shall die? *Dumah* [that is, the angel who is appointed over the dead] *comes before, and proclaims it to them.*"

"The *zuzees* that belonged to orphans were deposited with the father of Samuel [the Rabbin]. He died, Samuel being absent. He went after him to the place of burial, and said unto them [i.e. to the dead], *I look for Abba*. They say unto him, *Abba the good is here*. 'I look for Abba Bar Abba.' They say unto him, 'Abba Bar Abba the good is here.' He saith unto them, 'I look for Abba Bar Abba the father of Samuel; where is he?' They say unto him, *He is gone up to the academy of the firmament*. Then he saw Levi [his colleague] sitting without." (The Gloss hath it, The dead appeared as without their graves, sitting in a circle, but Levi sat without the circle.) "He saith unto him, 'Why dost thou sit without? why dost thou not ascend?' He answered him, 'They say unto me, Because there want those years wherein thou didst not go into the academy of the Rabbi.' When his father came, he saw him weep. He saith unto him, 'Why dost thou weep?' He saith unto him, 'Where is the orphans' money?' He saith unto him, 'Go, and take it out of the mill-house,'" &c. But I fear, the reader will frown at this huge length of trifles.

[*And cool my tongue.*] There was a good man and a wicked man that died. As for the good man, *he had no funeral rites solemnized*, but the wicked man had. Afterward, there was one saw in his dream the good man walking in gardens, and hard by pleasant springs: but the wicked man *with his tongue trickling drop by drop at the bank of a river, endeavouring to touch the water, but he could not.*

26. 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.

[*A great gulf fixed.*] It is well known from the poets, that *inferi* among the Latins comprehend the seat both of the blessed and the damned, denoting in general the state of the dead, be they according to the quality of their persons allotted either to joys or punishments. On this hand, *Elysium* for the good; on that hand, *Tartarus* for the wicked; the river *Cocytus*, or *Acheron*, or some such *great gulf fixed* betwixt them. The Jews seem not to have been very distant from this apprehension of things. "God hath set the one against the other, that is, *hell and paradise*. *How far are they distant? A handbreadth*. R. Jochanan saith, *A wall is between.*" But the Rabbins say, *They are so even with one another, that you may see out of one into the other.*

That of *seeing out of the one into the other* agrees with the passage before us; nor is it very dissonant that it is said, *They are so even with one another*, that is, they are so even, that they have a plain view one from the other, nothing being interposed to hinder it, and yet so great a gulf between, that it is impossible to pass the one to the other. That is worth noting, Revelation 14:10, "Shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb."

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

[*They have Moses and the prophets.*] The *historical books* also are comprehended under the title of the *Prophets*, according to the common acceptation of the Jews, and the reading in their synagogues: "All the books of *the Prophets* are eight; Joshua, Judges, Samuel, the Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the twelve." So the Gemara also reckons them. So we find *the Octateuch of the Prophets*, as well as *the Pentateuch of Moses*, in Photius; of which we have spoken elsewhere.

But are *the Hagiographa* excluded, when mention is made only of *the law and the prophets*? Our Saviour speaks after the usual manner of their reading *Moses and the Prophets* in their synagogues; where every ordinary person, even the most rude and illiterate, met with them, though he had neither *Moses* nor *the prophets* nor *the Hagiographa* at his own house. Indeed, *the holy writings*, were not read in the synagogues (for what reason I will not dispute in this place), but they were, however, far from being rejected by the people, but accounted for divine writings, which may be evinced, besides other things, even from the very name. Our Saviour therefore makes no mention of them, not because he lightly esteems them, but because *Moses and the prophets* were heard by every one every sabbath day; and so were not the *Hagiographa*.

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

[*Neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*] Any one may see how Christ points at the infidelity of the Jews, even after that himself shall have risen again. From whence it is easy to judge what was the design and intention of this parable.

APPENDIX 3: This is the major part of my letter answering questions about Luke 16:19-31, the Rich Man and Lazarus, edited only to remove personal items. 01-17-04. Revised 01-20-04

Dear brother:

Your Email read, "I went back to reread your recent emails because I'm not sure where you're going with this passage. Are you just saying that Luke 16 is not a good passage to learn about the state of the dead? Is Luke 16 just a poor choice of a proof-text for the point in the BBF doctrinal statement, or is the point itself wrong?"

ANS: I must write something about the story of the rich man and Lazarus [more than present time allows]. So far as I know, I am not "going anywhere with it..." It is hard to know where something will lead. For the present I believe I have awakened to understand that the story of the rich man and Lazarus is a parable and that it must be understood as such. To take a parable as meaning literal instruction based on the literal statements of said parable is a mistake. For one to base a teaching on the literal misunderstanding of a parable is also a mistake. Whatever is built on it cannot be correct.

I have talked to many people about this passage and asked, "The story about the rich man and Lazarus, Is it a parable or is it a literal, historical record of two men and what actually, historically, literally happened to them?"

Most reply saying it is literal, about 10 to 1. Then I ask, "Do you remember the setting when the Lord told that story?" No one remembers.

When I ask, "Can you recall the 'PUNCH LINE' of the Lord in that story? What was it?" No one knows off hand. After reading over the story a little some will answer that the Lord's PUNCH LINE is, "They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them." YES, that is the answer! Great! Added is Father Abraham's [the Lord's] rebuttal to the rich man's plea, "If they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." This is His reinforcement of the PUNCH LINE!

When we discuss that the Lord directed this story to the deriding scribes and Pharisees, I ask, "Do you really think that the Lord paused His discourse with these enemies to tell us about the after life of a rich man and a beggar?" They have never thought of it that way.

The scribes and Pharisees were deriding the Lord because of His statement, "No man can serve two masters...Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Those words were addressed to the disciples when the Lord was explaining the meaning and application of His **parable** about the Unjust Steward of Luke 16:1-9. The Lord's remarks were overheard by His enemies and this brought forth their added derision! What would the story of the rich man and Lazarus, **taken literally**, mean to these scribes and Pharisees? I do not know.

The Lord told this parable about two men. Concerning these two men He told us not one thing of what either of them believed or what they had done, good or bad, to cause the beggar to end up in the bliss of Abraham's bosom and the rich man to anguish in the flames of hell. If you can show He did tell us these things, then I have missed them.

If one takes this story literally it looks like rich men go to hell and poor beggars go to heaven, or whatever you call it, the good place. Surely you are aware that some people ponder

the Lord's meaning in this way and are puzzled. The same for Lazarus. Are we to draw the conclusion that if one suffers with patience the misery he endures in this life, that he will end up in the good place -- in the after life? I don't think so.

All we know about the rich man is that he was dressed in purple and fine linen and that he fared sumptuously every day. Riches can be a snare, but do they damn us to hell? Genesis 13:2 says that "Abraham was very rich in cattle, and in silver and in gold." I'll bet Abe fared sumptuously -- often, if not every day. Is being rich and enjoying it a sin? Of course not. If it were, brother, you and I are not very innocent. Sure, it depends on who we compare ourselves to decide in deciding just how rich we are. But what about Isaac, Jacob, David, Job...and the list goes on? Were all these men wicked because they were rich? If they died, would they also -- like the rich man of our story -- be "tormented in this flame?" Of course not. What about Paul who said that God gives us richly all things to enjoy?

Notice that the Lord gave us the name of the beggar, Lazarus. Great for the Greek, but how does this name read in Hebrew? It is Eliezer and/or Eleazor. And who was the first man in the Bible so named? Abraham's servant is the one! And Abraham lamented to God that he had no seed, and "one born in his household would be his heir." At that time Abraham's heir was "Eliezer of Damascus," a Gentile! (Genesis 15:1-3.) So far we have Lazarus' namesake but what about his companions?

The Lord said the dogs came and licked his sores -- the only ones who showed him companionship and compassion, such as it was! And why were the dogs there? Was it to lick the sores? Or was it not to get the same crumbs that fell from the rich man's table? [Should we recall Matthew 15:24-26 regarding dogs eating crumbs from a table?] And if we take this story literally, are we to learn that rich men eat like pigs? How many dogs could survive and exist from the crumbs from your table -- or mine?

Taken literally, could it be that Lazarus died because there were not enough crumbs or that the dogs got to the crumbs first? (I jest!)

But we must also consider the conversation between Father Abraham and the rich man. Are we to learn that in the after life (or the scene after death) that folks from both places can look across a separating gulf and see the joy of the one and the misery of the other? To ask is to answer, NO!

Father Abraham told the rich man, "remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus [in his lifetime receivedst] evil things..." In the Lord's story, there is a complete role reversal of these two. Father Abraham spoke of things the rich man had enjoyed on earth were the very things being enjoyed now by Lazarus. And the rich man's misery is analogous to "Lazarus' evil things." That Lazarus had it bad we would all agree, but whatever he has in Abraham's bosom is paralleled with what the rich man had lost! Think of that! Are we to suppose that he is in heaven? Come now. And just what was it the rich man had lost? What were his real riches that he enjoyed so much in his lifetime and would lose in his death?

The clues are his dress, for purple speaks of royalty and fine linen speaks of priesthood, the blessings of God to Israel! "What profit hath the Jew? Much, every way!" I believe the purple speaks of royalty in Israel and the fine linen of their priesthood, good things that God had given the favored nation. Was the Lord's audience in jeopardy of losing their physical and spiritual privileges and blessings? Were they not at risk of losing these great blessings because they were trashing the word of God? The Lord had said that the Law and the prophets were until John -- a ministry they had so far rejected. From that time forth an even greater ministry, that of John and

the Lord, the KINGDOM OF GOD, was preached. How were they handling this new ministry? The Lord characterized their opposition by saying "the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it..."(Luke 16:16). But what does that mean?

The parallel or sister verse in Matthew 11:12 is even clearer: "from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force." But what does this mean?

Perhaps the Lord said it best in Matthew 23:13, "...woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves [the kingdom suffers violence], neither suffer [allow] ye them that are entering to go in." To gain entry into this kingdom, one would have to be more violent than the violent men standing in their way. They must become violent in their insistence and overcome the violent opposition of the scribes and Pharisees, thus, "the violent take it by force."

Was not the Lord's audience in Luke 16 -- the very ones deriding Him -- in imminent danger of losing all the blessings of God to Israel? Was not their peril because of their neglect and opposition to the word of God through Moses and the Prophet and their present rejection of John and the Lord? Indeed it was!

If they persisted in opposition, did not the Lord speak of the danger of losing their position of enjoyment of the blessing of the promised kingdom? Did not the Lord after His encounter with the centurion of Matthew 8:5-10 say, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel"? And did He not further warn, "That many shall come from the east and the west [Gentiles?], and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (8:12). [Does this sound something like one tormented in flame?] I think it does.

Let us also consider the word "torment." As a verb we have it twice: "I am **tormented** in this flame," and "now he [Lazarus] is comforted, and thou art **tormented**" (16:24,25). This Greek word, used only by Dr. Luke, appears but four times. Mary and Joseph finding their missing son said, "Behold Thy father and I have sought thee **sorrowing**" (Lk. 2:48), and the Ephesian elders kissed Paul goodbye, "**sorrowing** most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more..." (Acts 20:24). The sorrow expressed in these other situations is clearly that of mental anguish, not the literal physical pain of roasting flesh!

Where am I going with Luke 16, the rich man and Lazarus? I hope we can now see that the Lord by this story was not pulling aside the curtain to show us anything about life after death. Nothing of the sort! He was not telling us about Abraham's bosom or any such for there is no mention of that place elsewhere in all the Bible. But He was warning his Jewish audience, the deriding scribes and Pharisees, that if they persist, they will be pictured by the rich man, not writhing in the physical pain which no corpse can feel, but writing in the agony of so tremendous a loss! Will not Israel's leaders be "tormented in the flames" of mental anguish seeing Gentiles enjoying the riches upon which God had given them first claim?!

The story the Lord told was one wherein person(s) who previously enjoyed "the good things" were sorrowing seeing others, previously impoverished, basking in the joy which could have been theirs. The anguish of this situation is so well described, "I am tormented in this flame." Will the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be cast into outer darkness? And will there be weeping and gnashing of teeth? I believe these situations are so similar that the meaning of parable of the rich man and Lazarus was not lost on His audience even though it has escaped me for so long.

Well, that is it in a nutshell. If it is heresy, I plead guilty. If some of our Doctrinal Statements are based on "Luke 16:21-28" (See BBF DS) taken literally, as it seems they are, I recommend deleting those references. I do not say the wording is incorrect. I believe Luke 16 does not support the words of the paragraph in any meaningful way. Therefore references to Luke 16 ought to be removed.

You said, "Luke 16 -- Parable or literal? -- that is a debate not yet settled. My daughter's professor on the gospels sees it as a real event, not a parable. I just mention that to illustrate that this question is still open to discussion." Perhaps you will share my letter with her and she with him? You say the question is still open to discussion: May I be free to discuss my understanding of it without fear of a heresy trial? I trust so. For my part I am pretty well satisfied now with this portion that long had me puzzled.

You also asked, "if it is a parable, how does that allow us to chuck all the details of the story?"

ANS: Contraire! Who is it that is really paying attention to "all the details of the story?" Am I "chucking all the details"? Or am I finally understanding what those details were intended to convey?

You asked again, "Why is Jesus making up such an elaborate story if it doesn't correspond to how things really were after death for OT people? What was the Lord doing, describing this elaborate picture -- the angels take Lazarus to Abraham's bosom, these two compartments separated by a great gulf, comfort on one side, agony on the other, the fire, etc.? What was He telling all that for, if these things don't really correspond to some reality out there?"

I must take your questions in pieces: "Why is Jesus making up such an elaborate story if it doesn't correspond to how things really were after death for OT people?"

ANS: I do not think He is describing the actual literal scene after death at all. But for discussion's sake, let us presume for the moment that was His meaning. Whatever the actual condition of people after death really was, would His audience identify with it through His words to them in this story? I don't think so. Consider everything you know about the Old Testament. From those scriptures can you piece together the after-life scene in the way the Lord described it in Luke 16? I can't.

If I am correct, then do you think the Lord was telling His audience something new, just exactly how it would be after they died, that their dead condition would be like the rich man? How would they know that to be the case? What did [or did not] the rich man believe? What was his crime -- his SIN? What was it? From the Lord's words you do not know, and you have the same absence of information about Lazarus. This absence of information has to tell us something, but what is that?

I found that in my days not knowing what to do with this story, I had gratuitously supplied the missing information. I had assumed that Lazarus' poverty was the result of persecution for his spiritual life and witness. I also thought the rich man's sin was that he did not invite Lazarus to share his table of good food or share his sumptuous lifestyle. He was selfish and did not "love his neighbor as himself." If my guesses were correct with either or both of them, why did the Lord not tell us these things about those two men?

You also wrote: "Its pretty plain and simple right there in Luke, if you are willing to accept it, otherwise, of course, it is all ridiculous. Once you get past the talking snake in Genesis 3, what's too hard to believe about the picture in Luke 16? I personally have always found that

talking snake much more difficult to believe than Abraham and the rich man having a conversation in hades. If that talking snake is literal, I need help with an explanation! I find it hard to believe, but I do believe it, just don't ask me to explain how I can do that other than a leap of faith."

Your words, "If that talking snake is literal, I need help with an explanation! I find it hard to believe, but I do believe it, just don't ask me to explain how I can do that other than a leap of faith."

ANS: Does the Genesis context indicate anything about a parable? There is nothing in the Genesis text or context to indicate we should not take the talking snake literal. The snake talked to Eve. God talked to the snake. All later Bible references to the scene in Eden seem to take it literally.

The Lord did say Luke 15:3 was a parable of 100 sheep. Agreed! What about the stories of the 10 coins and the two sons. Are they parables? The text does not say. You have not answered yet. What about the Unjust Steward, Luke 16:1-9 which the Lord explained to his disciples. Is that a parable? Did the Scribes and Pharisees hear **all these things**? What are "all these things" (Luke 16:14), and could He not mean all the parables from Luke 15:1? The Lord said they heard, and they derided Him, and it was then He told them of the rich man and Lazarus. Is this His 5th parable or is it a literal record of historical events involving these two men? I believe it makes sense only as a parable and that Luke 15 & 16 record 5 parables.

Can we say that Abraham is literally in charge of the righteous dead? Does he have a supervisory position over them? How would one know this from the OT? If the OT does not reveal that to be so, do you think the Lord's audience would accept this new teaching from Him under these circumstances? I don't think so.

You then asked about my words to you: "You [Ivan] asked about the eyes, voices, and fingers of the dead? What indeed do people look like when they are 'unclothed'?"

ANS: I do not know. What does the spiritual part of a dead person look like? I know what a dead body looks like. I also know what the Bible says during the Lord's ministry would be the same as Peter's words about David and apply equally to Abraham, "David...is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us to this day" (Acts 2:29). I don't believe any of the dead are, **bodily speaking**, doing anything. Do You?

They are pictured alive, not dead, in the Lord's parable of the rich man and Lazarus, and that is the feature which, as much as any of the details of the story, should shout to us that it is a parable!

You used the terms "unclothed and naked." 2 Corinthians 5 uses both these terms to picture people without a body. Their present house is gone and their new house is in the future. Their houseless condition must depict the state after death and before the resurrection. Paul does not use the term Abraham's bosom for these dead ones and neither will I. If you are asking what they look like in that condition, I will ask you, "who says they can be seen with our eyes?" The Lord has no trouble and He will manage the spiritual realm of all the departed, whether saved or lost. At death the spirit returns to God Who gave it, and the bodies in the graves await the resurrection. Some will be raised for blessing and other for judgment and loss! (See John 5).

I hope I have answered you somewhat on this issue.

Yours through grace,
Ivan L. Burgener