

Why This Familiar Gospel Story May Not Be a Parable After All

The Bible talks about a rich man who finds himself in hell. Many people think this story was just a parable. They say it wasn't a real person in a real place, but merely a metaphor for something else. This familiar story takes place in Luke 16, and is often a source of disagreement, even among Christians.

We can take a look at a few aspects of Luke 16 and easily decide if it lines up with the characteristics of a parable.

First, Luke 16 names specific people. No parable has ever referenced a person by name. This verse mentions Abraham, Lazarus and Moses.

Another point to mention is in verse 25 and 29 Jesus said, "Abraham said" to the rich man. If this was just a parable, then Abraham would not have said anything to the rich man. He would not be quoted as saying anything, and Jesus would have been lying to say so. Jesus was quoting Abraham.

This rich man in Luke 16 was concerned about his five brothers coming to the same place of torment. He wanted Abraham to send Lazarus (who was in Abraham's bosom; a place of comfort) back to testify to his family. Abraham said, "They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them." The rich man said (vs. 30b), " But if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent." Abraham replied, "If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead" (v. 31). Jesus is retelling an actual conversation.

We also know parables were used to parallel a true event, or

provide an analogy to convey a truth. If there is no hell, then Jesus would have been providing a useless, unnecessary parable with no reason for sharing it. Jesus was very intentional about everything He shared.

Jesus also talked about hell in 45 other verses. Many of the authors of the Bible also warned about hell, including Paul, Peter, James, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Jude, Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Jonah, Job, Amos, David, Solomon and Malachi.

What Jesus shared in Luke 16 was not a parable, and it should convince everyone there is a literal burning hell that awaits those who are unsaved. Receiving Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior is the only way to avoid hell and enter heaven.

For more on what we can learn from the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16, listen to the *23 Minutes in Hell* podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network here. {eoa}