

THE REALLY GOOD LIFE (*Life of Christ Series – Gospel of Luke*)

'Truth or Consequences' A long-running television show in America was called *Truth or Consequences*. The game show host would ask contestants trivia questions that had to be answered within a few seconds or Beulah the Buzzer would blast the signal that time was up. Unless the contestant answered correctly he or she would face the consequences of having to perform some zany or embarrassing penalty before a national audience. It was all in fun of course but the premise of the show is no joke, but a universal law of heaven and earth – our actions have consequences. The Lord Jesus confronted the sinful society of His day with the truth of God's Word. Before Him, John the baptizer had done exactly the same prior to his horrendous execution. Prior to John, the last Old Testament prophet, God confronted humanity with *the Law* and *the Prophets* of the Old Testament. What they preached and taught was the truth from God in heaven about His uncompromising standards for spiritual and moral holiness. God had given humanity in general more than 40 centuries to answer His question: "*Will you repent (turn from) of your false religions and moral debauchery to righteousness so I can forgive you, transform you, and let you into heaven someday?*" Every person has only this brief life span to reply. The correct answer is "*yes, I will stop believing religious error and stop living sinfully, my Lord Jesus – I believe You are the Way, the Truth and The Life and that no one comes to the Father except through total commitment to You*". The correct answer receives God's forgiveness, grace, reconciliation, transformation, and everlasting life. The incorrect answer is "no, I want to believe something else so I can persist in my self-centered, morally debased lifestyle and hope that I'll still go to heaven (if there is one) when I die". This incorrect answer or no answer at all (an unspoken 'NO!') guarantees eternal consequences when this life is over.

In Luke 16:19-31 and other passages, the Bible details the consequences as eternal confinement in the place of eternal hopelessness, loneliness, terror, and torment called Hades (also called *gehenna* or hell). It's a real place created by Christ for the devil and his rebel angels (called demons) (*Matthew 25: 41, 46*). God never desired the souls of human beings to join the demons in this terrible place of damnation (*2 Peter 3:9*), but there is no other alternative for an unrepentant, indestructible soul but to incarcerate it with the ones whom the lost soul chose to follow and obey in this life (*Eph. 2:1-4*). False religions of the world may suggest that there isn't a hell or a Lake of Fire; cultic false teachers may try to mitigate the horrors of the afterlife apart from Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, but that won't change the truth about the consequences. Jesus' strongest warnings on telling the truth about God's demand for holiness or suffer the consequences, were directed at the religious leaders misrepresenting Him and His Word to the people. They evaded, omitted and twisted moral scriptures to get in favor with those in violation of God's Law. They, along with those misled by them, are now on eternal death row awaiting everlasting execution in the Lake of Fire (*Rev. 14:10-11 & 20: 11-15*). Without true repentance toward God and faith in Christ, there will most certainly be *hell to pay* forever and ever, as the consequences of failing to answer correctly are imposed (*1 Cor. 6:9-11*) when the game of life is over.

The Clergy (Christ's Criticism of the Pharisees): Luke 16:15-18

The Lord Jesus taught that the religious leadership of the Jewish people by the Pharisees was spiritually and morally repulsive to God (*v 17*). Because of their love for prowess over the people and their lust for financial/material perks, they refused to call for total repentance in matters of personal and social morality. John preceded Jesus calling for full repentance from all sin (*Luke 3:7-18*). The people's response was *fear of the Lord* and urgent commitment to the righteous life required by Christ (*v 18*). The religious leaders were guilty of relaxing the holy standards required of those wanting to enter the kingdom of God (*v 19*). In the area of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, they unpardonably relaxed God's law, plunging their society into gross immorality instead of godly repentance. God's law about fidelity to marriage vows is clear (*Ecc. 5:1-7, Deut. 24:1-4*). Christ's concurrence with the Law is verified in **Matthew 5: 31-37 & 19:3-11**. The Bible is consistent in teaching that only on-going, unrepentant sexual affair(s) of a spouse can negate the marriage vows for the *innocent party* of the marriage. It was (is) debatable whether remarriage is condoned by God. The clergy in Jesus' day misled those with divorces for lesser reasons into thinking they were free for new intimate relationships or even remarriage. This false teaching made them popular with those who were improperly divorced and reconnected with a new partner, but in conflict with God who condemns that action as adultery and fornication.

Synopsis: Jesus was speaking to crowds in the region east of the Jordan River called Perea. In **Luke 15 & 16** He taught the audiences (residents, religious leaders and the 12 disciples) in a series of object lesson stories called 'the lost and found parables'. The lost & found sheep, coin, and boys illustrated various aspects of being prodigal from the grace of God in chapter 15. In chapter 16 Jesus told the story of the unjust steward who was an example of the religious leaders' failure to faithfully lead and teach God's people as the reason they were being replaced by the 12 apostles.

The underlying motive for the Pharisees' failure was their covetous passion for popularity with the people to get the financial and material perks they could give. Jesus declared that it is impossible for anyone to *serve two masters* regarding the things of God and the things of this world. The religious leaders were examples of the hypocrisy required to attempt serving two masters: **1)** outwardly they seemed to pursue spiritual things but inwardly they were corrupt before God (**v 15**); **2)** they said they were preaching about the kingdom of God, but unlike John the baptizer, they evaded commandments for true repentance; and **3)** they mitigated the Word of God regarding marriage and divorce causing further immorality, imposing a threat to family and society (**v 16**). And coming as no surprise, what was the *bottom line* of serving two masters (self and God)? *Unrighteous mammon* and/or money, of course. Jesus' last story is His final warning that if you let wealth, worldly influence, and self-indulgence become driving forces in your life, you can be sure that when this life is over, you'll be sorry forever with the certain consequences awaiting you.

- Discuss the qualifications of a disciple of Christ who can honestly call himself or herself "a servant" of the Master Jesus (*vs. 10-13*).
- How does this level of dedication make the Christian life easier? How does having something or somebody else as "master" make life harder? How can you tell if Jesus is your "Master"?

Parable(?) of a Lost Soul *(Lessons from The Richest Man in the Cemetery)* **Luke 16:15-31**

The Gospel Truth About Death

(Paradise gained or lost – your choice now; not later)

"There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torment in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." **16:19-22**

- What determines whether you will go to Paradise or Hell when you die (according to *vs. 19-22*)? What does whether you are rich or poor have to do with it?
- According to Jesus, in those verses what places do people go to when they die?

The Gospel Truth About Hell

(It's hot, hopeless and only a sample of something worse to come)

*"But 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.' ... Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot nor can those from there pass to us.'" **16:23-26***

- According to *vs. 23-26*, what is Hell like? How are Jesus' teachings different from Roman Catholicism and other cult groups? Who should we believe?
- What does God's word teach about any movement from Hell once your soul is there? How does this differ from Catholic teaching and other world religions? Who do you believe and why?

The Gospel Truth About Salvation

(The Word of God about the Son of God / Beware the devil's decoys)

*"Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'" **16:27-31***

- According to the Lord Jesus Christ, is it possible for spirits of the dead to leave hell and communicate with the living on earth? How does Jesus' teaching compare with beliefs that the dead can leave hell and communicate with the living on earth?
- How does Jesus' teaching compare with beliefs of the occult & ancient cultural legends (about the dead)?
- How does God reach lost souls before they die (*vs. 31*)?