



## Context of *The Man of Greed & the Man in Need*

By Marcus Lander (March 2012)

This poem is a poetic retelling of one of the parables of Yeshua. Yeshua, notwithstanding the many grand and royal titles by which he is known, such as the Prince of Peace, King of Kings etc. was born into an ordinary working class Jewish family in 1st century Judea, and even if not utterly impoverished, was certainly not affluent, whatever prosperity gospel preachers may claim. In any case we see in his teachings that he had a great deal of regard for the poor. That is not to say that he was prejudiced against the rich, as not all of his followers were poor, including little Zacchaeus, for God is no respecter of persons. He did however frequently criticize the rich for their neglect of the poor and claimed that earthly riches could be a hinderance to spiritual riches, which are far more important and enduring. The crime of the rich man in this story was not therefore simply that he was rich; there must have been more to it than that, neither does it make sense to suppose that merely because of his poverty in this life, was the poor man—known as Lazarus, or El'azar (God is my helper in Hebrew), rewarded in the next. Because the story, as told in the gospels, is a little vague on the precise details, I have sought in my retelling to flesh out a fuller and yet plausible narrative, that fits the events described and that ties in with other passages of scripture on the subject. My aim is not to add to God's word or read into it things which are not found there, but hopefully to unpack its meaning in a helpful and instructive way.

The original telling of the parable can be found below, taken from the gospel of Luke.

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

**Luke 16:19-31**