I. Problems with a literal interpretation of the Rich Man and Lazarus as 2 individuals.
   A. The rich man has active physical attributes after his death & burial:
      1. He lifts up his eyes
      2. He suffers physical pain
      3. He has a tongue
      4. He asked for water.
      5. All these things are associated with the body and the physical world, suggesting an allegory.
   B. The rich man is being tormented in fire before being judged. Fire is always associated with Gehenna, after the judgment (Matt. 25:41-46; Rev. 20:11-15).
   C. The only “crime” of the rich man was being rich – the reason for his torment. Being “rich” is not a sin.
   D. The “virtue” of Lazarus was only that he was poor and full of sores – the reason for his being comforted. This would imply that eternal life is given to those with no social standing, no success, and poor health – homeless people.
   E. The rich man was “buried,” being left in “Hades/Sheol.”
      1. In the Old Testament, Hades/Sheol is The Grave.
      2. In the New Testament, Hades/Sheol is also The Grave.
         a. In Matt 16:18 “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” (“gates of hades” – Isaiah 38:9-20 LXX), Christ’s Church will conquer the grave.
         b. In 1 Cor. 15:54-55 “So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’ Victory over “Hades” is at the resurrection for Christians. If Christians are allegedly in heaven, not in Hades, how is the resurrection victory over “Hades” for Christians? How is “Hades” a “sting” or “victory” over believers if they are in heaven?
   F. Conclusion: “Hades” in the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus ought to be understood as “The Grave” (as in the Old Testament) rather than a subterranean holding place for ghosts awaiting the judgment (as in Greek mythology).
II. The intended audience & historical setting (Context)

A. The setting for Jesus’ entire discourse was a great feast hosted by a member of the Sanhedrin (ruling council – consisting primarily of Levites, “a ruler, of the Pharisees” Luke 14:1).

B. The “Lawyers” (scribes) were present (Luke 14:3). “Lawyers” (scribes) were the teachers of the Law of Moses – a task assigned to the Levites (Mal. 2:1-9).

C. Both the Lawyers (scribes) and the Pharisees were Levites. “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do…” (Matt 23:2-3).

D. The intended audience did NOT believe in the “immortality of the soul.”
   1. The Pharisees did not believe that a “soul” continues to live and remain conscious after death. They believed only in the resurrection and future hope of the Messiah’s Kingdom.
   2. Some of the Sadducees were also Levites and Chief Priests. They did not believe in the “immortality of the soul” or an afterlife of any kind.
   3. The only major sect of Judaism that believed in the “immortality of the soul” was the Essenes, who had withdrawn from Temple worship.

E. The Scribes and Pharisees (Levites) at this feast were wealthy and had a high social standing, and were being seated according to social status (Luke 14:7-8).

F. There were also many common (poor) people present at this feast (Luke 15:1-2).

III. The conversation leading up to the story of the rich man and Lazarus

A. Luke 14:1-6 A sick man healed at the supper to the chagrin of the Levites

B. Luke 14:7-11 Jesus’ rebuke of those seeking social status and acceptance

C. Luke 14:12-14 Jesus rebukes his host for inviting guests of high standing

D. Luke 14:15-24 Parable of the Messianic Supper in the Kingdom, (includes the poor who appreciate the invitation but not the rich who despise it).

E. Luke 14:25-33 Jesus’ warning to the poor about the cost of discipleship

F. Luke 14:34-35 The worthlessness of tasteless salt (present leadership of Israel)

G. Luke 15:1-7 Parable of the lost sheep – to encourage the outcasts

H. Luke 15:8-10 Parable of the lost coin – to encourage the outcasts

I. Luke 15:11-32 Parable of the prodigal son – to encourage the outcasts

J. Luke 16:1-13 Parable of the unjust steward – to instruct the disciples to be just as shrewd as the present leadership of Israel – the Levites

K. Luke 16:14-16 Intro to Rich man and Lazarus
   1. vss. 15-16 The present system about to end (Mal. 3:1-3)
   2. vss. 17-18 Wrongful divorce practices of the Levites (Mal. 2:13-17)
IV. The story of the Rich Man and Lazarus is an allegory based on the following passages of Scripture, all of which the Jewish leaders (Levites) were familiar with:

A. Num. 20:22-27 & Josh. 14:1 (Lazarus / Eleazar)
B. Psalm 69 (Prayer of Messiah for the destruction of the corrupt priesthood)
C. Deut. 32:20-22 (Fire burns to Hades)
E. Malachi (God’s case against Levi, and purging by fire)

V. Interpretation of the Allegory: Luke 16:19-31

A. The “rich man” was clothed in purple and fine linen
   1. The Levites’ garments were “fine linen” (Ex. 39:27-29; 1 Chron. 15:27)
   2. King’s robes were purple (Mark 15:17)
   3. After the revolt of the Maccabees against Antiochus Epiphanies, Israel was ruled by priest-kings of the Hasmonean Dynasty (Levites)
   4. The rich man (Levi – representing the Levitical priest-kings) was “rich” because he stole the tithes from God (Mal. 3:8-9).

B. “Lazarus” is the Greek form of the Hebrew name, “Eleazar” (God is my help)
   1. The first “Eleazar” (Lazarus) was the son of Aaron, made high priest instead of his father because of Aaron’s sin (Num. 20:22-29).
   2. The first “Eleazar” (Lazarus) distributed the Promised Land to the 12 tribes of Israel along with Joshua (Josh. 14:1). Both men are symbolic of Christ – Joshua (Jesus) as Moses’ successor, Eleazar (Lazarus) as Aaron’s successor.
   3. Lazarus was a beggar – Jesus was homeless
   4. Lazarus was full of wounds and considered unclean – Jesus was “despised” and wounded by the ruling priests (Psalm 69; Isaiah 53:1-4).
   5. The “dogs” who licked his wounds are the gentiles (Matt. 15:26-27)

C. Lazarus dies first – the crucifixion of Jesus.
   1. Lazarus is carried by the angels to “Abraham’s Bosom.” This is a sign that “Lazarus” is the promised “Seed” of Abraham (See: John 1:18).

D. The rich man dies and is buried – the destruction of Jerusalem & Priesthood
   1. In Hades (the Grave) the Levitical priesthood experiences the fiery judgment prophesied in:
      a. The Song of Moses (Deut. 32:20-22)
         1. “I will hide My face from them” (cf. Matt. 23:39)
         2. “perverse generation, children in whom is no faith” (cf. Matt. 17:17; Matt. 23; Luke 11:45-54)
         3. “I will provoke them to jealousy” (cf. Rom. 10:19; Rom. 11:11)
   1. The ruling priests (vs. 7,14) made a “covenant with Hades” (v. 15) to escape judgment (the Romans), which would be annulled by the “Corner Stone” & “sure foundation” (v. 16), and they would be “trampled down” by Hades (v. 18).
   2. The rich man calls to Abraham out of the ground (Isa. 29:4).

c. Malachi’s prophecy
   1. Chapter 1: Levitical priesthood condemned for defiling the sacrifice; prophecy of a Gentile priesthood (v. 11).
   2. Chapter 2: Levitical priesthood condemned for polluting the Law of Moses; prophecy of their defilement (v. 3).
   3. Chapter 3:
      a. John the Baptist (cf. Mal. 3:1; Lk. 7:27; Lk. 16:16)
      b. Jesus comes to His Temple (cf. Mal. 3:1; Matt. 21:12-13)
      c. A “refiner’s fire” to “purify the sons of Levi” (vs. 2-3)

2. Levi cries out for mercy to “Father Abraham”
   a. Send the Messiah to give relief (cool tongue).
   b. Send the already resurrected Messiah to Levi’s 5 brothers (sons of Leah) – Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Issachar, Zebulon.
      1. If they won’t hear Moses and the prophets, they won’t believe the Resurrected Christ.
      2. Jesus only showed Himself to believers after His resurrection, never to unbelieving Jews (cf. John 14:19 & 1 Cor. 15:3-8).

VI. Other allegories with the same message:
   A. New wine in new wineskins (Matt. 9:14-17)
   B. Wicked Vinedressers (Matt. 21:33-46)
   C. Sarah & Hagar (Gal. 4:21-31)

VII. Did Jesus affirm the Prophets or Greek mythology?