



ONE ENDING

Introduction

When video games were first invented, they were like action movies you could star in and play for a clear win. Until you reached the highest prize, you had the opportunity to keep playing. You may have had to start over from the beginning at times but you could reach the end of the game with enough determination and skill, which you developed as you played. However, these endings created a problem for game publishers: it forced them to consistently produce new games to make more money.

Then one day, publishers realized that if the game never ended, they could make even more money. So, they focused on developing games where players made up the story as they

went along or departed on a series of similar but distinct adventures. Instead of having a true end, players had a preset list of rules with countless options. The player could play as much as they wanted so long as they stuck to the rules (think NBA 2K, Fortnite, and Roblox). And to make even more money, publishers built in-game purchases you could buy to expand your options.

Consider how many of the world's systems are designed for you to keep playing and never complete them.

The Word

Luke 16:19-24 (NIV)

19 "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. 20 At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores 21 and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. 24 So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'

Matthew 7:21-23 (NIV)

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?'

23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Matthew 25:31-36;41-42, 46 (NIV)

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

46 "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Breaking it Down

Jesus discussed the afterlife throughout His ministry. He often discussed what heaven is like and occasionally discussed the nature of hell. However, He did not often directly say what would lead people to Heaven or Hell. The accounts in our reading were some of the few times Jesus discussed the topic directly.

The accounts address how our actions effect our outcome.

In all three accounts, there is a direct correlation between our actions and outcomes. In Luke, the rich man ignored the needs of a beggar he had both the means and access to help. In Matthew 7, the workers performed acts using the power of God but did not act according to God's will. In Matthew 25, the people on the left ignored the basic needs of others (e.g. food, clothing, shelter). As a result of their actions, those who ignored God's will ended up in Hell.

We will retain our senses.

All accounts illustrate how our senses will remain intact. The rich man could see, talk, and feel the torment. In Matthew 7, the weeping and gnashing of teeth means those in Hell can feel the pain. In Matthew 25, the blessed will experience a place of great joy prepared for them while the cursed will experience eternal punishment.

We will retain our memory.

The rich man recognized Abraham and Lazarus. By calling him Father Abraham, the rich man reveals himself as an Israelite and therefore knew the expectations of caring for the poor (see Exodus 22:22-25).

We will be divided.

All accounts clarify there will be a point where our ending will be decided. After death, Jesus will separate us. That separation will be based on our actions as they are the evidence of our belief in Christ Jesus (see John 13:35).

Ask Yourself

After reading the passage, consider these questions.

What's a difference between how the rich man and beggar died?

What is the inheritance for the blessed people in Matthew 25?

Going Further

These three accounts of Jesus discussing the afterlife along with others such as those listed in Mark 10:23-25 help us focus on the one ending that awaits us all – the afterlife. However, the afterlife includes two options and understanding what dictates the option we get can help us live more focused lives on Earth.

Why do you think Jesus used our actions toward those in need as a deciding factor in where we'll end up after death?

How can people perform signs of God's power and not do the will of the Father?



Bible Reading Plan

We recommend using the New Living Translation (NLT) or New International Version (NIV) when reading these scriptures each day.

Day One

Mark 9:42-50

Day Two

Exodus 22:22-25

Day Three

Matthews 6:1-3

Day Four

Matthew 6:18-20

Day Five

Mark 13:31-33

Day Six

Philippians 3:13-16

Day Seven

Philippians 3:17-21