

## THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

This parable, recorded in Luke 16:19-31, is generally regarded as being the utterance of our Lord (though nothing is said of his having uttered it), and we so regard it.

The great difficulty with many is, that though they call it a parable, they reason on it, and draw conclusions from it, as though it were a literal statement and not a parable. To think of it as a *literal statement* involves quite a number of absurdities: for instance, that the *rich man* went to hell because he had enjoyed many earthly blessings and gave nothing but crumbs to Lazarus. Not a word is said about his wickedness. Again, Lazarus is blessed, not because he is a sincere child of God, full of faith and trust – not because he was *good*, but simply because he was *poor and sick*. If this be understood literally, the only logical lesson to be drawn from it is, that unless you are a poor beggar, full of sores, you will never enter into future bliss, and if now you wear any "*fine linen*" and "purple" and have plenty to eat *every day*, you are sure to go to hades. Again, the place of bliss is "Abraham's *bosom*," and if the whole statement is literal, the *bosom* must be literal and would not hold very many of earth's millions of sick and poor. But why consider the absurdities? All unprejudiced minds recognize it as a parable.

As a parable, how shall we understand it? We answer, that a parable is *one thing said, another thing meant*; we know this from some of the parables explained by Jesus: for instance, the parable of the "Wheat and Tares." From his explanation we learn that when in that parable he said *wheat*, he meant "children of the kingdom;" when he said *tares*, he meant (to those who would understand the parable) "the children of the devil;" when he said *reapers*, angels were to be understood, etc. (See Matt. 13). So you will find it in every parable *explained* by our Lord; the *thing said* is never the *thing meant*; consequently in this parable "a rich man" means something else. Lazarus and Abraham's bosom are not literal, but represent some class or condition. In

attempting to expound a parable such as this, an explanation of which the Lord does not furnish us, modesty in expressing our *opinion* regarding it is certainly appropriate. We therefore offer the following explanation without any attempt to force our views upon the reader, except so far as his own truth-enlightened judgment may commend them, as in accord with God's Word and plan. To our understanding the "rich man" represented the Jewish nation. At the time of the utterance of the parable, and for a long time previous, they had "fared sumptuously every day" – being the especial recipients of God's favors. As Paul says: "What advantage then hath the *Jew*? Much every way; chiefly, because to them was committed the oracles of God." – [Law and Prophecy.] The promises to Abraham and David invested the people with *royalty*, as represented by the rich man's "*purple*." The ritual and (typical) sacrifices of the Law constituted them, in a *typical* sense, a holy nation – righteous – represented by the rich man's "fine linen." – Fine linen is a symbol of righteousness. – Rev. 19:8.

Lazarus represented the Gentiles – all nations of the world aside from the Israelites. These, at the time of the utterance of this parable, were entirely destitute of those blessings which Israel enjoyed; they lay at the gate of the rich man. No rich promises of royalty were theirs; not even typically were they cleansed; but in moral sickness, pollution, and sin they were companions of "dogs." Dogs were regarded as detestable creatures in those days, and the typically clean Jew called the outsiders "heathen" and "dogs," and would never eat with them, nor marry nor have any dealings with them. – John 4:9. As to the "eating the crumbs (of favor) which fell from the rich man's table" of bounties, Jesus' words to the Syro-Phoenician woman give us a key. He said to this Gentile woman – "It is not meet (proper) to take the children's (Israelites) bread and give it to the dogs" (Gentiles); and she answered, "Truth, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." – Matt. 15:27. Jesus healed her daughter, thus giving the desired crumb of *favor*. But there came a time when the typical righteousness ceased – when the promise of royalty ceased to be theirs, and the kingdom was taken from them to be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. – Matt.

21:43. The *rich man* died to all these special advantages and soon he (the Jewish nation) found himself in "*gehenna fire*" – a cast-off condition, in trouble, tribulation and affliction, in which they have suffered from that day to this.

Lazarus also died: the condition of the Gentiles underwent a change, and from the Gentiles many were carried by the angels (messengers, apostles, etc.) to Abraham's bosom. Abraham is represented as the father of the *faithful*, and receives to his bosom all the children of faith, who thus are recognized as the heirs to all the promises made to Abraham. For the children of the *flesh*, these are not the children of God, but the "children of the promise are counted for the *seed*" (children of Abraham) "which seed is Christ," – and "if ye be Christ's then are ye (believers) Abraham's seed (children) and heirs according to the (Abrahamic) promise." – Gal. 3:29. Yes, the condition of things then existing terminated by death – at the death of Jesus – "for if one died for all, then were all dead." There the Jew was cast off and has since been shown "no favor," and the poor Gentiles who before had been "aliens from the commonwealth (the promises) of Israel and *without God* and *having no hope* in the world," were then "made nigh by the blood of Christ" and "reconciled to God." – Eph. 2:13. If the two tribes living in Judea (Judah and Benjamin) were represented by *one* rich man, would it not be in harmony to suppose that the *five* brethren represented the remaining *ten* tribes, who had "Moses and the Prophets" as their instructors? The question relative to them was doubtless introduced to show that all *special* favor of God ceased to the ten tribes, as well as to the two directly addressed. It seems to us *evident*, that Israel only was meant, for *none other nation* than Israel had "Moses and the prophets" as instructors.

In a word, this parable seems to teach precisely what Paul explained in Rom. 11:19-31, how that because of unbelief, the natural branches were broken off, and the wild branches grafted into the Abrahamic promises. In the parable, Jesus leaves them in trouble, and does not refer to their final restoration to favor, doubtless because it was not pertinent

to the feature of the subject treated; but Paul assures us, that when the fullness of the Gentiles – the Bride – be come in, "they (the Israelites) shall obtain mercy through your (the Church's) mercy." He assures us that this is God's covenant with *fleshly Israel* (who lost the higher – spiritual – promises, but are still the possessors of certain earthly promises), to become the chief nation of earth, etc. In proof of this statement, he quotes the Prophets, saying: "The deliverer shall come out of Zion, (the glorified church,) and shall turn away ungodliness from *Jacob*," (the fleshly seed). "As concerning the Gospel, (high calling) they are enemies, (cast off) for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes." "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" – Rom. 11:30-32.

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