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## THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

– APRIL 26. – Luke 16:16-31. –

THIS parable has long been used as the special support of the horrible doctrine of "eternal torment." If those who thus misuse it would but examine it afresh in the light of the below suggestions they would find it more in harmony with other Scriptures, more beautiful and more [R1966 : page 85] reasonable.

(1) It is a *parable*, without doubt; because to take it literally would make of it an absurdity. It simply puts the rich man into flames and torment because of his fine linen and purple and sumptuous living, and not because of any specified evil doings. It likewise puts the beggar into "Abraham's bosom" simply because he was poor and sick, and not for any specified merit or righteousness. And if Abraham's arms are only for the poor and sick he surely has them more than filled long ago; so that the poor and sick of the present time would have no more chance than the well clothed and well fed of getting into his bosom – if this were a statement of *fact* and not a parable.

(2) Since it is a parable, it must be understood and expounded as a parable, and *not as a fact*. In the parable of the wheat and the tares, wheat does not mean wheat but the children of God, and tares do not mean tares, but the children of the devil. The same is true of all other parables – sheep, goats, fish (good and bad), the pearl of great price, ten pieces of silver, etc., etc.: the thing said was *never* the thing meant. It would therefore be as [R1966 : page 86] incorrect to say that the rich man and the beggar of this parable were two men as to say that literal sheep and goats, and wheat and tares, were referred to in the other parables.

(3) Interpreting this parable on the lines of interpretation applicable to all parables, we should expect the rich man to represent

some class of people, and the beggar to represent another class, and the fire and Abraham's bosom to have equally symbolical meanings.

(4) We suggest the following as fitting all the conditions: –

The rich man represents the scribes and Pharisees (the elder son in the parable of the Prodigal Son) who enjoyed the good things of God's favor and had much advantage every way over the Gentiles as well as over the publicans and sinners (the prodigal) of their own nation. The purple raiment represented the royalty promised to Israel, the fine linen represented their justification through the typical sacrifices.

The beggar who desired the crumbs from the table of the favored represents the sin-sick of Israel, and especially of the Gentiles, who were desirous of God's favor. Some of these Gentile outcasts asked for and received from our Lord "crumbs from the children's table."

The death of both, beggar and rich man, at the same time, represented the change of dispensation which dated from the time that our Lord, just before his death, pronounced over Jerusalem the words, "Your house is left unto you desolate."

The rich man in torment represents the trouble which has been upon the Jews throughout this Gospel age. The beggar in Abraham's bosom represents how the former poor outcasts have been received into divine favor during this Gospel age, and are no longer strangers, but children of Abraham through faith in Christ. – Gal. 3:29.

For further particulars see OLD THEOLOGY TRACTS, Nos. 1 and 32.

The Golden Text chosen shows that those who selected the lesson had the common misunderstanding of this parable.

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