

## THE RICH MAN IN HELL

– MAY 5. – LUKE 6:20-26; 16:19-31. –

**Text: – "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." – Luke 12:15.**

NOT ALL THE POOR are to be blessed and to inherit the Kingdom of God, etc., as set forth in this lesson. We are to notice particularly the setting of the Master's words. He lifted up His eyes on His disciples, and said, "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God" – "ye shall be filled" – "your reward is great in heaven." Undoubtedly poverty is a greater aid to discipleship than wealth. The cost of discipleship is the surrender of every earthly ambition to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

The rich are disadvantaged because theirs would be the greater sacrifice. "How hardly shall a rich man enter into the Kingdom of God" – become a joint-heir with Christ in His Messianic Kingdom which for a thousand years is to bless the world! The rich are disadvantaged because their wealth preserves them from many trials to which the poor are subjected. They have so many consolations and comforts now that the thought of sacrificing these to follow the Master appalls them, and the Kingdom glories seem to them less real and less attractive than to the disconsolate.

The lesson for us is that if we would win the great Prize and the Kingdom we must not set our hearts upon earthly things, nor trust in uncertain riches. Contrariwise, we must realize that our all, much or little, is the Lord's, and that faithfulness in sacrificing what we have will decide whether or not we shall share His glory.

## THE RICH MAN IN HELL

The second part of our lesson is one of our Lord's most striking parables. We read that He opened His mouth in parables and dark

sayings, "that, hearing, they might hear and not understand." Of all our Lord's parables this one has been most seriously misunderstood. Indeed, it is accepted as a literal statement, notwithstanding the fact that we read again, "Without a parable spake He not unto them." Only a slight investigation, however, is necessary to demonstrate that this is a parable – that it would be unreasonable to consider it to be a statement of literal facts. For instance, it would be unreasonable to suppose that a man would be sent, after death, to torment merely because in the present life he fared sumptuously every day, lived in a fine house, and wore purple and fine linen. Nothing whatever is said about the character of the man, good or bad, and we are not permitted to add to the Word of God. The Rich Man represented a class.

Similarly, the poor man, after death, must have symbolized a class, because no reason is given for his blessing after death, except that he was poor, covered with sores and lay at the rich man's gate eating his crumbs.

Considered as a parable, this is one of the most interesting and helpful of all our Lord's utterances. The Rich Man of the parable represents the Jewish nation, highly favored of God. The bountiful table represents the rich promises of the Law and the Prophets, which were theirs alone up to the time that they nationally died to those favors. The Rich Man's purple clothing represents royalty – the fact that they were God's typical kingdom.

David and Saul sat upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord, and when the kingdom was removed in the days of Zedekiah the declaration was made that it would afterward be restored, with Messiah as King. The "fine linen" of the Rich Man represented the *justification* which God had granted to the Jewish nation alone thus far. It was a typical justification, accomplished through the Law Covenant and its sacrifices for Sin Atonement administered by a typical priest year by year.

A harvesting of the Jewish people began with our Lord's ministry and lasted for forty years. It ended in the year A.D. 70, when the Rich Man, as a nation, died at the hands of Titus and the Roman army. Nationally, the Rich Man is buried, and will be non-existent until the due time, when the Lord's blessing will return to the Jewish people, as explained by St. Paul in Romans 11:25-35. But although *nationally dead*, the Jewish *people* have been very much alive ever since, and have been ostracised and persecuted and tormented with fiery trials.

Although the nation of the Jews contains representatives of all the tribes, it is specially represented in Judah and Benjamin; and hence these two tribes constitute the one Rich Man. The other ten tribes, "scattered abroad," would proportionately represent the "five brethren" mentioned in the parable. This thought is confirmed by the statement, "They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them." None but the twelve tribes of Israel had Moses and the Prophets.

### **LAZARUS IN ABRAHAM'S BOSOM**

Lazarus, the poor outcast, who was longing for a share of the Rich Man's favor and privileges, represented a certain class of Gentiles, such as the Centurian, whose servant Jesus healed, and who had such faith in Jesus that he said, "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come into my house, but speak the word and my servant shall be healed." Jesus declared that He had not found such faith as that amongst the Israelites. Another of these Gentile outcasts was the Centurian Cornelius, the first Gentile received into the Gospel privileges. Of him it is written that he revered God, prayed always, and gave much alms to the poor.

Of the same Lazarus class was the Syro-Phenician woman, who besought Jesus that he would heal her daughter. Because she was a Gentile Jesus answered, "It is not proper that I should take the children's bread and give it to dogs" – the Gentiles – "dogs" being a familiar name for all outside the pale of Judaism. The woman at once recognized the application and answered, "Yea, Lord, yet the dogs eat

of the crumbs which fall from the children's table." In answer to such faith Jesus granted her a crumb from the Divine table.

Here, then, we see the Lazarus class, sin-sick, covered with sores – because not sharers in Israel's yearly sin-atonement sacrifices – hungry, because all of the promises of God primarily belonged to Israel – the companions of dogs, who licked their sores – this also intimating that they were Gentiles. They were *outside the gate* of Divine favor, this illustrating the same lesson – that they were "aliens, strangers and foreigners to the commonwealth of Israel." This Lazarus class, composed chiefly of Gentiles, had as its nucleus "the outcasts of Israel" – the publicans and sinners, who heard the Gospel Message gladly, but whom the Scribes and Pharisees rejected, disfellowshipped and put out of the synagogues, disowning them as Jews.

The parable pictures a great change in this Lazarus class – they died to the conditions wherein they then were. They ceased to be the poor beggars, aliens and strangers, sin-sick, weary and hungry. But Lazarus was not buried, as was the Rich Man; "he was carried by the angels" to the bosom of Abraham. The angels were the Apostles and ministers of the Gospel – specially St. Peter and St. Paul. These declared to the Gentiles that whereas once they were "aliens, strangers and foreigners to the commonwealth [R5005 : page 116] of Israel," they were now "brought nigh" through faith in the Lord Jesus, and through the begetting of the Holy Spirit.

Abraham typified God, the Father of the faithful, and the carrying of Lazarus to "Abraham's bosom" symbolically said that the outcasts of Israel and the worthy Gentiles became children of God, children and heirs of Abraham, who typified God. Thus also wrote the Apostle, "Ye are brought nigh through the blood of Christ"; "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's Seed, and heirs according to the promise." The promise reads that "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" by this Seed of Abraham. Thus St. Paul wrote, "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh, but the elect obtained it, and the rest were

blinded," and "wrath came upon that people to the uttermost," "that all things written in the Law and the Prophets concerning them should be fulfilled." – Rom. 11:7; I Thess. 2:16; Luke 21:22.

The Jew in his misery has beheld with jealous eye the favor of God manifested toward those whom he despised. He has even humbled himself to ask that relief might be sent to him through Christian Gentiles – symbolically, even "one drop" of refreshment. But no relief will be afforded until the end of this Age – until the Messianic Kingdom shall be established; and then Israel (both dead and living) shall obtain mercy through the elect. – Rom. 11:31,32.

One fulfilment of the request of the parable for a "drop of water" occurred several years ago when the Jews memorialized President Roosevelt, requesting his good offices with the Russian Government for the abatement of the persecutions of the Jews there. The President replied that he regretted the inability of complying with the request because the etiquette of nations prohibited such a suggestion being offered by one nation to another with whom it was at peace.

=====