

Reaping God's Justice

Key Verse:
***“Abraham said—
Child! remember—
That thou didst
duly receive thy
good things in thy
life, and, Lazarus,
in like manner, the
evil things; but,
now, here, he is
comforted, and,
thou, art in
anguish.”***
—Luke 16:25,
Rotherham
Emphasized Bible

Selected Scripture:
Luke 16:19-31

and he cried, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.” Abraham did not grant this favor, but simply reminded the rich man of his former favorable position, and the previous unfavorable lot of the beggar.—vss. 22-25

In the parable, it does not state that the rich man was wicked, or that the beggar was righteous. When the beggar died he did not go to heaven, but was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom. Earlier in his ministry, Jesus had

IN OUR LESSON, JESUS gives a parable of a “rich man” who “fared sumptuously every day,” and a “certain beggar named Lazarus,” who was “full of sores.” Each day he laid at the gate of the rich man's house, desiring to be fed with “crumbs which fell from the rich man's table.”—vss. 19-21

Eventually, both the rich man and the beggar died. When the beggar died he was “carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.” When the rich man died, he was buried, and “in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments.” He saw Abraham afar off, with Lazarus “in his bosom,”

in fact said: “No man hath ascended up to heaven.” (John 3:13) Therefore, the statements in Jesus’ parable must be symbolically understood, including the declaration that the rich man was “in hell ... being in torments.”

The parable’s interpretation revolves around the nation of Israel. Just as the rich man fared sumptuously every day, so also Israel was blessed bountifully with nourishing symbolic food furnished by God’s Law and his prophets. To them were given “the oracles of God.” (Rom. 3:1,2) Thus, the rich man in the parable well represents the Jewish nation as it existed at the time of our Lord’s earthly ministry.

The rich man of the parable wore a purple robe, a symbol of royalty. God had promised to make Israel a “holy nation” if they would obey him. The rich man’s “fine linen” is a fitting symbol of righteousness. It represented the measure of righteousness which the Israelites had under the Law which had given them a standing before God unlike other nations.

As a nation, however, Israel “died” shortly after Jesus’ First Advent, having not recognized him as their Messiah. The rich man was in “hell” [see Lesson for June 17], the condition of death. The nation of Israel has remained in this state throughout the present Gospel Age—dead as a holy nation. We rejoice, however, that God has promised their restoration.—Rom. 11:1,2,25-27

The beggar in the parable symbolizes the Gentiles who have responded to the heavenly call during the Gospel Age. Concerning God’s promises, they were a poverty-stricken people prior to the First Advent of Jesus. Shortly after Pentecost, however, Gentiles were given the opportunity to hear God’s call. (Acts 15:14) This change of position is represented by the beggar’s being carried into Abraham’s bosom. Thus, in God’s plan, both Jews and Gentiles will be recipients of the promises made to Abraham for “all the nations of the earth.”—Gen. 22:17,18; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8,16,28,29 ■