



THERE was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:²⁰ And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,²¹ And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.²² And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;²³ And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. (Luke 16:19-23)

This hymn was written by a minister well-acquainted with the doctrines of the Bible and a prolific writer of hymns to make those doctrines clear to the hearer. His name is Philip Doddridge (1702-1751). His many hymns are all designed to further an understanding of Holy Scripture even for those who were illiterate in reading. The tune is *PENTECOST* written in 1864 by William Boyd, and it conveys the reverence of God's holiness to the lyrics composed by Doddridge though the tune was first written for "Come, Holy Ghost, Our Souls Inspire." The name of the hymn is sometimes referred to as "*IN WHAT CONFUSION EARTH APPEARS!*" - the first line.

The Rich Man and Lazarus

In what confusion earth appears!
God's dearest children bathed in tears;
While they, who heaven itself deride,
Riot in luxury and pride.

But patient let my soul attend,
And, ere I censure, view the end;
That end, how different, who can tell?
The wide extremes of heaven and hell.

See the red flames around him twine,
Who did in gold and purple shine!
Nor can his tongue one drop obtain
T' allay the scorching of his pain.

While round the faint so poor below
Full rivers of salvation flow;
On Abra'm's breast he leans his head,
And banquets on celestial bread.

Jesus, my Savior, let me share
The meanest of thy servant's fare;
May I at last approach to taste
The blessings of thy marriage-feast.

1 In what confusion earth appears! God's dearest children bathed in tears; While they, who heaven itself deride, Riot in luxury and pride. Does this first sentence not perfectly describe this orb of chaos upon whose turf we dwell and make our lives? Those issues such as love, marriage, civil restraint and courtesy, and sobriety were merely the natural state of decent society in the days of my youth – today, there is a rarity of decent society. *“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”* Isaiah 5:20 (KJV) The dignity of law is given to perversions of sex and the sins of Sodom. Pornography is elevated in sex education classes for our youth while prayer and Bible readings are forbidden. The abortion of innocents in their mother’s womb is praised while Godly family life is assailed as quaint and out of date. The wicked seem to prosper while the righteous suffer want. But there is purpose in all of God’s plan for His Elect, and that purpose is easily observed in the account of Lazarus and the Rich Man just as it was revealed in the life of dear Job.

2 But patient let my soul attend, And, ere I censure, view the end; That end, how different, who can tell? The wide extremes of heaven and hell.” Success in life itself is closely reliant upon our measure of patience – a Godly virtue, indeed. If we will patiently forego the little luxuries of life in our youth and save, we may have the resources to invest in business or profession when our savings allow. But spendthrifts lack patience and enjoy the summer corn and starve in the winter months. In living the life God has willed for us, we must exercise that same patience of a wise steward. Though our righteous honor may seem to cut us short from the advantages of the less honorable in life, a patient reliance upon the Providence of God will bring a more enduring reward in the end. There is a thin line between Heaven and Hell, but the degree of difference is beyond description. The story of Lazarus and the Rich Man will bear that truth out in bold relief.

3 See the red flames around him twine, Who did in gold and purple shine! Nor can his tongue one drop obtain T' allay the scorching of his pain. The Rich Man can lay claim to no asset at all – even a name which he needs not in the lonely fires of Hell. He carelessly enjoyed his finery in selfish living in this life, and will suffer every deprivation in the life to come. (By the way, we all will spend an eternity someplace – either in Heaven or Hell). The Rich Man never wanted of a drop of water when the world seemed to lay at his feet. Now, the most routinely available of natural resources are withheld. Not only is he without material blessings, but immeasurable pain and suffering are added in the place thereof. Even his mind is tormented for his brothers who seem destined to share the same end.

4 While round the faint so poor below Full rivers of salvation flow; On Abra'm's breast he leans his head, And banquets on celestial bread. Bread and water are the essentials of life. Lazarus, who begged for bread from the Rich Man and his friends now has an abundance of the best Bread of all – the Bread of Heaven. But the Rich Man, never lacking the best cuisine and wines, now yearns only for a drop of water from the finger of Lazarus. The text is not about ONE beggar, but TWO! Lazarus was a beggar on earth but a rich man in Heaven; and the Rich Man was wealthy on earth but has become a beggar in Hell. Wealth is no bar to salvation, but it is a hindrance to many whose eyes are blinded by that wealth so much so that God is eclipsed by things of this world engendered by greed and lust. It should be noted that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. If one considers a life in Hell to be defined as living, the Rich Man is also as alive today as Abraham. But eternal damnation is an existence apart from God and Love. Eternal life is on a far different scale than the life of damnation reserved for the wicked.

5 Jesus, my Savior, let me share The meanest of thy servant's fare; May I at last approach to taste The blessings of thy marriage-feast. Who was the Savior of Lazarus as he lay before the Rich Man's door? It was the same Lord Jesus Christ upon whom Abraham fixed his faith, and upon whom you and I look for salvation. The poor feel the need and presence of God more commonly in their lives of deprivation than those to whom every need is provided by a wealthy sire. I have noticed this fact in the mountains of Luzon, the jungles of the Solomon's, the rice paddies of Asia, and the bush country of Kenya. When the next morsel of food seems too much to hope for, the poor turn to God who provides for those who believe. The feasts and banqueting of the Rich Man were enjoyed in the sight of poor Lazarus, yet no one cared for him or invited him to the feasts thrown by the Rich Man. Now the Rich Man can see Lazarus as he enjoys his own feast of opulent provision given on his behalf by His Lord and Redeemer, but no one will notice the Rich Man's cries and screams in Hell for that wide abyss to which Abraham made reference precludes Heaven from witnessing the pains of Hell, but not those in Hell from witnessing the splendors of Heaven. Our Lord has made His Invitation list In Heaven for His greatly anticipated Marriage Supper. He will invite those only whose names are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life. I pray that your name appears there.