



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. ²⁴ And he cried and said, 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. ²⁵ But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. ²⁶ And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. ²⁷ Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: ²⁸ For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. ²⁹ Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. ³⁰ And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. ³¹ And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. (Luke 16:19-31)

There are two men named Lazarus in the Gospels – one a friend of the Lord, brother to Martha and Mary, at Bethany; the other a beggar who was laid at the gate of a rich Man day after day begging bread. Both men were restored to life – the first, to his former life on earth; the second to life eternal in Paradise. But Lazarus of Bethany was not the only dead person resurrected by our Lord during His ministry. Thousands witnessed His miraculous power over death. Many of those who witnessed such miracles were the Jewish rulers, priests, scribes, and Pharisees – yet, these REFUSED to believe though they were eye witnesses of more miracles of the Lord than most of His disciples for they followed and observed Him everywhere. “And for this cause God shall send them

strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12)

We all have known people whose opinions were far stronger than the facts known to them. We see it today in the political world. We see it even more strongly manifested in the religious world. There are so many problems in society today which would find simple and complete resolution in following the Word of the Lord; however, this is the one and only resolution that is forbidden by the world. Men’s lives are ruined in following after the mirage and delusion of humanistic religion. They may profess a belief in God but deny Him by their deeds and words. *“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” (Matthew 15:8-9)*

Our Lord will not brook false professions of faith, neither will He while away His time on the obstinate of heart and reprobate of soul. It is a hard thing for the modern church to accept the fact that some men are beyond convincing of truth. Though such men may be unknown to us, they are not unknown to God. There is no remission of sin without the shedding of blood. *“This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and **without shedding of blood is no remission.**” (Hebrews 9:20-22)* It is not as though the terms of salvation were revoked for them, but they have, by their habitual rejection of the call of God, placed themselves beyond the voice of the Holy Spirit. *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.” (1 Timothy 4:1-3)*

As a sidelight to this trend of thought, we should understand that we lead no one to Christ. We may point the way through teaching; but it is the Holy Ghost who enters the heart of the sinner and draws him, as with the hook of the fisherman, to Christ. We are to beg no one to follow our Lord. If they profess faith based on our urgings, of what value is that profession to Almighty God? My Lord is King of Kings. It is an honor to be in His company. Why should I beg anyone to follow the Sovereign of the Universe? If they will not hear biblical teachings, shake the dust of that home from your shoes and go to the next.

You will recall in the introductory text above of the beggar Lazarus, the Rich Man could see, from the torments of Hell, the beggar Lazarus in the Bosom of Abraham (Paradise), but we are not told that Lazarus could see the Rich Man. I am sure that seeing Lazarus in such fine fettle would increase the torments of Hell for the Rich Man. On the other hand, if Lazarus saw such pain and torment as was experienced by the Rich Man, he would likely have been saddened and feel remorseful at such a sight. So, God knows what He is doing in dividing the two estates in that manner.

The Rich Man was not basely evil – he was simply selfish to his own desires and indifferent to the needs of others. He chose the best of everything for himself and received those things. But he was close-handed with his riches. He saw Lazarus day-after-day lying at his gate begging. He had the means to lift the unbecoming yoke of Lazarus (as Christ has done for us) but was not so inclined. Now, in the fires of Hell, he can see Lazarus again but from a totally different perspective, too late to amend his character, he has awakened in Hell.

Now, in Hell, the Rich Man becomes the beggar and Lazarus the man of means. He begs for Lazarus to come to him as he should have come to Lazarus in former life. But life’s rewards are already fixed. The abyss between Heaven and Hell is such that no man

can cross the divide. Once our eyelids close in death, delayed salvation is no longer possible. Our fates are fixed at the moment of death. Either we are carried by an angelic escort to the bosom of Abraham or, else, buried and awaken in Hell.

The Rich Beggar is a true Hebrew in bargaining for SOMETHING from Abraham: *“Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.”* Once dead, the lost know the value of faith. The Rich Man has brothers who are likewise lost. He desires that they be spared the fires of Hell. Surely they will believe if Lazarus returns from the dead to convince them! Not so!

You will remember the large contingent of Jews who witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus of Bethany, of the daughter of Jairus, of many others who were resurrected by the simple Word of our Lord? Yet, they did not believe even in witnessing these great miracles over death. And they ALL witnessed the crucifixion of our Lord on the brow of Calvary Mountain. They witnessed his death and burial. They knew as well, that He rose from the dead on the third day. But they REFUSED to believe – not that they could not, but they did not desire to believe!

Our Lord rose from the dead, yet they would not believe just as they refused after the lesser resurrection of Lazarus of Bethany.

Faith is not confirmed by miracles and outlandish demonstrations of the hypocrite’s demonstrations on a stage of life. It is confirmed by the simple faith in the Lord and all He has said and done. He was prophesied of old, born of a virgin in the fulness of time, lived a sinless life, was crucified, dead, and buried. He arose on the third day and ascended to Heaven. PERIOD! *“Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”* What more do you need to believe? Don’t waste your time and money running to ‘floor shows’ of faith that boast signs and miracles – run rather to that solid Rock of faith which is found in Christ alone!