



# Bible Student's Notebook™

*The Herald of His Grace*

Weekly

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume XXI  
Issue 513

## The Rich Man and Lazarus

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

In the present revolt against the traditions concerning the so-called “intermediate state” there has been a return to the teaching of the Scriptures. A careful consideration of “the Law, the Prophets, and the Literature” – as the Sacred Hebrew Writings were called by our Lord, and especially the book of Ecclesiastes, makes it most positive that “*the dead know not anything*” (Ecclesiastes 9:5). This is further confirmed by a close study of the later Greek Scriptures. In spite of the attempts on the part of the translators to conform their version to current tradition, enough of the truth was left to show that, apart from resurrection, even those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished (I Corinthians 15:18).

But there is one passage which seems to teach the very opposite. It seems to run counter to the entire tenor of Scripture. As a result there have been many attempts to explain it away. Many who see the truth clearly must still acknowledge the difficulty created by the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31).

### THE WORD “TIS”

The translation of this passage, as it occurs in the *Authorized Version*, is not far from the mark, though it might be more accurate in a few instances. It may be well to point out that the story was not given out as an actual incident. This is the meaning of the word rendered “certain.” It really signifies “uncertain.” It is a very indefinite term, usually rendered “any,” and is used to introduce ideal or typical characters. There is no evidence to support the assertion that “there



was a rich man.” Our Lord asserts the contrary when He inserts the word “tis,” making it an ideal rather than a real case.

### FARED SUMPTUOUSLY

The “sumptuous fare” of the rich man has no particular reference to food, and cannot be taken in the derogatory sense which usually attaches to feasting. It was but the exuberant gladness which even saints are exhorted to entertain (Acts 2:26; Romans 15:10; II Corinthians 2:2; Galatians 4:27; Revelation 11:10; 12:12; 18:20).

### THE GREAT GULF

The “great gulf,” or yawning chasm, evidently was a waterway, for Abraham tells the rich man, “*Neither may they ferry from thence to us.*” This word is used only when crossing water; and there must have been water for Lazarus to dip his finger in.

### THE SUMMATION

The teaching of this tale is summed up in the mouth of Abraham. He says to the rich man,

*You came in for your good things in your lifetime; and Lazarus like-wise evil things: yet now here he is consoled and you are in pain.*

With the Word of God in our hearts, we fearlessly and unreservedly protest that this is *not* truth. Abraham is the last man to give out such a doctrine, for he himself had been a very rich man and should not be

(see LAZARUS, page 4507) ↗

## Bible Student's Notebook™ Weekly

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

ISSN: 1936-9360

Volume XXI, No. 513 – October 6, 2015

This free weekly electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
  - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
  - union in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6);
  - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

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### ABBREVIATION KEY

<u>Scripture Version</u>	Concordance (Knoch)
(Unless otherwise noted all Scripture quotations are taken from the Bible Student's Version).	CL: A Critical Lexicon and Concordance (Bullinger)
CV: Concordant Literal Version	CWS: Complete Word Study Dictionary (Zodhiates)
DAR: Darby Translation	FoS: Figures of Speech (Bullinger)
DT: Dabhar Translation	SEC: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance
FF: Ferrar Fenton Bible	TGL: Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon
KJV: King James Version	UR: Unsearchable Riches
RE: Rotterdam's Emphasized Bible	VED: Vine's Expository Dictionary
WT: Weymouth Translation	YAC: Young's Analytical Concordance
YLT: Young's Literal Translation	
<u>Reference Sources</u>	<u>Reference Notations</u>
AA: Analytical Analysis (Welch)	cf. – compare
BDB: Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon	e.g. – for example
CB: Companion Bible Notes & Appendixes (Bullinger)	et al. – and others
CC: Concordant Commentary (Knoch)	etc. – et cetera (and so on)
CKC: Concordant Keyword	ff. – and the following
	i.e., – that is

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LAZARUS (continued from front page)

comforting others but be receiving his “evil things,” for, during his lifetime “the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things.” He was very rich (Genesis 13:2).

### THE EMBELLISHED STORY

We are not at liberty to add to this Scripture and to imagine that the rich man was wicked as well as wealthy. We are *not* told so, and his “faring” sumptuously was no worse necessarily than the joy of heaven over the advent of the Kingdom and the authority of the Christ (Revelation 12:12), for the same term is used of both.

Nor is there the least hint that Lazarus lacked food or sympathy while he lay at the rich man’s gate. He did not leave for a better bed. But it is positively wrong to embellish the story with human inferences. The moment we begin to grope outside the realm of what is written we expose our own inability to see the point of what is revealed.

Doubtless this story it is, which is responsible for the prevalent notion that there is merit in poverty and in loathsome disease. It is indeed true, *in this economy*, that God is selecting the base things. Not so, necessarily, under the law.

Obedience brought temporal *blessing*: suffering was generally the law’s penalty for disobedience. Those who harkened diligently to Jehovah’s voice were to be blessed in every way (Deuteronomy 28:1-14) like the rich man. Upon those who would not hearken came the curses (Deuteronomy 28:15-16) which afflicted Lazarus. He had the “botch” or boils of Egypt (Deuteronomy 28:27), the sore botch which cannot be healed (:35). Lazarus had the sure tokens of Jehovah’s displeasure; the rich man had every sign of His favor.

### IMPORTANCE OF OMISSIONS

Omissions, in Scripture, are as important in their way as the record itself. There is absolutely nothing said of the faith of these two men, and we must positively refuse to inject any such distinction into the narrative. *Faith is the response to a revelation*. Neither the rich man nor Lazarus were in the place which faith had put before them. *God* had never

promised to give a place in “Abraham’s bosom” to the unfortunate. That was one of the Pharisees’ traditions against which the disciples were warned by our Lord. *God* never threatened the rich with fiery torment. That was the teaching which was making the Word of God of none effect.

According to this story, then, destiny depends not on faith, but on what may be termed the law of average. To everyone is allotted an equal amount of good and ill. Death is the pivot, the unseen world is the counterbalance in which each one receives that portion of good or ill due to put all upon an equality.

Is anything needed to convict this false delusion beyond the mere statement of what it proposes to our credulity? If this be true, where is law? Where is grace? Where is love? Where is God?

Much that is in the Bible is not true. Satan’s first statement, “*Ye shall not surely die*” was not true, even if it has been incorporated into the creeds. And the woman’s first utterance contains an element of falsehood, for God did not say “*neither shall ye touch it.*” The greater part of the book of Job is composed of man’s false philosophy. Many a text has been taken from it because the preacher did not distinguish between the unsullied Word or Expression of God Himself and His inspired record of the false views and utterances of others. But we cannot put the story here told in this category, for it fell from the lips of our Lord Himself.

### IT IS THE FIGURE CALLED “ADMISSION”; IT IS NOT OF THE NATURE OF A PARABLE

The fact is that it is an impressive figure of speech. Figures are not, and indeed cannot be, true as to fact, but are true to feeling. We never think of accusing Him with falsehood when He said “*this is My body,*” or when He speaks of that same body as the temple, so that He was misunderstood. Nor is it true that His disciples were salt, or that that other Lazarus was literally asleep in the corrupting tomb. So that, when we suggest that our Lord told a story which was not true as to fact, but most impressively true in the finer realm of feeling, we are simply expressing in words what is acknowledged by all in various degrees. And we are simply applying a recognized principle to ►

the case in hand. If anyone wishes to know where the denial of this plain principle leads, let him follow the controversy between the learned Luther and Zwingle. Luther's contention that the bread is the Lord's body was unwarranted by the facts. Faith is the acknowledgment of a truth which our senses are unable to test, not the acceptance of a *lie* which our senses deny.

If, then, this is a figure of speech, what figure is it?

Many seem inclined to call it a parable, though it is not given that name in the narrative. But it is essential, in a parable, that the story be familiar and commonplace. Let anyone glance over the parables and they will see that the story is never such but what has been and can be seen. A picture is presented to the eye as one side of a parallelism alongside of which we are supposed to find the hidden meaning. The story, though ideal, may well be true as to fact: the interpretation is true in a different realm. Now none of this fits the figure here. The action is located in the unseen. No one has ever seen anything like it, much less is it so usual an occurrence as would justify its use in a parable.

Besides this there are figures of speech in this story, which can never be the case with a proper parable. Should we allow that "*Abraham's bosom*" is a picture of the place of consolation in hades, we are debarred, by the unbearable law that *the interpretation of a figure cannot be a figure*, from making this, in turn, representative of another place of comfort. The interpretation of a figure is literal.

No interpretation which calls this story a parable

will stand this test. The most ingenious and elaborate, which seems to have gained currency since the days of Constantine, makes the rich man the representative of Israel and Lazarus a type of the nations. As a result of Israel's death in 70 A.D. (we are not told when the nations died!) there has been a great gulf between Israel and the other nations. But, as a matter of fact, the contrary is the truth. As a result of Israel's defection, not only has Abraham's blessing come to the nations, but the estrangement between Jew and Gentile has been set aside. The gulf which once existed has vanished. Neither is it true that the nations cannot alleviate the sufferings of Israel. Some will be rewarded for succoring them, while others will be punished for helping forward her affliction.

That the scene is a figurative one is evident, for the literal bosom of Abraham is not sufficiently capacious to hold the blessed dead. But the rest of Abraham is not literal when a part of him is figurative. As he is the principal speaker, the whole scene is figurative.

We are forced to acknowledge one of two positions. The only tenable one is to take it as the Lord's auditors took it. They were accustomed to use "Abraham's bosom" as a figure of the highest felicity. Their vivid oriental imaginations clothed the abstract idea of blessedness with appropriate concrete forms. This presented no difficulty to their eastern minds. Many stories almost identical in its figures were common in their traditions.

### "THE GOSPEL OF NICODEMUS" SETS FORTH THE "INTERMEDIATE STATE"

Later on these crude errors were repeated in the



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by — Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918)

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*Beneath a silent heaven we are called to this life of superb trust.* – Alan Burns (? -1929)



apocryphal “Gospel of Nicodemus,” sometimes styled “The Acts of Pontius Pilate.” The writer of this, adding to the record of the resurrection which occurred after the Lord was crucified (Matthew 27:53), tells how Charinus and Lenthius, sons of Simeon (Luke 2:25) were raised, but could not talk until they had made the sign of the cross with their fingers on their tongues. Then they asked for a piece of paper on which each writes the forbidden account of what they saw in hell. Charinus gave what he wrote into the hands of Annas and Caiphaz and Gamaliel. Lenthius gave his to Nicodemus and Joseph. Then they vanished. What they wrote was compared and found to agree with not one letter's difference in it.

This narrative of what was seen in hell should be read by all who wish evidence (?) for the orthodox position on the “intermediate state.” All was dark at first, but suddenly a “substantial purple-colored light” enlightens the place. Isaiah cried out that this was the fulfillment of his prophecy (Isaiah 9:1; Luke 2:29)! John the Baptist appears in his part as the forerunner, reminding Adam of what Michael had told Seth at the gates of Paradise, when Adam had a headache. Michael had said to Seth,

do not pray to God in tears and entreat Him for the oil of the tree of mercy wherewith to anoint thy father Adam for his headache, because thou canst not by any means obtain it till the last day and times, namely, till five thousand five hundred years be passed.

Then comes Satan, boasting of his defeat of Christ in death, but he is soon followed by Christ Himself, Who makes the sign of the cross on Adam and upon all His saints, and leads them all, including David (Acts 2:34), into the heavenly paradise!

There they meet Enoch and Elijah. The “thief,” too, had preceded them, having been given the sign of the cross so that the angel who is the guard of paradise will admit him! Lest anyone should take this as the Rich Man and Lazarus story is generally taken – as a narrative of facts – I beg to explain that I repeat these fables only that they may afford a contrast with the real source of truth on this question and to show that orthodoxy is following fables instead of the pure presentations of holy writ.

It was natural for the Jew to seek for a sign. They preferred to have someone rise from the dead rather than listen to Jehovah's words as recorded by Moses and the prophets. But when another Lazarus, Mary's brother, did come forth from the tomb, having been in the unseen three days, what did they do? They sought to kill him! And what did he report as to the realms of the dead? *Not one word!* Why? Because there was nothing for him to tell!

Had he some tale like this, which would uphold their traditions and give the lie to Moses and the prophets, he would have been the petted idol of the day. This is the truth taught here – *faith*.

*They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear them.*

Nothing else will persuade them, not even the return of Lazarus from the dead. The great object of the story is to drive the faithless Pharisees back to the Scriptures. The whip He uses is one of their own traditions.

The Lord shows the powerlessness and absurdity of their departures from the written law by forcing these to their legitimate conclusion. They did not hesitate to put their doctrines into the mouth of Abraham, but the Lord used Abraham, the great example of faith, to turn them from their purile deceptions back to the Scriptures which they had deserted. He allows, for the moment, the position they hold in order to show them that, even on their own grounds, faith alone is of any avail.

It is useless for them to prate about blessing with Abraham while rejecting that faith which was the foundation of all his bliss.

The figure of speech here used is called “Admission” or “Epitrope.” That which is false is seemingly granted or admitted for the time. It is closely allied to irony, which states the opposite of what is really intended. Figures such as these depend upon the occasion, upon the attending circumstances, to make them understood. They may be used only in impassioned discourse, when feeling is at fever heat. It must, moreover be clear to all what the speaker really believes. What he states must be that which his ►

listeners believe. Then there is no possibility mistaking the speaker's real meaning.

For instance, when Micaiah (I Kings 22:15) told the king of Israel "Go, and prosper, and Jehovah deliver it with the hand of the king," we would naturally think, unless we had entered into very close sympathy with the state of affairs, that the king ought to be pleased. But he knew what was in his own heart and that it was not in line with Jehovah, so he sees the meaning hidden behind the prophet's words. Jehovah was encouraging him to his destruction.

Thus we see that Jehovah, by his prophets, actually used words *which were not true* as to literal fact, yet full of truth and force for the king in his rebellion.

Like this is the advice of Koheleth, the Preacher:

*Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth: and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*

We do not take this advice as it stands. In fact, it arouses the opposite desire, to *avoid* the ways of one's own heart and *distrust* one's own eyes, for, as he goes on to say, "All is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 11:9: 12:8).

*Come to Bethel and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgressions; and bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three years; and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this pleaseth you, O ye sons of Israel saith Adonai Jehovah (Amos 4:4,5).*

This, indeed, pleased *them*, but who imagines that it pleased *Him*, even if He had not said plainly, "seek not to Bethel?"

In line with this was the advice given by our Lord to the scribes and Pharisees. After denouncing the murderous crew, He adds, "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers." This they did in crucifying Him, but even they would hardly claim that it was done at His instigation.

## THE PHARISAIC TRADITIONS OF THE DAY

The story of the rich man and Lazarus is taken bodily from the Pharisaic traditions of the day. As our Lord uses these traditions He is careful to phrase His speech with their peculiar terms, such as "Abraham's bosom," "carried by angels," etc., all of which was borrowed from the so-called "oral law," which He had denounced, and none of which has the least likeness to that written law which He hid in His heart. They knew full well that He was giving them their own and not His doctrine. In fact matters had come to such a crisis that they would no longer listen to *His* teaching, so He gives them a dose of their own.

Seeing that this was the case, we have just the right material for the figure of Admission. Feeling gets the better of mere fact.

The story occurs at just such a juncture. The Lord had been speaking of another rich man and his unjust steward. He made friends for himself with his master's money. His master commends him for his prudence. Our Lord comments:

*And do I say to you, "Make for yourselves friends by the riches of injustice that, when you fail, they may receive you into eonian habitations"? He that is faithful in a very little is faithful in much also: and he that is unjust in a very little is unjust in much also. If therefore you have not been faithful in the unjust riches, who will commit to your trust the true? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and riches (Luke 16:8-13).*

The Pharisees, who were *misers*, heard all these things; and *they sneered Him down*.

## THE PHARISEES WERE MISERS; THE RICH MAN WAS A SADDUCEE

The Sadducees did not believe in any "intermediate state." Because they even denied the resurrection they enjoyed their wealth as the rich man in our sto-

ry. But the Pharisees, holding to the tradition of conscious bliss or misery before the resurrection and the judgment, did not approve of using their wealth for a daily good time. They were misers, literally, “*fond of silver*,” hoarding their money rather than spending it. They are not represented by the rich man. So they would readily recognize a Sadducee in the rich man, and enjoy his fiery torment.

They sneered Him down. But He does not leave them. He touches their weak point and holds them by it until He can enforce the lesson they so much needed. To go on correcting and denouncing them was useless, for they “stuck up their noses” in disdain and would not listen. The object before Him is to enforce His dictum:

*It is easier for heaven and earth to pass than one tittle of the law to fail* (Luke 16:17).

And, since they would not listen to plain truth, He gives it to them in their own terms. The rich man they would put down as a Sadducee because of his lavish living. They would enjoy his predicament and the realistic portrayal of their own conception of hades. But, finally, the Lord brings them round to the point with which He began. The rich man had five brethren who, *like the Pharisees*, did not hearken to Moses and the prophets. These represent the Pharisees. The skillful introduction of Abraham by means of their own pet phrase “*Abraham’s bosom*” gives Him the opportunity of impressing them with the real sentiment of the “*father of the faithful*.” They claimed Abraham for their father while they were doing the work of the Adversary. And all because they did not follow in the faith which Abraham exemplified. How impressive, then, when their ears were closed to the Lord’s teaching, to hear Abraham’s voice from the dead, as it were, warning them of their apostasy!

*They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear them ... If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from among the dead.*

And may we press home this very exhortation? May we suggest that our Lord always believed and taught what had been revealed on this very subject, and that not even the Pharisees themselves were deceived into

thinking that He had abandoned the Scriptures and had embraced their doctrine of an equal measure of torment and bliss for all or their notions as to the state of the dead?

## CHRIST IS THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

It is to *faith* that we appeal. When, on another occasion, our Lord was dealing with an unfaithful servant, He admitted that He was an austere man (Luke 19:22). Shall we take this as our authority for denying all the grace and love which illumines almost every page of the sacred text? He admitted that He is a hard man – *but is He?* And just so He admitted the traditions of His enemies, the Pharisees – *but shall we follow them or take His own words when dealing with His own on this very subject and heed His advice to believe all that God has spoken?* We will not place our expectation in Abraham or any traditional intermediate state, but in *Christ* – not as – what shall we say? Scripture has no name for Him in connection with the intermediate state, so we will not invent one – but in CHRIST as THE RESURRECTION and THE LIFE. ■

— *Unsearchable Riches*  
Vol. 6, pages 229-240

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