

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

The Parable of the rich man and Lazarus, is a passage on which the self-styled orthodox chiefly rely to sustain their doctrine of rewards and punishments at death. And as we have in a former number intimated our intention of giving a critical examination of this text, we will now proceed to show that this parable, like all others in the group, has reference to the Jewish nation who were about to be cut off for their disobedience and rejection of the Messiah, and to another class, called Gentiles, about to be engrafted into the stock of Abraham and become heirs of the promises, covenants and blessings of Abraham.

To begin at the beginning, then, it will be necessary to take into account the persons to whom our Lord addressed his discourse, and the circumstance that called forth the parable. Our Savior had just been relating the parable of the unjust steward, and had applied it to the Pharisees by charging upon them the same practices as that of the unjust steward, saying, "Ye make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness in order that when ye fail ye may secure to yourselves a habitation for life." The Pharisees, who were covetous, felt the force of the simile, and like their antitypes of the present generation when hard pressed with stubborn facts, turned it off with derision. However, our Lord does not leave them, but continued his discourse by first informing them that the law under which they held their tenure, expired with the preaching of John, and since that time the Kingdom of God was preached, they imagining that they only were the heirs of that Kingdom, were making a rush towards it. In order to undeceive them in this respect, he refers them to the law respecting marriage. The Jewish nation were represented by the Prophets as the married wife, and as the wife had broken the marriage covenant, she had forfeited all right or title to her privileges. She was about to be put away for her unfaithfulness, but ere another bride could be taken, a symbolical death of the married wife must first take place, else it would be a case of adultery. Then comes the parable: "A certain rich man clothed in purple and fine linen, who fared sumptuously every day," is made to represent the Jewish hierarchy. [See Exodus 28. where a description of the garments of the priesthood is given in detail, answering to the habiliments of the rich man in the parable; then as a counterpart of the poor beggar, see the case of the Syro Phœnician woman as recorded in Matthew 15: 24-27; Mark 7: 25-28.]

It is a well known fact that all Gentiles

were looked upon by the Jews as beggars and outcasts, scarcely worthy of being fed by the crumbs falling from their tables, much less as being heirs to the Abrahamic covenant. But here in the parable our Saviour is about to show them that the time for their debasement was just at hand, that all the curses contained in the Law of Moses were going to be inflicted upon them on account of their adulterous connection with the world, and their rejection of the Messiah; or in other words, that they were about to suffer a political and ecclesiastical death, and that the Lord was about to take to himself another bride to fill their place; that during the time of their death and burial, Jehovah would elevate the despised Gentile beggars to the bosom of Abraham, or engraft them into the Abrahamic stock and thus become participants of the blessings of Abraham. Here, then, we have in this parable a striking and faithful representation of the condition of the Jew and Gentile, and the change that was about to take place in their relative positions. The Jews prided themselves in being the heirs of a kingdom that should supersede all other kingdoms and stand forever. They supposed that they were destined to be the rulers of all the Gentile nations, whose governments they would one day "dash in pieces like a potter's vessel," and rule the people with a rod of iron, when the promised deliverer should come as a triumphant conqueror to subdue their enemies, as the prophets had clearly predicted, but they erred in overlooking the preliminary humiliation, sufferings, death and resurrection of the promised Messiah, the destruction of their city and temple, their own "dispersion into all countries, and the afflictions, torments and plagues of long continuance," which Moses and the Prophets had so clearly foretold, and which have so faithfully and literally been fulfilled in the history of that nation. Let the reader just now turn to Deuteronomy 23th chapter, and read from verse 15 to the end, and Levit. 26: 14-16, and after comparing these threatenings of Jehovah in case of their disobedience, with the situation of the Rich Man in Hades, and any man who can fail to discover their identity, must be blind indeed.

But the question may be asked, "will the great gulf that has been fixed remain forever, and the torments of the Rich Man never come to an end?" We answer, no. That blindness and unbelief on the part of the Jew which constitute the gulf is only to continue "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." Then "the Deliverer will come out of Zion and turn away un-

godliness from Jacob, for this is my covenant with them when I shall take away their iniquities." Rom. 11; 26, 27. Although the torments and plagues of this symbolical Rich Man have been "sore and of long continuance," yet Jehovah has declared by the mouths of all his holy Prophets that he will not cast them off forever or break his covenant with them, but that he will remember the covenant of their Ancestors, Levit. 26, 44. He has announced by the Prophets his intention of "gathering them out of all the countries whither they have been dispersed, of taking them out of their graves and placing them in their own land, the land wherein their fathers have dwelt." See Ezek. 36 and 37th Chapters. There is a time coming, yea, close at hand when Jehovah's indignation shall cease and his anger in the destruction of their oppressors.

Hear what the Lord hath said concerning this matter by the mouth of his Holy Prophets, Isaiah, 61: 17—"Awake awake O, Jerusalem which hath drunk the dregs of the cup of trembling and wrung them out * * * thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of every street like a wild bull in a net * * * desolation, destruction and famine and the sword, they are full of the fury of the Lord, the rebuke of thy God." But in answer to that important question of the termination of their sufferings in Hades, where they have been buried for the past 1800 years, hear what the Lord has said by this same Prophet, verse 21: Listen ye enemies of Jehovah's chosen people and tremble. "Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted and drunken but not with wine. Thus saith thy Lord the Lord thy God," (how emphatic! who will dispute what HE is about to utter). "He that pleadeth the cause of his people. Behold I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the cup of my fury. Thou shalt no more drink it again, but I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee, who have said to thy soul, bow down that we may go over. And thou hast laid thy body as the ground and as the street to them that went over."

The seed of Jacob have long been "afflicted, tormented and tossed" for their disobedience and unbelief; they have been scattered and peeled, as Moses and the prophets have said, but the time of their affliction is nearly run out; the cup of the Lord's fury is about to be taken out of their hands and put into the hand of their oppressors. And though they may refuse to receive the cup, yet the decree has gone forth from the mouth of the Lord, saying, "If they refuse to take the cup at thy hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, ye shall