

# GOSPEL GUIDE

UNDERSTANDEST THOU WHAT THOU READEST?  
HOW CAN I, EXCEPT SOME MAN SHOULD GUIDE ME? (ACTS 8:30,31)

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## The Rich Man and Lazarus

**IN LUKE 16:19-31** Jesus tells the story of the rich man and Lazarus. It would be good to read these verses carefully. The account is not identified by Christ as a parable. It tells the story of two men, of how they lived on earth, and of how they fared after death as a result of their earthly conduct.

### **I. This passage condemns certain PRACTICES.**

“There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.” The marginal reading is “living in mirth and splendor every day.” It is evident that God intended for people to be happy here on earth because in the beginning he gave to man a paradise in which to live. Jesus said to his disciples, “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John 15:11). Paul wrote to Christians, “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Philippians. 4:4). True joy comes in serving Christ and not in “the pleasures of sin for a season.”

The rich man in this passage was condemned not necessarily because he was rich, *but* because he

used his riches selfishly in living in mirth and splendor. Warnings are given to the rich. “But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. (Luke 6:24). “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” (Luke 18:24). “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:9,10).

This passage then condemns a lack of concern about the physical well-being of others. If the poor man received any help from the rich man, it was only the unwanted crumbs which fell from his table. Yet, the rich man lived under the

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## THE RICH MAN

law of Moses which said, "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth" (Deuteronomy 15: 7,8)) The rich man failed to obey this law.

In the New Testament Paul shows that one has the responsibility of working to support himself—"if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). When one is not able to do this, others have a responsibility toward him. "But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John 3:17).

This passage also condemns waiting too long to be concerned about the spiritual well-being of

others. In the place of torment the rich man became concerned about the destiny of his five brothers and begged Abraham to send Lazarus that he might testify to his brothers, lest they also come to that dreadful place of torment. He had waited too long. He failed to meet his responsibility toward his brothers in the days when he had opportunity. How many now are letting days of golden opportunity pass by without trying to save others from an eternal torment?

Further, this passage also condemns waiting too long to be concerned about our own spiritual welfare. After the rich man had fared sumptuously every day, after he had lived in mirth and splendor without concern for doing God's will, he now begs for relief from his dreadful suffering, begs for even a drop of water. He had waited too long to become concerned. "It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Many may have in mind, "Lord, I will obey thee, but not yet, not today." That "not today" becomes not tomorrow, and not the next day, until death comes when there is no day of grace left.

### II. This passage condemns certain DOCTRINES.

It repudiates the Christian Science doctrine which denies the existence of pain and suffering. The sores of Lazarus must have been real, for the dogs came and licked them. The suffering of the rich man must have been real, for 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."

It repudiates the doctrine of Spiritualism which proposes communication between the living and the dead. The rich man proposed that Lazarus be sent back to his father's house that he might testify to his five brothers to help prevent their coming to that place of torment. Abraham said that if they were not willing to hear God's word, Moses' and the prophets' communication from the dead would be of no benefit to them.

It repudiates the Jehovah's Witness doctrine of soul-sleeping. Both the rich man and Lazarus died, and neither was in a state of sleep after death. The rich man lifted up his eyes; he felt; he saw; he spoke, he remembered. All of this he could hardly do while asleep. If it is said that this passage is only a parable, and that it, therefore, represents something else. This argument is without the support of the passage itself. The passage does not refer to the story as a parable. A parable makes use of well-known facts to teach spiritual lessons. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus Jesus is revealing unknown facts of conditions after death. If this passage is a parable, and Christ is making use of these unfamiliar facts to teach a spiritual lesson, what lesson is he teaching? The true lesson is to be found in the factual revelation of conditions after death and not in some parabolic projection of these conditions.

It repudiates the doctrine of Universalism—that *all* will be saved. Even if one person should be lost, this doctrine falls, for it de-

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clares that all will be saved. Certainly the rich man was not saved. Further, Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13,14). In the great judgment Jesus will say to those on the left hand, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting

fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41).

It repudiates the doctrine of Purgatory. The rich man could not do anything for his brothers; nor could his brothers do anything to relieve him from his endless suffering.

It repudiates ancestor or family worship. Sometimes people now say, "If I obeyed the gospel, I would be condemning my father" (or my mother, or my husband, as the case may be). A woman said, "If my father is lost, I want to be lost." The rich man had an entirely different

idea. He wanted his brothers to do God's will in order that they might not come to that terrible place of suffering.

It repudiates the doctrine of the second chance. He prayed. He begged for relief, and no relief was given or promised. One who rebels against God in this life, and expects another chance after death, will find that he has made an unalterable mistake, for "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Hebrews 9:27). — BN

## Tell Us Plainly

**IN JOHN 10:24 WE READ** of the Jews gathering around Jesus and saying unto him: "How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, *tell us plainly.*" Jesus obliged them by speaking plainly even though his answer was not what they wanted to hear. "Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him" (John 10:31).

Jesus, either in person or through the revelation of the Spirit, has spoken plainly in regard to every question for which man needs an answer. He has not answered every question about which man may question, but he has answered every one which man needs to know about. He has given to us all things which pertain to life and godliness. (2 Peter 1:3). The apostles, shortly before Jesus left this earth, were told: "Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth ...." (John 16:13). Thus

Jesus, either in person or through the revelation of the Spirit, has spoken. He has spoken plainly. We need not guess. We need not speculate. We need not turn to tradition. We need to listen to Jesus who has spoken plainly.

### Lord, Is There a Way to Heaven?

Lord, in the midst of this maze of human speculation and tradition where some say one thing and some another, is there a way to heaven? Tell us plainly. The prophets had said so in the long ago.

"And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isaiah 35:8). Jesus spake plainly about this. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and *narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life*, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13,14). That is spoken plainly. Can we understand that plain speech?

### Lord, What Must One Do to Be Saved?

Lord, when so many voices give conflicting messages, tell us plainly what one must do to be saved. The Lord himself said: "He that believeth and is baptized *shall*

## **A HASTY IMPULSIVE JUDGMENT**

David made a hasty judgment without knowing all the facts he could have and should have known. He had done a noble thing in restoring lands that rightly belonged to Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, king Saul's son and devoted friend of David. He had told Ziba and his sons to care for the lands that belonged to Mephibosheth and to serve him (2 Samuel 9:9,10).

When David was fleeing from his son, Absalom who was in rebellion against his father's rule, Ziba went with David, and brought a great amount of food for David's needs. David asked why Mephibosheth had not come. Ziba lied to David, telling him that Mephibosheth was in rebellion with Absalom and was expecting the kingship to be given to him. Without any investigation of the word of Ziba, in haste—and perhaps in anger—David gave all the lands of Mephibosheth to Ziba. Later he did return half the lands to Mephibosheth (2 Samuel 19:29).

There is something to be learned from the life of David. In making an important judgment, lay aside impetuosity, take time to know the facts essential to a fair judgment.

## **TELL US PLAINLY**

*be saved.*" (Mark 16:16). To those who already believed Peter, being guided by the Spirit, said: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins ..." (Acts 2:38). To another, who already believed and had already repented, the message given was: "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, *and wash away thy sins*, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Is this not spoken with plainness? What is there about this which is hard to understand?

### **Lord, How Can We Know If We Are Christians?**

Lord, people who believe and practice all sorts of conflicting things vehemently affirm that they are Christians. Tell us plainly as to how we can tell whether or not we are Christians. Listen to his statement about this in 1 John 2:3-5: "And hereby we do know that we know him, *if we keep his commandments*. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: *hereby know we that we are in him.*" This ought to be plain enough for any of us. The Spirit directed the apostles to use great plainness of speech. (2 Corinthians 3:12). Furthermore, we read in Romans 8:16 this: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God." This is saying that our actions in becoming and remaining Christians must be in agreement with the testimo-

ny of the Holy Spirit—the word of the Lord who speaks plainly.

### **Lord, I Am Satisfied that I Am a Christian**

Lord, I am satisfied that I am a Christian. Isn't that enough? The Lord spake plainly about such things. The Lord always sought to do the will of his Father in heaven. He did not seek to please himself. Listen to him speak: "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). Again, he said: "For I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29). The only way we can please God is to follow what he says in his word. I must not be satisfied that I am a Christian until I am sure that I have done what the Lord said that people must do to become Christians.

### **Lord, Is There More than One Church?**

Lord, all about us there are hundreds of different churches, each teaching something which differs from the others. Tell us plainly. Is this according to heaven's will? The Lord tells us plainly. He promised to build one church (Matthew 16:18). Through the apostles he plainly tells of one church. There is one body (Ephesians 4:4). That body is the church (Ephesians 1:22,23). Christ is head of one church. "And he is the head of the body, the church" (Colossians 1:18). "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ and every one

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members of another” (Romans 12:4,5). The Lord has told us plainly that there is one church. If we will search we will learn that he tells us how to identify it. It is then a challenge to us to find the one which He speaks so plainly about.

### Lord, How Do You Expect Christians to Live?

Lord, religious people about us have different standards of righteousness. Tell us plainly what you

expect of us so far as manner of life is concerned. He has spoken plainly. “For the grace of God which brings salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:11,12). “Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phi-

lipians 2:14,15). Yes, Jesus has spoken plainly about the manner of life his disciples are to live.

### Whatever You Do

The Lord has spoken plainly. He has even said that whatever we do we are to do it in harmony with his instructions. “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Colossians 3:17). The Lord has spoken plainly about everything for which we need instruction. — *Curtis E. Flatt*

# What About Universal Salvation?

**UNIVERSALISM IS THE THEORY** of “a final restitution of all souls to God’s favor and to blessedness.” It was advocated by Origen in the third century. One of the five “Essential Principles” of the Universalist Church is “The final harmony of all souls with God.” This theory is also held by many people in various churches and has been urged by a number of modern writers. Some who believe in universal salvation do so more as a fond “hope” than with full commitment to the doctrine. James Orr calls it “a tempting speculation.”

But while it may be tempting to want to believe that all men will be saved eternally, universal salvation is not taught in the Bible. The arguments made in support of the theory will not stand the searchlight of divine truth.

1. *One argument offered in behalf of universal salvation has to do*

*with the character of God. We are told that God is too good to send any to hell and therefore will finally restore all men to His favor and save them eternally. But those who will be lost in eternity will be lost not because of a lack of goodness on the part of God but due to their own sinfulness. The goodness*

of God provided the means of salvation for all men (John 3:16). But the justice of God and the free will of man are also involved. (Romans 2:1-6). God through His redemptive mercy makes salvation possible for all, but His divine justice demands that those who refuse His offer of mercy be punished for their sins. Those who reject God’s mercy will die in their sins. Jesus said to some, “And ye shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come” (John 8:21).

2. *John 12:32 is given as a proof-text for universal salvation. “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” It is claimed on the basis of this statement that all men eventually will be drawn to Christ and thus saved. Jesus here refers to the fact that His death on the cross would be the means of drawing men to Him by His resurrection from the dead. “All*

## THE BIBLE IN HAND — NOT ENOUGH

When one carries the Bible to impress people with his holiness, he could be more of a hypocrite than a saint. It is good for one to have the Bible in hand for the purpose of reading and learning the will of God. When, however, one gets no closer to it's contents than holding it in his hand, he does not have it where God intended for it to be. God intends for His word to be in the heart. "Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!" (Psalm 119:11). "Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

When God's word is in the heart, one does God's will "not with eyeservice, as menpleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" (Ephesians 6:6). When man truly loves God, his love will be with all the heart, with all the soul, with all the mind (Matthew 22:37). The Bible is not for mere display. In the heart it directs man in fully doing God's will (Hebrews 13:21).

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men" does not mean that every person on earth will be saved. It is obvious that many will be lost. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:46). "All men" means all kinds of men, or men of all nations. The gospel was intended for all men, and the cross has power sufficient to save all who will come to Christ in His own appointed way. But the gospel will not save those who put God's word away from them and thereby judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life (Acts 13:46).

3. *"But doesn't the Bible say that Christ died for all men?"* The answer to this question is yes. Christ did indeed die for all men. A number of passages makes this clear. For instance, Hebrews 2:9. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." This simply means that Christ's death is sufficient to save all men. He died for all men potentially. However, only those who come to Him through obedient faith will be saved. The same writer said, "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:9). A lifeboat may be sufficiently large to save all the passengers on a sinking ship, but only those who are willing to get into the lifeboat will receive the benefits of its saving power.

4. *Some who hold the theory of universal salvation claim that all*

*punishment for sin occurs in this life.* They claim that suffering is a continuing process by which men are purged of their sins. They say, "Sin is a temporal matter which, when duly wiped out by suffering or 'punishment,' leaves the way open for universal salvation." This overlooks the fact that it is the blood of Christ that purges sin and not suffering or punishment—"knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Peter 1:18,19). Suffering does serve to try the righteous; and it is only with difficulty that they overcome their sundry trials and remain faithful to the Lord. This is what Peter had in mind when he said, "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Peter 4:18).

5. *Many believe that there will be another chance to be saved after death.* They claim that if men are lost in this life some way will be provided in the next life for them to be saved. This view takes on many facets of explanation. Some say there will be a sort of purgatory or a continuing process of "cleansing by suffering" to purge sins left over at death. Others think there will be another age on this earth during which another opportunity will be offered to the lost to be saved. But regardless of the explanation, the truth of the matter is there will be no second chance for any to be saved. Paul said, "... it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this

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cometh the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). There is no hint of a second chance for salvation given in the New Testament. The judgment will be based upon what each has done “in his body,” not after leaving the body (2 Corinthians 5:10).

The theory of universal salva-

tion is not true. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). While time and opportunity are ours we must accept God’s offer of mercy by obeying the gospel of Christ and by living in harmony with His will so that the blood of His cross will purge our sins (Romans 6:3-6; 1 John 1:7). But if we

fail to take advantage of God’s grace while mercy lingers and choose to die in our sins, we will be forever lost. Where He is we cannot come (John 8:21). Nothing awaits the rebellious “but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:27).

— Earl Kimbrough

# Dead to the Law

**THE INSPIRED APOSTLE PAUL** reminded Jewish Christians at Rome that they had “become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that (they) should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead” (Romans 7:4). He makes it clear as to what “law” he refers to when in verse seven he says, “... I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” Just what is the significance of this statement, “Dead to the law”?

### The Law Given To Jews

In Deuteronomy 5:2f we read, “The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.” We can read of that incident in such passages as Exodus 19ff. The only way for a Gentile ever to have been under (alive to) the law of Moses was by proselyting, or becoming of “the circumcision.”

### The Purpose Of That Law

In Galatians 3:19 we read that the law “was added because of transgression,” and in verse twenty-four that it was to serve as a “schoolmaster to bring us

(the Jews) unto Christ, that (they) might be justified by faith.” These passages, as well as others, clearly show that the law of Moses was intended to be a *temporary* system of instructions for the Jews.

### Jesus Was Born Under The Law

“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:4,5). Although there were many attempts to prove Jesus guilty of violating the law, none were successful. He alone kept that law perfectly. In fact,

He himself said that he came to “fulfil” the law (Matthew 5:17f). While some would accuse Him of “destroying” the law, He assured them that He had not, and that nothing would pass from the law “till all be fulfilled.”

### The Duration Of The Law

This is implied in two of the passages given to show the *purpose* of the law; namely, “till the seed should come,” which “Seed” was the Christ, according to verse sixteen, and “... the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us unto Christ ...*” (Galatians 3:19,24). But note the statement of our theme: Paul said the Jews had become “dead to the law.” Death basically means a “separation.” They had become *separated* from the law, that they might be married to Christ. Now note that he says this was accomplished “by (or through-ASV) the body of Christ.” As we have noted, Jesus said He came to “fulfil” the law, and this He *did*. (See John 17:4). When He had fulfilled the law, He “took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Colossians 2:14). Thus, by His death Jesus brought the law of Moses to an end. In this He was “blotting out the handwriting of or-

## CAN MAN DO A BETTER JOB THAN GOD?

In building the tabernacle Moses was careful to follow God's instruction in every detail. The result was a structure, exactly according to God's design (Exodus 40). Many years later Ahaz, king of Judah, saw a pagan altar in Damascus that highly pleased him. He had a copy made "according to all its workmanship." On the "great new altar" the priest could offer for the king his offerings and those of the people. What Ahaz did no doubt pleased the king. It did not please God, for "he did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD his God" (2 Kings 16:2).

Through the ages there have been many walking in the footsteps of Ahaz—ignoring the supreme authority of God and without authority proposing their own way of life. Such a course is utter foolishness—"O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

Yet some political leaders in high offices today propose and encourage what God declares to be abominable. Warning: "be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23).

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dinances which was against us, which was contrary to us," or He was breaking down "the middle wall" which stood between Jew and Gentile.

The apostle reminded the Ephesians that in this He made it possible to "reconcile both (Jew and Gentile) unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Ephesians 2:16).

### Law Of Moses No Longer Binding

As we have noted, the law was never binding upon the Gentiles, and the Jews became "dead" to it by the death of Christ; therefore, that law, having served its purpose, is not binding upon anyone *now!* In fact, the Galatian Christians, who were being misled by Judaizing teachers, were told that "Christ shall profit you nothing," if they attempted to be justified by the law; they had "fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:1-4).

The Colossians were reminded that they were not to be judged by stipulations of the law, such as "meat, or drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon or of the sabbath days" (Colossians 2:16). We, therefore, cannot justify anything in religion today by that

law, but must rather turn to the *law of Christ* for all things. (Colossians 3:17).

### Conclusion

No one can serve God today while appealing to the law of Moses for their authority for such, whether it be Sabbath keeping, burning of incense or mechanical music in worship. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." (Hebrews 1:1f).

Someone asks, "Then, does the Old Testament serve no good purpose today?" Yes. We are reminded that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning ..." (Romans 15:4). We see a good illustration of this in First Corinthians 10:1-12, wherein we are reminded that the same thing that happened to God's people back in the wilderness might very well happen to us! And so, we can gain many good things from the Old Testament *now*; but for *authority* for our teaching and practice in religion today we must appeal to the law of Christ. We are (or should be) "married to Christ." (In our next issue of *Gospel Guide* we want to give attention to that theme, as also suggested in our text of Romans 7:4).

— Charles G. Maples, Sr.

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