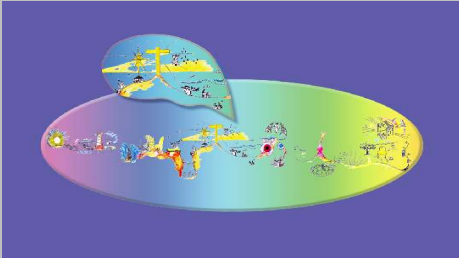


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Eternal Fellowship News Bulletin

We believe in one GOD, in three persons; FATHER, SON and HOLY SPIRIT. We regard the Bible (both Hebrew Bible and New Testaments) as the only infallible authoritative WORD OF GOD.

HULDAH MINISTRY aims to return to the Word Of God, founded on Hebrew background and to interpret it from Hebraic perspective, acknowledging that Jesus is a Jew and the Jewish-ness of His teaching as a continuation from the Hebrew Bible. The Ministry also aims to put His teaching into practice, to have a closer relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ, and to regularly have a Christian fellowship so that this-worldly kingdom of God will materialise in the midst of the followers of Jesus here and now, as well as earnestly seeking Christ's Return to establish the otherworldly Kingdom of God on earth.

All activities are free of charge and no obligation whatever. Just enjoy our fellowship!

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HULDAH MINISTRY

LETTER TO THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

[CHRIST AND THE WORD ALONE]

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' 'But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' 'He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to the place of torment.' 'Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them listen to them.' ' 'No father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' 'He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

LUKE 16:19-31.

The account of 'the rich man and Lazarus' (or the parable in which Jesus called one of the characters by the name "Lazarus") quoted above teaches many things.

First, it tells of a clear distinction between the two destinations of the dead; 'Abraham's side' and 'hell.' Throughout the New Testament, Abraham is referred to as

the great prototype of a man of faith. In the Talmudic language, to sit on '*Abraham's side*' (or "bosom") is to enter paradise, which is the place the righteous dead go as a temporal blessed home to await future vindication at the end of the age. The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) designates 'paradise' as a garden, park, orchard or forest, while the New Testament designates it as a blessed home of those who died in Christ between death and resurrection. "Hell" here in the NIV version that usually translates from the Greek "Geena" and "Hades", has the same meaning as the Hebrew "Sheol" (grave, the underworld, the unseen world, abode of the dead). Hades is a realm of the wicked dead who await the final judgment and experiences the torment and agony that characterise hell. Hades and paradise are completely separated by an impassable chasm. While the rich man who lived a selfish life, stored up things for himself and not God, found himself at death in Hades, the poor Lazarus who nevertheless lived in faith even in his plight in this world was immediately taken to paradise at the moment of death.

Secondly, death and subsequent judgment are equally inevitable for all of us, as sinners, at the heavenly Father's appointed time, although the exact time of death is different for each individual,

Thirdly, Abraham's side, i.e., paradise, though its exact location is uncertain, is likely to be situated in a spiritually and topographically heightened place to Hades. The view of Paradise seems to be very clear from Hades, as the account tells that the rich man jealously and angrily *looked up* at the bliss of Lazarus by Abraham's side, whereas the view of Hades may not be as clearly visible from Paradise. In fact, those in paradise, in a fully conscious state even after death, would be so caught up and overwhelmed by the reality of eternal happiness with the Lord, that they would not have the time or capacity to be aware of the wicked in Hades. According to Paul's experience of being supernaturally caught up in '*the third heaven*', as recounted in Corinthians 2, the revelation was of such surpassing glory that he had to be disciplined so that he would not become conceited. Paul insists there that he will not boast about such a glorious experience and actually refrained himself from referring to it in detail because he was much more concerned about the fear of being misguided by his own personal experience that might cause others to think more of him than was warranted by what he did or said.

Fourthly, it may be that it was only at the time of Christ's ascension, forty days after His glorious resurrection, that all believers that had resided in conscious state at Abraham's side, i.e., paradise, since the creation, were finally taken up to '*the third heavn,*' that Paul witnessed. Paul's quotation from Isaiah 53:12 and Psalm 68:18, and its application to Christ's ascension in Ephesians 4:8-10, "*When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.*"...*He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.*' (Lines added) might be regarded as a proof text. In this sense, in the New Testament and from it onwards, the Hebrew name "Sheol," a general name for the place and state of departed souls whether good or evil, should clearly be distinguished from paradise. The account of '*the rich man and Lazarus*' was a parable that made clear the existence of completely opposite conditions in Sheol; paradise and Hades. Thus, a clear concept of two opposing destinies after death was only established in the New Testament time.

Fifthly, this parable tells us that an opportunity to make a decision concerning one's future destination is given to every individual in this life. Because it is solemn truth that '*Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,*' (Heb.9:27 Line added) there will never ever be another opportunity to choose a destination once man dies, in contrast with the belief of reincarnation, as falsely maintained among pagans. Like the rich man in the parable, even if he has started showing concern for others after death, it is too late for him to change his destination once in Hades. This explicitly teaches us that we have to make up our minds now as to whether or not we accept Jesus who died on the cross in our place for our sins, while we are still alive in this physical body.

Lastly and most relevantly to us today, this parable significantly and prophetically, as if expecting increasing delusions in the end times, seems to warn us of man's strong inclination for "*sign-seeking.*" Abraham's response to the rich man's request to send Lazarus in paradise to his house to persuade his bereaved brothers to believe in God and not come to the terrible place of torment where he is now suffering in agony, was that of straight rejection. It showed no concern about the attractive schemes, methods and techniques of this world that are employed to deliver sinners from self-centred and sinful ways. Abraham answered in the parable: '*They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them... If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.*' Here '*Moses and the Prophets*' is the whole Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament). Sign-seeking is a means considerably demanded among non-believing people, even among the present-day Christians

but it is nothing more than just an excuse of unbelief and a sign of disobedience. Such demands simply expose lack of repentance and intention of changing heart attitudes towards God. When Jesus told this account He might have thought of His own resurrection and preconceived Jewish religious leaders' unbelief. In fact, even after Jesus resurrected from the dead and demonstrated conscious, eternal life after death for forty days, hard-hearted religious leaders and Jews continually rejected both the truth and Jesus Himself as their Messiah. No matter what techniques are adopted, man's unbelieving ways of life will not change.

This parable's thrust that the whole Scripture is sufficient on its own as a revelation for each individual's salvation, is a significant reminder for us today amidst the ever popular trend of the church to emphasise the **"feel-good factor"**-, and **"paranormal experience-seeking"**, leaving the simple obedience to the Word of God and teachings of Christ in the sideline. One of the most glorious statements regarding Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews supports the idea of "Christ and the Word" as the final revelation: *'In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.'* (Heb.1:1-3). After the demonstration of the superiority of the Son's revelation, comes the author's warning: *'We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard (i.e., the gospel delivered in the first century), so that we do not drift away.'*

A clear message is that now that God has spoken to us in His Son, Christ, there will be no further revelation forthcoming, that is, the whole Scripture and the Person of Jesus are God's final revelation to man. The given Word of God and Christ Himself are sufficient for us to be saved. This declaration would subsequently exclude all other claims of other worldly religions, cults, and self-pronounced paranormal experiences and added revelations to the Scripture. If believers would not firmly abide in Christ and the gospel (**"what we have heard"**) alone and begin to drift away from the safe haven of His revelation, they might find themselves more vulnerable to deceiving spirits. What Paul prophesied as a major trend of the end of times, the prelude of which had already been present in his time, has indeed, been accelerated today: *'The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.'* (1Ti.4:1). We need to turn to Paul's instructions: *'Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly...devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching...Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.'* (1Ti.4:7-16).

Whereas many Christian leaders have increasingly conformed to the spirits of the age today, there are still a handful of leaders who firmly remain in the infallible authority of the Scripture and the revelation of Jesus Christ alone, and dauntlessly warn of the danger of compromising. The following is quoted from an article by Dave Hunt (*The Berean Call*, Nov.'05). 'Christianity has lately fallen into the hands of leaders who have lost confidence in the sufficiency of Christ, his Word, and the Holy Spirit to live the life of Christ through them and others. They have also destroyed the confidence of their followers. That lack of faith spawned "Christian psychology" (borrowed from godless humanists who were themselves drowning in sin), with its multiple therapies that the early church never heard of and, without any of them, triumphed gloriously. From this godless source came the many "recovery programs" that are even more popular among Christians today than simple faith in Christ and His Word. The victorious new life that Christ promised and will Himself live within all who know and trust Him is available to every Christian and requires no special program-just simple faith and obedience. The problem with all "therapies" is that they inherently deny the sufficiency of Christ and His Word to save, sanctify, and keep the worst of sinners. Thus, it is hypocritical for a "program" to claim to be biblical when its very existence denies what the Bible teaches and what the early church knew and proved to be sufficient...Methods and teachings not found in Scripture that would supposedly suppress the fleshly desires that plague even Christians seeking to live for Christ had not yet been invented in Paul's day. Why are they needed today? They aren't! Isaiah was very blunt: "If they speak not according to this Word [i.e., Scripture]...there is no light in them," (8:20). But today the Scripture is being denied...Those who claim to be Christians, yet who need some special "deliverance ministry" or "recovery program" to keep their behavior in line with what Christ has commanded, either don't know Him

or do not love Him as they ought. So says the Word of God...Many of the so-called "desert fathers" adopted occult techniques, later popularized as the *Spiritual Exercise of Ignatius of Loyola*, founder of the Jesuits. They thought that if they could visualize Christ and biblical events in their imagination, the Bible would become more real and they would mature spiritually. That delusion is still promoted by many Christian leaders today...' After Dave shows the deceitful promise of spiritual maturity through occult methods in *Celebration of Discipline*, which is adopted by a Christian leader only to entice thousands, he further puts it: 'The visualized "Jesus" often takes on a life of its own and does indeed "speak." This is not the Lord Jesus Christ come down from the right hand of His father in heaven, but a seducing spirit...There is no excuse for falling into such delusion, which is so contrary to the Word of God.'

Some of the recent deceptive winds blowing into the church, and stirring up multitudes of believers' sound faith are the following, according to the present-day biblical watchmen: (1) "the word of faith" movement, which includes (2) "prosperity gospel," (3) "positive confession," (4) "atonement heresy," (5) "the Toronto blessing," (6) "visualisation," and (7) "speaking out spells." These false teachings have infiltrated into Christian minds so powerfully that a brief illustration of each is worth referring to, so that we would be fully alert before being trapped. The idea of "the word of faith" movement, which talks about faith moving mountains and uprooting trees encourages people to exercise their faith by declaring the removal of all obstacles. To use words of a very famous Christian leader, it believes; 'by the spoken word we create the presence of Jesus with your mouth...He is bound by your lips and by your words.' "Prosperity gospel" encourages people to name what they want and to claim it when they speak out their word of faith. Believing that God's will is prosperity, and even commanding ministering spirits, i.e., angels, it claims that in the name of Jesus, they take authority over the money and everything they need to get, and that they begin to see them happening. Being led to an arrogant view of themselves, "positive confession" tells that all people have to do is utter a thing and see it happening because each of them is a god. "Atonement heresy" teaches the insufficiency of the blood of Christ to atone and because of this that Christ had to descend into hell, where He took on a Satanic nature in order to be born again. "The Toronto blessing" might be caused by manipulative of man's mind from a human source rather than a genuine move of the Holy Spirit, from which true believers should stay away. "Visualisation" encourages people to picture something as happening, mostly in their prayer and a famous Christian leader puts it: 'Through visualisation and dreaming you can incubate your future and hatch the result.' Another famous Christian leader commends it and says: 'Don't try to understand it. Just start to enjoy it! It's true. It works. I tried it.' However, this is an occult technique as well as "speaking out spells."

Characteristics of the present day false faith movement and perverted gospel are seen in its mind controlling techniques and the biblical watchmen attribute sources of such deceptive and seductive teaching to man's souls marred by the inclination to materialism and self-centredness. The latest information about deceptive movements tells of the sad fact that new Chinese Christian converts are leaving the church, seduced by a religious movement called "Lightning From the East" founded by a lady who claims to have taken the place of Jesus Christ. Needless to say, the major reason why they are so easily falling prey to such nonsense fallacies is due to the shortage of solid biblical teaching. While over 20,000 Chinese people are said to accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour every day, it is a pity that considerable numbers of new converts are being tempted by such a false cult and deserting the truth. We should raise our voice to warn Christians of the danger of the ever increasing streams of deception and to remain in simple faith in Christ and the Word alone.

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This month a money gift has been sent to MARY JANE in the Philippines.

Also, a money gift has been sent to FREDERIC to support his ministry for salvation of his countrymen, Burundians. FREDERIC and his whole family (wife, four kids, one new-born) left for Burundi after a 11 year refugee life in Kenya on 15th January. Pray for the Lord's assured guidance and protection upon both of them, their co-workers and their ministries so that His salvation will work out through them especially where Christ was not known yet.