

The Wedding Guests.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his son." Matt. 22:2.

The Jews were first invited to the great feast, but they made light of the matter, were more interested in the farms and merchandise, and a remnant even persecuted and slew the servants who carried the invitation; in consequence of all which "he sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers and burned up their city." (Ver. 7.) Then the command is given: "Go ye therefore into the highways and as many as ye shall find bid to the marriage." (Ver. 9.) This seems clearly to refer to the work of the Gospel among the Gentiles; and by people gathered from among them "both bad and good, the wedding was furnished with guests." (Ver. 10.)

The parables of Jesus about the "kingdom of heaven," seem always to refer to the "church militant," or to the living mortal phase of the church; as soon as a man dies he is no longer represented in the parables, so the last part of the movement represented by the parable would include only the generation that are "alive and remain." So the "harvest" of the parable of tares and wheat (Matt. 13) relates to those that "grow together until the harvest," which "is the end of the age." (vs. 30 and 39.) And in the parable of the virgins, the going in to the marriage, refers to same act of the last generation. (Matt. 25.)

The idea of a wedding is often referred to by the Saviour, but it is somewhat remarkable that in such parables the believers are represented in the attitude of guests, and not as the bride. This fact has puzzled some, as Paul speaks of the church as the "espoused" virgin or prospective bride; and the Revelator speaks of the bride made ready as clothed with "the righteousness of saints." (Rev. 19:7,8.) The bride is therefore composed of saints, (holy ones); but why then should the

last generation be called guests? It is certain that the "wedding garment" is spoken of as properly belonging to the "guests" with which the wedding was furnished.

We suggest a solution, but as disciples we would gladly receive light from others. 1st. We understand the bride is the whole church, dead and living, raised and glorified. 2d. That the marriage is the process of raising and glorifying the church, or the process of making up his jewels. (Mal. 3:17.) The making up suggests a gradual and not an instantaneous work; as also, "when the Lord shall build up Zion he shall appear in his glory." Ps. 102:16. This doubtless refers primarily to the restoration of the earthly Jerusalem during thirty-seven years, or from 1878 to 1914, which, according to the prophetic arguments, is the last half of the sounding of the seventh **[R58 : page 5]** trumpet. But there are two Jerusalems – an earthly and a heavenly; a mount that could be touched, and a mount Zion that could not be touched. (Heb. 12:18,22.) We believe these are related to each other; the one outward and Jewish, the other inward and Christian; and that both are to be built up during the same period, "the last trump." According to the parables of the "two Dispensations," Christ was due to enter or come into the office of king in the spring of 1878, the parallel of his riding into Jerusalem in fulfillment of "behold thy king cometh;" and the same king who has the power to restore the natural Jerusalem, has the power to build up the spiritual Jerusalem; and it is declared that he will reward the whole church – prophets, saints and them that fear his name, small and great" – during the seventh trumpet, (Rev. 11:18) – the same period in which it has often been shown that the earthly Jerusalem will be restored.

3d. To be in the light when this process is due is the privilege of the living generation, and because of this they are guests. They understand when he takes to himself his great power. "When he had returned having received the kingdom he then inspects the guests and

rewards them." Luke 19:15,27. It is evident that the inspection is a work done in reference to the living, while they are yet mortal, for two reasons, first, the reward follows the inspection, and second the unfaithful was cast out.

The idea of being cast out of immortality seems absurd, as the immortal "cannot die." The case of the unfaithful servant cast out seems the same as the one found among the guests without a wedding garment, who shares the same fate. (Comp. Luke 19:26 and Matt. 22:13.) From this it appears evident that "going in to the wedding" is not the translation of the living into immortality, but is coming into a position of expectation, which may be lost on account of lacking certain qualifications, represented by the wedding garment.

The servants gather, but they are not infallible, they do not know the heart, and the king sifts out those unfit for the kingdom. This inspection and sifting out we again remark is after the king comes, and yet before the "power over the nations" is given.

The "dead in Christ" have no part in this light, and therefore not guests, neither are they subjects of this inspection or sifting – their case was decided before they fell asleep. Hence Paul could say: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown." When the dead in Christ are raised they are immortal, and when the living are changed they will be immortal too, both alike sharing in the position of the glorified church – "The Bride, the Lamb's Wife." If it be kept in mind that the living are guests while mortal, by being in the light, there can be no objection we think to our being guests now and yet in due time constituting a part of the Bride, when we put on immortality.

After the king comes, and inspection is due, it should not be surprising if the subject of the garment should be uppermost in the minds of the guests; neither should we be surprised if there is a sifting out instead of a gathering in. That many have passed through a strange test during the past year is known by them all, and the work goes on.

Let none be in haste however to judge their brethren, the Lord is judge, and he will decide who is or is not possessed of the wedding garment. In another article we may consider this subject.

J. H. P.
