

THE GREAT FEAST.

"A certain man made a great supper and invited many. And he sent his servant at the hour of the supper to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for it is now ready.' And they all began with one accord to excuse themselves....And that servant, having returned, related all to his Master. Then the householder, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly (at once) into the open squares and streets of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and crippled, and blind, and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, I have done what thou didst command, and yet there is room.'" Luke 14:16-22. Diaglott.

Our Heavenly Father, kind, bountiful, and rich, is ever pleased to dispense of his bounties to those requiring and appreciating them. He tells us of a feast he will soon spread for all the world, when he will not only feast them on fat things, refined joys and pleasures, but he will "wipe away all tears from off all faces" – destroy death and remove the vail of ignorance from all nations. In the day of that feast it shall be said: "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us;...we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isa. 25:6-9.) A salvation from the vail of ignorance, and from Adamic death. That will be a delightful feast, a blessed season for poor, wretched humanity. But before that feast can be spread, the MOUNTAIN or KINGDOM of the Lord must first be established (see vss. 6,7), that from and through it may come this blessed feast "unto all people."

The feast described by Jesus, though made by the same kind, rich Heavenly Father, is not the same feast above viewed. It applies, we believe, not to the next, but to the present age. It is not for all people, but for the "few selected" from among the "many invited" in the present age. (Matt. 22:14.) Those first invited were the leading representatives of the Jewish nation. "What advantage had the Jew?

Much every way" – they being typically justified by typical sacrifices, were reckoned as being on a plane of friendship with God – having intercourse with him. To these, through the prophets, he had long ago intimated his intention of spreading a great feast, and when the time for it was come, he sent Jesus (who in turn sent others) "to those who had been invited," saying, it is now ready, – "The kingdom of God is at hand."

The call first reached the Priests, Scribes, Pharisees, and Doctors of the Law who sat in Moses' seat (Matt. 23:2), and were acquainted with the Law of the Prophets, and who knew that such a feast was proposed. "And the Pharisees also who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided him." (Luke 16:14.) They had a plan and system of their own arrangement; they were busy and could not heed the message; they had no desire to have their own plans superceded by God's plans, or, in the language of the parable, to taste of his supper.

Jesus perceived that they received not the message, and gave most of his time and attention to the lower classes, "who knew not the law" (John 7:49), and had not heard the invitation.

He said to those who were originally invited, "Verily I say unto you, that the Publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." (Matt. 21:31.) "Ye shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and ye yourselves thrust out." (Luke 13:28) – You shall not taste of the supper.

"The common people (who knew not the Law, and had not heretofore heard the invitation) heard him gladly." (Mark 12:37.) But those first invited, who rejected, were grieved that he and his disciples taught the people (Acts 4:2), and invited them to the feast. Jesus therefore said, "Ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." (Matt. 23:13.)

This application of the first two calls, is in harmony with the parable – first the merest mention to those already invited, then quickly, when they refused, an invitation was given to the morally blind, lame, and halt, of the same CITY (or government). Thus Jesus came to his own, and his own people received him not; but as many as received him (believed his message), to them (publicans, harlots, etc.) gave he power (liberty) to (come [R343 : page 6] to the feast) become sons of God. (John 1:12.) This second feature of the call to the Gospel feast, continued to be the only one, for some years, but there were not enough of the worthy ones there in Jewery to complete the number of guests – yet there was room.

Hence the servant (the body of Christ) was commissioned to go outside the CITY (outside Judea) to the highways and hedges – to the Gentiles, and constrain* – urge enough [R343 : page 7] to come in, to furnish this feast. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15.) The servant that calls the world is always the Christ, either head or body, while the servant that guides the Christ is always the Holy Spirit.

*The word translated compel in the old version is, in the Diaglott, constrain; the same word is rendered constrain in Matt. 14:22; Mark 6:45, etc., of old ver.

We, then, are of those blessed under the third call. We Gentiles were children of wrath – strangers from the commonwealth of Israel; but now, by the blood of Christ, we are made nigh to God and hear the call, Being justified freely from all things by faith, we are clothed with the robes of Christ's righteousness, and invited to come to the feast now spread. Here is food to satisfy every longing – more and better than we could ask or think.

The feast to which we are invited is a spiritual feast of future good things – joys and pleasures in the presence of the Lord. It has a

beginning just as soon as we accept the call and come to it. We at once begin to enjoy and feast upon God's bounteous provision; by hope, by faith, we have a joyful anticipation and rich feast on the promises of God.

To come to this feast in any sense, either to the real feast of the future, or to the feast of hopes and promises of the present time, involves a leaving of worldly hopes, aims, and pursuits. In proportion as earthly things are abandoned, each may feast now. So the coming in and the feasting by faith and hope has continued during the entire age, until the door of opportunity closed Oct. 2d, 1881, since which time we do not understand that any may enter to the spiritual feast (– be begotten of the Spirit, and thus enabled to know and understand spiritual things). But there is still time for those in the guest-chamber to continue their preparation for the marriage. We rejoice to know, however, that, though the door to the marriage feast is closed, there is another feast in preparation for all people.

Because coming to this feast involves the leaving or sacrificing of earthly aims and pleasures, the world counts those who come, foolish, and it causes such the loss of the esteem of men. This is a mingling of bitter experience and sweet hope, and they are proportionate. As we eat his words – feast on his promises – we are strengthened, and will as surely have the cup of trial, death, presented after. Thus it was with our Head and Leader, and thus it must be with all his followers. After supper, he gives also the cup, saying: "Drink ye all of it," and again he said, "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of, and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized." (Mark 10:39.)

To our understanding since, this third call ceased, it is no longer proper to invite to this feast. Those who have heard, and have accepted the call, came in and the door was shut – the opportunity of entering has ceased forever. Since all have come in, we know that

the actual feast, the realization of the things we have long hoped for,
is at hand.
