

THE MARRIAGE FEAST

"Jesus continuing to discourse to them in parables, said: The kingdom of the heavens may be compared to a royal person who prepared a marriage festival for his son; and he sent his servants to call those who had been invited to the festivities, and they refused to come. Again, he sent other servants, saying, 'Inform those who are invited – Behold I have prepared my entertainment; my oxen and fatlings are killed and all is ready; come to the festival. But they disregarding it, went away, one to his own farm and one to his merchandise, and the rest seizing his servants, insulted and killed them. And the king was indignant, and having sent his military forces destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.'" (Matt. 22:1-7. Diaglott.)

Some have questioned whether or not this parable is the same which Luke furnishes in very similar language, but with other details, previously narrated. But whether exactly the same or not, there seems to be no doubt that it covers the same period of time, viz: the Gospel Age. God has indeed prepared royal blessings for his Son, and has invited some to share these glorious blessings with him. (Eph. 1:4.) Jesus first invited Israel as a nation – as represented in the rulers and chief priests of his day, and in this work he employed his disciples but these servants were disregarded – they refused to come. A second message was sent them at Pentecost through other servants; (The disciples at first were simply justified men, but on and after Pentecost they were NEW creatures begotten of God. 1 Pet. 1:3.) but this message also they disregarded, and insulted and killed many of the Apostles. No wonder, then, that their polity (city) was subjected to (fire) wrath to the uttermost, and entirely overthrown – Titus' army desolating it in A.D. 70. In this view, as in Luke's parable, two invitations were given to the Jews; and here, as in that we shall find

the third message to be to the gentiles – the Gospel call during this Gospel Age.

The king said to his servants, the entertainment indeed is ready but those who have been invited were unworthy. Go therefore into the PUBLIC ROADS and whoever you may find invite to the marriage-feasts. And those servants went into the road and brought together all that they met, good and bad, and the feast was well supplied with guests." (Vss. 8-10 Diaglott.)

Here the public roads in which the call is made, represent the Gentile world, in which, for over 1800 years, the invitation to come to the spiritual feast has been made. All who hear and accept the invitation, may come to the banquet. The call does not come solely to the good, but all who have an ear may hear and come – "good and bad." Since all guests are furnished a robe (Christ's righteousness) it matters not how poor or ragged they were when they were called; at the feast all stand on an equality, so far as their previous condition is concerned. All are acceptable at the feast if clothed by faith with the righteousness of Christ.

"Just as I am without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bid'st me come to thee;
O lamb of God, I come, I come."

As in Luke's parable, the feast is both a present one of hope and joy mingled with earthly bitterness, and also a future real feasting, or sharing of eternal joys with Jesus our Lord. In this account it is called a marriage feast. The King's Son – our Lord Jesus Christ is to be married, and the bride is found among those invited to the festivities. Yes, those who sacrificed much in proportion to what they had, in order to come to this banquet – these are the ones termed overcomers, who are to be united to the King's Son who was also an overcomer.

The full control of the feast is given to the Bridegroom, who has become the "heir of all things" and at this time enters office as a King. Before the marriage (union) he appears as King, and inspects or judges of the guests, and selects the overcomers (Rev. 3:21). Among those assembled there as guests, he discovers three classes, the overcomers or bride, the guests or friends, and one who had not on a wedding garment – some who did not realize the necessity of having on Christ's righteousness, who did not recognize the necessity of being bought, redeemed, clothed with Christ's merit only, as a prerequisite to a participation of the feast.

When the King arrives, he makes the two selections: The one (small class) not having on the wedding garment, is deprived of the privilege of guests – bound, and cast into the outer darkness of the world. To the overcoming class he gives his name and a share in all that he hath, by uniting them to himself. They thus become heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ, their Lord. After the marriage, in joyful praise a "great company" of the bride's loved companions shall say, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to (God), for the marriage of the Lamb is come and his wife hath made herself ready." Rev. 19:7.

These, though not of the overcomers, not of the Bride, are nevertheless beloved of both Bridegroom and Bride. They are the great company of Rev. 7:9, and in Psa. 45:14, are called, "the virgins, her companions which followed her," who also shall come into the palace of the King with gladness and rejoicing. (Vs. 15.) These will be the guests at the great supper, and after the marriage is accomplished, they shall enjoy the feast with the Royal Family, as it has been written to them, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." (Rev. 19:9.)

Matt. 25:1-10, seems to show this closing end of the age, when some having gone in during the entire age, the Bridegroom King

comes, and they of the living that were ready to go to the supper went in [R344 : page 7] with him and this ended the admittance – "The door was shut." Since the King came in we believe that the inspection of the guests has been in process. Now is an important time – a testing time. Who will be cast "into outer darkness" – the world's condition, on account of denying the Lord's having bought them – taking off the wedding garment? "Who shall be able to stand?" – be accounted worthy, as his bride to "stand before the Son of Man." Take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand."

In answer to questions of those anxious to be at the Marriage Supper, we would say: If you heard the call, i.e., the gospel invitation to the feast of good things God has prepared, and having heard, if you accepted and commenced to feast upon the promises before the call ceased by the shutting of the door (Oct. 2d, 1881), then, we understand the Scriptures to teach that you have yet opportunity to make your calling and election sure – even to the highest position as the Bride of the Lamb. Even now in the hour of inspection, let us lay aside every weight, and every besetment of earth, and run with patience the race for the prize of our high calling.
