

PARABLE OF THE GREAT SUPPER.

– APRIL 12. – Luke 14:15-24. –

Golden Text – "Come, for all things are now ready." – Luke 14:17.

THE feast of this parable is not the feast of Isa. 25:6. That is to be a feast for all people and points forward to the Millennial age and its blessings, when the Kingdom of God will be established for the blessing of all the families of the earth: – "And in this mountain [Kingdom] shall the Lord of hosts make *unto all people a feast* of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." That will be a feast of joy and gladness such as earth has never known, the blessed tidings of which were proclaimed by angel messengers at the birth of Christ, through whom the invitation and privilege of admittance was to be extended to all mankind. "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people."

But the feast of this parable is one to which only a select number are invited. It is a feast which was announced as ready at the beginning of the Gospel age. John the Baptist first announced it to the Jewish nation, saying, "Repent ye; for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 3:2.) And after him came Jesus of Nazareth, saying, "The time is fulfilled [– "all things are now ready"] and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe the gospel [the good news of the great feast now ready]." (Mark 1:15.) It is noticeable also that while this feast was announced as ready in the beginning of the Gospel age, and that while the bountiful board has been spread for a select company all through this age, the feast for "all people" is foretold as a thing future – after the great time of trouble (Isa. 25:1-4), when great Babylon will have been destroyed.

Both of these feasts consist of the good things pertaining to the Kingdom of God; but the difference is that the feast of this Gospel age

pertains to the spiritual phase of the Kingdom, while that of the age to come will pertain to the earthly Kingdom. The feast now spread is for the elect Gospel Church, while that of the Millennium is for "all people" – all the willing and obedient.

If it be asked, Of what good things does this feast consist? the reply is suggested by the Psalmist (Psa. 34:8), "O taste and see that the Lord is good." And Peter adds, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word so that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." (1 Pet. 2:3.) Those who have a mere curiosity interest to know what good things are found upon the table of the Lord can never know. Only those who come with sincere hearts to taste and see for themselves can ever know. Theirs is the "hidden manna." They have "meat to eat" that others "know not of;" for "the *secret* of the Lord is with them that fear him." Unto them "it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven" – the mystery which was kept secret since the world began. – Rev. 2:17; John 4:32; Psa. 25:14; Matt. 13:11,35.

It is their blessed privilege to know and realize their relationship to Christ as his prospective bride and joint-heir, and, as his betrothed, to hold sweet communion with him here. And they may feast continually upon the glorious hope of living and reigning with him, of seeing him as he is, and being made like him, and of inheriting with him the spiritual phase of the Kingdom of God, being partakers with him also of the divine, immortal nature. Words can never make manifest to uncircumcised hearts the blessedness of the privileges of the saints at "the table of the Lord," even amidst the trials and difficulties of the present life and its warfare with the powers of darkness. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over;" for the glorious fellowship with Christ hereafter has its joyful beginning even here, in the fellowship of his sufferings and his cross. **[R1957 : page 71]**

Only those are invited to this table of the Lord – this feast of spiritual blessings, of communion and fellowship with God, of a

knowledge of the deep things of God, the exceeding great and precious promises, and of joy in cooperating with him in his plan of salvation – who desire to **[R1958 : page 71]** forsake all other tables; for "Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils." (1 Cor. 10:21). Only deeply appreciative ones are desired at this feast. – those who will gladly forsake all to enjoy the favor. Our Lord Jesus expressed this fact forcibly when he said: "If any man come to me and hate not [love not *less*] his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple....Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." – Luke 14:26,27,33.

Those who do cheerfully and of their own free will comply with these conditions are privileged to come to the table of the Lord and to partake of his bounties. But the realization of these conditions is the explanation of the indifference and even opposition of many who hear the call. They are not willing to sacrifice the business prospects of the present life, the social ties, etc. They consider the cost, and prefer to be excused. Such will never taste of the supper.

The parable shows three classes called: **(1)** Those originally invited; *i.e.*, those of Israel who, having respect to their covenant, were striving to keep the Law, and thus to attain to all that God had promised (the "elder brother" class of the parable of the prodigal son). To this class *belonged* the Kingdom favors by divine covenant, *if* they had appreciated and accepted them; but the strait gate and narrow way repelled them and they excused themselves, and were excused. **(2)** The class of the streets and lanes of the city represents the publican and sinner class of Israel – the prodigal-son class, of which some came, and, accepting the terms, left all to follow the Lord. But that remnant was not sufficient – not the full number which God had foreknown and predestinated should be the elect number to constitute the Kingdom class of joint-heirs with Christ. Hence **(3)** the Lord sent forth the message to the Gentiles – outside the city, outside of Israel – in the

highways and hedges *urging* a sufficient number of them to come to complete the elect number.

"Compel" in verse 23 is better rendered constrain or urge as in the Diaglott. The Lord never compels the acceptance of his favors, but he does constrain by his love and grace and promises those who love righteousness and truth. – 2 Cor. 5:11,14,15.

Truly so precious an invitation is worthy of our strivings and self-denials to attain it; and the truly appreciative will lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset, and run with patience the race for this great prize. But, thank God, we are no longer deluded into the belief that those who, blinded by Satan, reject this great invitation will be everlastingly tormented therefor. – Compare 2 Cor. 4:4 with Isa. 29:18; 35:5; and Rev. 20:1-3.

We are plainly told that the great majority who hear the call will reject, and that only a "little flock," a mere remnant, of both Jews and Gentiles will be the privileged sharers of this "supper." And "blessed" indeed will he be "who shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God" – who shall be counted worthy to share with Christ in the honors and glory of the spiritual Kingdom established. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne." "Fear not, little flock [of overcoming ones], it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."
