

THE MARRIAGE FEAST.

– MAY 8. – MATT. 22:1-14. –

"Come; for all things are now ready." – Luke 14:17.

ACAREFUL scrutiny of this parable, as found in Matthew's record, shows it to be in full accord with the similar parable recorded in Luke (14:16-24), tho they differ somewhat in minor details. It is therefore wise to study the two records in unison.

Both records show three distinct calls to the marriage supper, or rather three divisions or parts to the one call which gathers the guests. There can be no difference of opinion respecting what the parable signifies: the thought brought to our attention is the same which pervades the Scripture throughout, namely, that God is selecting from among mankind a peculiar people, a little flock, to be joint-heirs with Christ Jesus, their Lord, in his Kingdom and in all the gracious work of that Kingdom, and symbolized as a "chaste virgin" who enters into a covenant of betrothal to the King's Son, her Redeemer and Lord, in harmony with which ultimately the great marriage shall take place, and the virgin become "the Bride, the Lamb's wife."

This thought was enunciated by John the Baptist who, in introducing our Lord, presented him as the Bridegroom, saying: "He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom, but the friend of the Bridegroom, when he heareth the Bridegroom's voice, rejoiceth greatly; this my joy, therefore, is fulfilled." John heard the Bridegroom and rejoiced, tho he was not invited to become one of the Bride class. The Lord had specially called Israel as his peculiar people, and had made ready his arrangements by which the *first* invitation to be [R2301 : page 136] the Bride of Christ was extended to the people of that nation. This invitation was given at our Lord's first advent, during the three and a half years of his ministry. His message, sent throughout all the land of Israel, was, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at

hand; repent and believe the good tidings." This is the invitation mentioned in the third verse of our lesson, which was not heeded by Israel as a people. Following this, as we saw in our last lesson, their "house," or nation, was left desolate, Messiah was slain, etc.

But our Lord did not abandon the people of that nation, when he rejected the nation as a whole; and hence at his resurrection, in directing his apostles no longer to confine their efforts to Israel, but to preach the gospel to every creature, he added, "beginning at Jerusalem." And we know that for a number of years following the crucifixion, the gospel message went again to Israel, under the power and blessing of the holy spirit, operating upon the apostles. Speaking of this, the Apostle Paul said to some of the Jews, "It was necessary that the Gospel should be preached first to you." – Acts 13:46.

This was the *second* call to the marriage, recorded in verse 4. It says, "Tell them which *were bidden*" – previously bidden, and who had during the three and a half years of our Lord's ministry refused to come. Moreover, now the servants were commissioned to tell them that "the oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things ready." This comprehensive statement of readiness could not be made in the first invitation, before our Lord's death; for he himself, in his own sacrifice for sin, was the bullock that was killed, and it is the eating of his flesh, given for the life of the world, that is to bring eternal life to as many as receive him.*

*See *Tabernacle Shadows*, – signification of the fatted bullock of the sin offering, page 34.

To the first call none seem to have responded, save the servants only who bore the message. To the second call some responded, tho only a remnant, as is shown by Luke's account (vss. 21,22). Moreover, the second call is shown to have been not to the righteous and prominent ones among the Jews, but to the morally and mentally poor, blind, and maimed – not to the Temple class of Israel, the leaders of religious thought, the Scribes and Pharisees, but to the poor, found in

the streets and lanes of that city or kingdom. This second message found a considerable number of this apparently inferior and unsuitable class, and gathered them for the wedding, where they were made presentable under the provided "wedding garments." Respecting the gathering, under this call, notice the record found in Acts 2:41,47 and 4:4 – three thousand were found willing in one day and five thousand subsequently. Nevertheless, as the Apostle Paul clearly shows, these Israelites who received the message of grace after the day of Pentecost, under this second call of the parable, were but a *remnant* as compared with the whole of Israel [R2301 : page 137] – but a part as compared to the entire number predestinated to be the number of the elect Church, the Bride of Christ.

In proof of his assertion that only a remnant of Israel was acceptable to God, Paul quotes Isaiah, the prophet, saying, "Isaiah also crieth concerning Israel, Tho the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a *remnant* shall be saved." (Rom. 9:27.) Paul proceeds to show that "the fall of them was the riches of the world," and that in consequence of their not completing the elect number, not providing the full complement of guests to the great marriage feast, therefore the invitation was extended beyond them to the Gentiles. He points out that God spared not the natural branches of the olive tree, but broke off the unfit ones, and during this age has been grafting Gentiles into the places formerly reserved for Israelites according to the flesh, in connection with the root and fatness of the great divine promises to Abraham's Seed. – Rom. 11.

It was after the remnant had been gathered out from the "streets and lanes," and after the great and influential of that nation had rejected the divine invitation to the marriage feast, and had imprisoned the King's messengers, the apostles, and had slain some of them (See Acts 8:1-4; 12:1-3, etc.), that God sent his judgments against that city or government, and utterly destroyed it, in a great time of trouble, referred to in verse 7 of this lesson. John the Baptist, speaking of that trouble, likened it in parable to "fire," whose work was to burn up the

chaff of that nation. This was the baptism of fire which came upon them, in contradistinction to the baptism of the holy spirit, which came upon the Israelites indeed, who accepted the invitation to the marriage feast. (Matt. 3:11.) It was respecting this fire and wrath that John said to the scribes and Pharisees who came to his baptism, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matt. 3:7; Luke 3:7.) Concerning this same destruction of these rejectors of the divine favor, the Apostle Paul wrote, saying that they "killed the righteous, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved; – to fill up their sins alway: for WRATH IS COME *upon them to the uttermost.*" – 1 Thess. 2:15,16.

Thus the way was left open for the *third* division of the call to the marriage feast (the call of the Gentiles) by reason of an insufficient number of worthy ones being found amongst those which were originally bidden – the Jews, the natural seed of Abraham. This third call, mentioned in verse 9 of our lesson, and in Luke 14:23, is in both the accounts designated as a call in "the highways" – among the nations, the Gentiles, outside the city of the parable, which represents Israel. This call among the Gentiles has progressed for now more than eighteen centuries and, according to various lines of testimony in the Lord's Word, it has about accomplished the purpose intended, namely, the filling up of the elect, predetermined number which shall constitute the joint-heirs in the Kingdom, by becoming the Bride, the Lamb's wife.

Both evangelists state that a sufficient number will be found; and Matthew declares that "both good and bad" were amongst those found willing to participate in the feast. His description reminds us of another of our Lord's parables, illustrative of the same point, namely, the parable of the net which, being cast into the sea, caught fish, both good and bad, – suitable and unsuitable. The separation of the fish, gathering some into baskets for use, and casting the remainder back into the sea, implies a choice, a discrimination on the Lord's part, as

between the numbers who eventually would profess to be of his Kingdom class and seek to share the feast, and those whom the Lord will esteem worthy, according to certain conditions and tests of character.

This part of the parable brings us down unquestionably to the close of the Gospel age; because the Gospel age is for the very purpose of calling those who shall participate in the marriage feast. If, therefore, it be true that we are in the end of this Gospel age, it implies that a sufficient number of worthy guests have been found, or, to reverse the proposition, If a sufficient number of worthy guests have now been found, it proves that we are in the close of this age. And just at this point the parable introduces another feature – for it was after the wedding *had been furnished* with a proper number of guests, that "the King came in" and began the inspection of the guests. This, we have elsewhere shown, marks the date April, 1878.* At that point of time therefore, we believe, on the strength of the testimony of the Scriptures, our Lord assumed the office of King, which he since holds, and will continue to exercise until he shall have overthrown present institutions, falsely called Christian institutions, dashing them "in pieces as a potter's vessel," in a great time of trouble symbolically spoken of as a time of "fire" and of overflowing "floods," and eventually reigning in righteousness for a thousand years, during which all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

[*MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. III., page 197.](#)

This date, at which the Bridegroom takes his kingly authority and power, marks a special feature of dealing in connection with his consecrated Church – the class gathered to the feast. The first part of the King's business, in the establishment of his Kingdom, **[R2301 : page 138]** is, as we have seen, the judgment of the nations, and the Apostle Peter assures us that "judgment must *begin* at the house of God." This judgment of the house of God, the consecrated Church, is shown in the parable by the statement that the King *inspected* or examined the guests. Among them he found worthy ones, evidently,

and also unworthy ones which, in the parable, are represented by one man – a leader or representative of the class.

The unworthiness of this guest is represented in his lack of a wedding garment, hence it is important for us to ascertain the significance of such a garment. Secular history shows that the custom of that time amongst the Jews was that when any notable person made a feast of this kind, he provided for the occasion an outer robe or covering, for each guest, so that however different the guests might be in respect to their circumstances, wealth or apparel, on this occasion, while at the feast, as guests of one host, they were on a common level; for the wedding garments were alike, probably of white linen embroidered. The significance is readily seen. The Lord's people, gathered from every nation and people and tongue, are dissimilar in their intellectual, moral, physical and financial conditions, but when they have accepted the Lord Jesus, the redemption in his blood provided and an invitation to the wedding, they are reckoned as "new creatures in Christ Jesus," and all on a common footing – the robe of Christ's righteousness [R2302 : page 138] making up for the deficiencies of each one, so that there is no difference as respects previous situation or condition, bond or free, male or female, they are all one in Christ Jesus. – Gal. 3:28.

The class represented as without this wedding garment of Christ's righteousness is, therefore, very evidently a class which denies the necessity, value or merit of the great atoning sacrifice accomplished for us at Calvary, – denies totally any necessity for a covering for their sins – attempting to appear at the feast in the filthy rags of self-righteousness.

The appropriateness of the illustration is still further heightened by the knowledge that it was the custom of that day, not only to provide these garments, but to insist that each guest who would enter to the feast should first have on the wedding garment. Just so it is one of the explicit terms or conditions of the call to the great feast that God

has prepared, that all who will come to it must first accept by faith the redemption which is in Christ Jesus our Lord – otherwise they can gain no admission. It follows, therefore, logically, that the guest found without a wedding garment must have taken off the wedding garment after he had entered as one of the guests, since he would not have been admitted without it. We can readily see the application of this in the Church. While none could have access to the grace of God in Christ without first accepting by faith the merit of his sacrifice as the ransom price for their sins, yet after having entered the grace of God, we find so many who do despite not only to the King who made the marriage feast, but also to the King's Son who has just assumed the office of King, by rejecting the robe of his righteousness, while attempting to enjoy the benefits of his grace.

Where may we look for this class? We answer, we may look for them in amongst the others, who still retain the wedding garment; and, as we should expect, it is especially since 1878 that the various no-ransom doctrines have come to the front, – "denying that the Lord *bought* them." And these theories, in derogation of the ransom, seem to have a special fascination for certain classes: (1) For a class which is anxious to appear more independent in thought, and to be known as critics and advanced thinkers. (2) They have fascination for a class whose consecration is lax, or partial only, and who like to take a broad view and to claim universal salvation, partly because they realize that they are not walking in the narrow way of self-sacrifice.

At all events, such a class is to be expected at the present time, and such a class we find quite numerous; some of them openly scoffing at the thought that a ransom was necessary or was given, others tacitly acknowledging the ransom, but in heart and in life denying it: ignoring the logical consequences, and propriety of participation with the Lord in the sufferings of this present time.

The parable shows that at this juncture the *full number* of the guests has been gathered, and are in the house of their host. We may

imagine the provision for their entertainment, the reception room, its brilliant illumination, etc., and these correspond in our case, to the blessings enjoyed by the *living members* of the consecrated Church now. With us, too, the light has been turned on (since 1874); we are enjoying many of the blessings provided by our host, the Lord, and we have before us the menu describing to some extent "the things which God hath in reservation for them that love him." We can even occasionally see some of the preparations for the great feast progressing, and it is from such favorable conditions, into the ignorance, uncertainty and "outer darkness" of the world, that all who do not have on the wedding garment shall be thrust or forced.

It was in 1878 that the importance of the wedding garment was particularly drawn to our attention, and since that time there has been continual evidence before us of the binding and going into outer darkness of such as have taken off the wedding garment. Of course, it is not a literal binding: it is accomplished by the presentation [R2302 : page 139] of the truth, in contradistinction to the error; the influence of the truth being the binding or restraining influence circumventing the error, on this subject. It is the duty of all who see the truth on the subject of the ransom to be thoroughly loyal to the King, and to thus assist in binding, restraining with the truth, any whom they find exercising influence to the contrary. It is our experience that all who lose respect for and trust in the merit of the precious blood of Christ as the redemption price of the world, go *quickly* into the outer darkness of the world in respect to the divine plan, etc.

In the parable it is said that in the outer darkness there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is generally understood to mean "eternal torment," "hell-fire," altho those who offer such an interpretation seem to entirely ignore the fact that outer darkness and inner fire would be opposites of thought: wherever there is fire, the darkness is absent; where darkness prevails, fire is absent. Moreover, they claim that people will be shut up *in* hell, whereas in the parable the place or condition is an outside place. None of the conditions favor

the ordinary interpretation, tho all favor the interpretation which we are giving. The wailing and gnashing of teeth among those of the outer darkness of the world and of the nominal church has not yet commenced; but, as the parable states it, by and by, "*there shall be* weeping and gnashing of teeth." And those who are now ejected from the light and from all participation in the joys and blessings of the present time will have their portion, their share in the great time of trouble coming upon the whole world, which is thus signified, "a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation." None then living shall escape that trouble, except the little flock, the Kingdom class, the Bride class, to whom the Lord said, "Watch ye, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all those things coming upon the world."

Our Lord sums up the significance of this parable, as meaning that "Many are called but few are chosen." How true! Not all have been called to this marriage feast. Hundreds of millions never heard a word about it all through these eighteen centuries, and hundreds of millions are living to-day without the slightest knowledge of it, and none of these can in any sense of the word be reckoned among the "called." Nevertheless, *many* have been called – all of the Jewish nation who had ears to hear the message were called, because they, by divine arrangement, were a covenanted people, to whom the first call belonged; but only a few of them were chosen. And so, during the offer of the Gospel to the Gentiles, it has gone to a comparatively small proportion of the whole Gentile world; nevertheless, it has reached millions during these eighteen centuries. The calling has extended to hundreds of millions of Christendom to-day, and a considerable portion of these, we may reasonably suppose, have ears to hear; nevertheless, they very generally choose to ignore the call: the vast majority find other attractions and ambitions – worldly and church power, wealth, influence, pleasure, ease, etc. Comparatively few therefore, care to accept the invitation. And finally, of those who have accepted, the Lord makes choice and separates and rejects all who do not accept the invitation and all its privileges as a grace, a favor. The others constitute the little flock, addressed by our Lord, saying, "Fear

not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

The inquiry naturally and properly arises: If the wedding was furnished with guests when the King came in – April, 1878 – how can there be any room for others to come in now? We answer, that there would be no room for any to enter now, were it not for the inspection which is in progress, and the casting out of those who were not worthy. For each one of those cast out of the light and the privileges of the feast, there is an opening, an opportunity for another to take his place and to take the crown that was reserved for him. – See Rev. 3:11.
