

## OUR WEDDING GARMENTS

APPARENTLY many of the Jewish customs connected with marriage were so ordered by the Lord as to be typical of matters connected with the marriage of the Church to Christ. The Jewish maiden was betrothed to her intended husband by her father, or some substitute for him. Her father stipulated the conditions as between her and the bridegroom. When these were signed she was considered "espoused." The bridegroom came about a year later to receive his betrothed one and thereby to make her his bride, and to install her in the home as his joint-heir. St. Paul applies this matter to the Church, telling us that we have been "espoused" to one husband, which is Christ, our Beloved, our Lord. He has gone to prepare a place for us and will come again and receive us unto himself, and make us his joint-heirs in his Kingdom. Then "the Spirit and the Bride will say, Come...and take of the Water of Life freely." For all the families of the earth, the river of the Water of Life will then flow.

One of our Lord's parables took note of the fact that when a kingly bridegroom brought home his bride, he expected that all of his servants would be more than ever on the alert to welcome him and to honor him – intent to note the first sound of his approach and to open immediately when he should knock. Our Lord used this to illustrate how awake all of his true disciples should be that, at his Second Coming, they might not be asleep and overcharged with the cares of this life, but hear the knock – the testimony of the Scriptures respecting the times and seasons and manner of his Second Presence in the harvest of this age. We remember the precious promise given to all of the Lord's followers who would be found thus awake and alert: their Lord would become their servant. He would cause them to sit down to meat – to enjoy a spiritual feast. He would gird himself as a servant and serve them

with rich dainties. How we have seen this parable in process of fulfilment during the past thirty years. The knocking has been heard by one and another of the Lord's true servants. Those awake have heard, have discerned his presence, his *parousia*. And all such have experienced the blessing promised – the Master has become the servant. The servants are seated at his table and are being bountifully fed with rich spiritual food, such as never before was tasted, and such as they were not aware he had provided.

The parable of the wedding garment illustrates another feature of Truth from another standpoint. It was the custom at weddings that all the guests, as they entered the house, should be handed a wedding garment. The acceptance of this implied that they would put it on and wear it. (Matt. 22:1-13.) The parable shows how one, representing probably a class, rejecting the wedding garment furnished him, was expelled.

Interpreting the parable: Coming to the door, desiring to enter in, would imply faith in respect to the marriage. The robe would represent justification; the imputation of Christ's righteousness shows that all who would be acceptable at the wedding must appear in the imputed righteousness of Christ, and not in their own more or less filthy garments of imperfection and unrighteousness. But surely this garment represented something more than mere justification, else why should it be called a "wedding garment"? These garments were not provided for the public in general, but merely for those who had been invited to the wedding and who had accepted the invitation and were desirous of entering in on the terms and conditions of the host. Applying this we see that God is not supplying justification to the world in general, nor to believers in general, but merely to such believers as accept the terms and conditions attaching to the marriage supper arrangements.

We might assume that all believers were invited to this feast and that all the invited ones were informed that wedding garments

were provided for them, but that only those who accepted the invitation and actually came to the wedding and entered in through the door were actually given the wedding robes. Applied, this would mean that all believers were informed respecting the merit of Christ's sacrifice and its sufficiency for them as a covering for all their blemishes and as making them acceptable at the wedding feast if, leaving sin and worldly business and pleasure, they would come as guests to the wedding. The promise and tender of the wedding garment was a promise of full justification from sin and a full imputation of restitution rights, but with the understanding that in order to be sharers of the heavenly blessings all earthly rights, earthly honors and talents, must be surrendered, must be buried, that the individual might be reckoned as a New Creature in the provided robe.

The coming of the guests to the door desiring to enter in to the festival, pictures our compliance with the Lord's call and willingness to sacrifice self and to have ourselves buried as old creatures that we might appear as New Creatures in the wedding garments. The acceptance of the garment and the putting of it on, therefore symbolized that the individual had not only consecrated himself unto death, but that his consecration had been accepted and that thenceforth he was a New Creature privileged to enter in and to participate in all the privileges and joys of the occasion. The point we **[R4525 : page 361]** wish specially to emphasize here is that the wedding garment in the parable represents more than merely justification – it represents additionally sanctification or consecration, to be dead with Christ; to suffer with him; to be baptized into his death; to drink of his cup. Only by such a consecration could anyone possibly have right to be at the great banquet, either as a member of the Bride class or as a member of the "great company," her companion.

If now we have clearly in mind the meaning of the wedding garment, what would be suggested by the taking of it off – its

repudiation? Would not the rejection of the robe signify a rejection of the *consecration unto death* – the consecration to share in *his cup of sufferings* – the consecration to *suffer with him* and to be *dead with him*? Is it not a fact that all this must be included in the wedding garment symbol? Must it not represent *all* the sacrifice we covenanted when we accepted justification on condition that we would sacrifice our justified rights? Is not this our robe as New Creatures and not our robe as human beings?

Surely the "wedding garment" can be worn only by those who, as New Creatures, still have fleshly bodies, whose imperfections are covered by the robe. Surely none but New Creatures ever had on this wedding robe and surely no one ever became a New Creature, except by the full consecration of his earthly restitution rights, sacrificial, after the manner showed us by the Lord. So then, to take off the wedding garment would not signify merely the rejection of our Lord's merit as our Redeemer, our Ransomer, but it also would include specially the practical renouncing of the terms and conditions of *sacrifice*, on account of which we obtained the robe. Would it not seem, therefore, that a repudiation of membership in the Body of Christ, a repudiation of our share in his cup and repudiation of our baptism into his death, might symbolically be represented as a taking off of the wedding garment?

Why anyone should wish to draw back from fellowship in the sufferings of Christ seems difficult to understand. Indeed, happy are we if our own loyalty and appreciation of the privilege is so great that we cannot understand the attitude of those who repudiate their Vow to suffer with him, to be *dead* with him, that they may also share in *his resurrection* and *live* with him, that they may also *reign* with him.

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## COMMUNION WITH OUR FATHER

Oft when alone in prayer I kneel  
Before my Father's throne;  
I cannot tell him all I feel,  
Nor make my wishes known.

With heart subdued, and head bowed low,  
I lean upon his breast,  
And while the tears unbidden flow,  
My love for him confess.

I have no boon to ask of him,  
Save that his will be done,  
To make me holy, pure within –  
An image of His Son.

But as he smiles and draws me near –  
His Spirit from above  
Floods all my soul with peace so dear,  
And fills my heart with love.

Though from my gaze he hides his face,  
My soul, from self apart,  
Has found its happy resting place  
Close to his loving heart.

L. C. RAMSDELL.

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