



LESSON VI.—MAY 8.

The Marriage Feast.

Matt. xxii., 1-14. Memory verses, 2-4.

Golden Text.

'Come, for all things are now ready.'—Luke xiv., 17.

Home Readings.

- M. Isa. iv., 1-13.—The great invitation.
- T. Luke xiv., 15-33.—The great supper.
- W. Matt. xxii., 1-14.—The marriage feast.
- T. Matt. xxii., 15-33.—Answering the Sadducees.
- F. Matt. xxii., 34-46.—Silencing the Pharisees.
- S. Heb. ii., 1-18.—If we neglect so great salvation.
- S. Heb. x., 26-39.—There remaineth no more sacrifice.

Lesson Story.

The kingdom of heaven is likened to a certain king who gave a marriage feast in honor of his son. When the supper was ready the king sent his servants to call the guests to the wedding, but they would not come. The king then sent other servants with the kindest of invitations to the guests who had been bidden. Again they refused to come, and went so far as to sneer at the invitation. They considered their money-making of more importance than the king's favor and bounty. Some were so enraged by the repeated invitation that they persecuted the messengers of the king, and even killed them!

When the king heard of this outrage he was very angry, and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then the king said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.'

So those servants went out into highways where they found every class of people, poor, rich and tramps, beggars, and royalty, old and young, good and bad; all alike, regardless of rank and nationality, were invited freely to the marriage feast of the king's son. Each guest was offered a beautiful wedding garment, so that all might be alike fit for the king's presence, and all went joyfully into the banquet hall.

The king came into the hall in all his majesty and splendor to greet his guests. One man of all the joyful throng was silent, he had rejected the offered wedding garment, he was not fit to appear before the king. He had considered his own clothes good enough for the feast — it was all very well for those beggars to put on the king's garment, they needed it to hide their rags. If the king said anything to him he felt that he could easily argue out the point that his own clothes did very well, he looked better than a lot of other people that he knew. He is the one discordant note in the harmony of praise and joy. Instantly the king's eye singles him out, 'Friend,' he asks, 'how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?'

In the blazing light of the king's glory he looks down at his own garment, once so beautiful in his eyes. He is struck dumb with shame, his garment appears in this light to be nothing but filthy rags, while the wedding garments of the others take on a new brilliancy of lustre from the glory of the king.

All his fine philosophies and arguments have failed him now, it is too late to plead for mercy, he has carelessly braved the king's displeasure, and knows that he deserves the severest punishment. He is speechless with terror and shame, as the king turns to his servants with the command, 'Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

'For many are called but few are chosen.' God is the King who has prepared a marriage supper for his Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To his own chosen people, the Jews, he sent the first two invitations. These refused, and sneered at the invitation, and slew the messengers. God then commanded his servants to give the

gospel message to all sorts of people in every part of the world.

The wedding garment is 'the garment of salvation,' (Isa. lxi., 10), the righteousness of God, (Rom. iii., 20-23) for 'All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,' (Isa. lxi. 6). The outer darkness is the eternal punishment of the wicked and those who neglect God

Lesson Hymn.

Jesus, thy blood and righteousness,
Thy beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed;
With joy shall I lift up my head.

When from the dust of earth I rise,
To take my mansion in the skies;
E'en then shall this be all my plea—
Jesus hath lived and died for me.

Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who ought to my charge can lay,
While, through thy blood, absolved
I am,
From sin's tremendous curse and
shame.

This spotless robe the same appears,
When ruined nature sinks in years;
No age can change its glorious hue;
The robe of Christ is ever new.
—Zinzendorf.

Lesson Hints.

It is still the custom in Oriental countries when great men make a feast, to send first an invitation to the guests, and later to send the servants to say that the supper is ready. The preparation for these feasts are on the most magnificent scale, whole oxen and sheep and calves being roasted. It is considered a great insult to refuse an invitation to one of these great feasts.

'They made light'—there are many to-day who make light of the gospel invitation. Each time they have heard it and given no heed, they have insulted God's loving kindness in the same way as those who sneeringly refused the king's repeated invitations.

'Went their ways' — they had what they considered very good excuses, they had to attend to their business and make money. But no excuses will serve instead of obedience, those who wish it are excused from the marriage supper of the Lamb, but their neglect banishes them eternally from the presence of God and their end is darkness. (Heb. x., 6-31.)

'Those servants went out into the highways'—we Christians are those servants who should be going out into the highways; out into the corners of the earth, to gather in guests to the King's wedding feast. Are you gathering in those in your classes?

'A man' — who thought himself 'good enough' for heaven. There is many a man who prides himself on being 'good enough.' He measures himself by his neighbors, because they have faults which he has not he thinks himself nearly perfect. 'Why should I be a Christian?' he asks, I am sure I am better than a good many Christians that I know.' A weed may grow higher in a month than a young oak tree, but at the end of the summer the weed withers and dries up and dies, while the young oak keeps on growing year after year until it is one of the greatest trees of the forest. And beside the great oak tree the little weeds stand in insignificant silence—there is no comparison of measure now. To those who measure by their own standard instead of God's, Christ gives the counsel in Rev. iii., 17-18.

'How camest thou'—everyone has some sort of a desire to enter heaven, but those who have not trusted in Christ for salvation would not be happy if they did get there.

The Rev. F. B. Meyer tells the story of a tramp whom he once invited to take dinner with him. The tramp accepted, probably thinking it a fine thing to be invited to a gentleman's house to dine. He had not however been in the house three minutes before he began to wish himself out again. He was not accustomed to the ways of polite society—he had no idea how to use his knife and fork, even, and instead of enjoying himself he was miserable! Dear friend, the marriage supper of the Lamb draws nigh, (Rev. xix., 7.), are you preparing for it? You can not enjoy yourself there if you are not well acquainted with Jesus and accustomed to being with him and doing his ways. The only garments worn there will be the robe of his righteousness. Are you ready?

Primary Lesson.

Why was the man cast out of the wedding feast? He had obeyed the invitation to

come, he had not made fun of it, nor helped to kill the King's messengers, as some of the other invited guests had wickedly done. He probably thought himself very good and fit to enjoy the feast. But the minute the King came in he noticed that man. What was wrong?

He had no wedding garment on. He could not have been happy if he had stayed there. He was like a man who tried to get to heaven by doing good deeds, instead of by trusting in Jesus' righteousness and obeying him. Good deeds will make us a dress that may look very nice to ourselves and to our neighbors, but when we get to heaven we would find it was only filthy rags, compared to the other people's garments.

The righteousness of Christ is like a pure and spotless white robe, as shining bright as the sun. If we honestly love him and obey him here, our Saviour will give us this robe in which to enter heaven.

Do not put off giving your heart's love to Jesus, and asking him to wash you in his own heart's blood and make you ready for heaven. You can not save yourself, you cannot make yourself ready. For some of you this may be the last invitation. Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.

Suggested Hymns.

'The gospel bells are ringing,' 'Whosoever will may come,' 'Come unto me,' 'Come to the Saviour,' 'Jesus, the water of life will give,' 'Are you ready for the Bridegroom?' 'What can wash away my stain?' 'Majestic sweetness sits enthroned,' 'Shall you? Shall I?'

Practical Points.

A. H. CAMERON.

May 8. — Matt. xxii., 1-14.

'All that joy would win, must share it, happiness was born a twin.' verses 1, 2. Verse three is an old, old story, told often before. Compare Prov i., 24; and Hosea viii., 12. How long-suffering is the King of heaven. Verse 4. The indifference of verse five, and the malice of verse six, were speedily punished by the King. Verse 7. All are invited to the gospel feast. The King has drawn no color-line, and requires no literary or moral qualification. Verses 8-10. Since the wedding garments were provided for each guest at the King's expense, it was a gross insult not to wear them. In like manner we are acceptable to God only if we are arrayed in the robe of Jesus' righteousness. Verses 11-13. He who finally refuses to let the True Light scatter his inner darkness will be cast into that outer darkness which is eternal separation from God. Verse 14.

The Lesson Illustrated.

Here our illustration presents one of the three-sided tables in use in Christ's time, with the couches upon which the guests lay. Here the table, representing the kingdom of God, is spread with righteousness, peace and joy, for all hungry hearts. The invitation



is a pressing one for all. Some of the guests have arrived, and are lying down at the table clothed in the wedding garment of holiness, stamped with the cross of the Saviour-host. One guest is receiving the necessary robe. One is departing because he would not receive the robe, and could not come and enjoy the blessed feast while still keeping the garment of sin and selfishness.

Christian Endeavor Topic.

May 8.—Things my denomination has accomplished.—Eph. v., 25-27; Ps. lxxxvii., 1-7.