

✻ The Sunday School ✻

BIBLE LESSON.

Abridged from Peloubet's Notes.

Second Quarter.

THE MARRIAGE FEAST.

Lesson VI, May 8.—Matt. 22: 1-14.
Read the whole chapter. Commit Verses 2-4.

GOLDEN TEXT.

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

EXPLANATORY.

I. THE KING.—Vs. 1, 2. 1. AND JESUS ANSWERED. To the feelings awakened by his former discourse, to the needs and circumstances. SPEAK UNTO THEM, the leaders, 21: 45. BY PARABLES. By the parabolic form of discourse. By this picturesque method he could best compel attention to unwelcome truths, and make the truth most clear.

II. THE MARRIAGE BANQUET.—V. 2. WHICH MADE A MARRIAGE: i. e., marriage feast. The word in Greek is in the plural, to express "the several parts or stages" of the festival. "Compare our word nuptials." For "the wedding festivities in the East are often protracted for several days, sometimes for an entire week or more, Gen. 29: 27; Judges 14: 12."

III. THE BRIDEGROOM AND THE BRIDE.—V. 2. FOR HIS SON. Jesus the Christ who loves The Bride, his church, woos her, makes her his own, takes her to his home to abide in unspeakable love and joy forever. He is our soul's ideal, and never disappoints us. He has in the highest spiritual sense all that can be desired,—rank, wealth, home, resources, character, love, usefulness, attractiveness.

IV. THE INVITATION TO THE WEDDING.—Vs. 3, 4. 3. AND SENT FORTH HIS SERVANTS TO CALL THEM THAT WERE BIDDEN. Literally, "to call the called," to summon those who had previously been invited. It is still customary in the East not only to give an invitation some time beforehand, but to send round servants at the proper time to inform the invited guests that all things are ready. AND THEY WOULD NOT COME. They could, but they did not wish to come, as is clearly expressed in the Greek. They did not like the king or his son. They were traitors at heart.

4. AGAIN, HE SENT FORTH OTHER SERVANTS, who were "not merely to invite to, but to commend the feast, with a view to create a desire." BEHOLD, I HAVE PREPARED MY DINNER. Not the chief meal of the day, but "the wedding breakfast with which the series of meals connected with the marriage was to begin." This will give even greater precision to the meaning of the parable as applying to these preparatory foretastes of the great feast which the church of God now enjoys. MY OXEN (bees) and MY FATLINGS. Smaller animals, as lambs, calves, specially fed for the occasion. ALL THINGS ARE READY; COME. There was no threatening, but only a loving, earnest invitation, as if they might have misunderstood the first invitation, or not realized its value.

The wedding feast was ready. The fullness of the time had come. The world was in the best condition for the coming of Christ. Never before or since has there been so fitting a time,—one government, one language, peace, roads, synagogues of the Jews everywhere.

The servants who invited represented all God's inspired messengers, Moses, and the prophets, and John the Baptist. The "other servants" were Christ himself as a prophet, and his apostles.

The guests were the individuals, who together make "the Bride, the Lamb's wife." The whole Jewish nation had been called of God as his peculiar people, and chosen out from all nations. In our day the guests represent all who have been brought up in Christian families, who have been trained in church and Sabbath school, and in the study of God's Word. They have long been called; and they are again and again invited to the gospel feast.

V. THE INVITATION REFUSED.—Vs. 5, 6. In two ways.

First, By neglect. 5. MADE LIGHT OF IT. They took no notice of what had been done for them. All was as nothing compared with their FARM AND MERCHANTS, —to enjoy what they had and to acquire more. Such indifference to a feast given by an earthly king is almost unknown, but it was a true picture of the Jews in Christ's day. They were so absorbed in worldly things that they were indifferent to the message from God which Christ brought. It is also a true picture of the indifference of many modern people to religion, to the spiritual blessings which God offers them in the gospel.

Second, Active opposition. 6. AND THE REMNANT. The rest. TOOK (seized) HIS SERVANTS AND ENTRAINED THEM SPITEFULLY. Insulted them, persecuted them, AND SLEW THEM. As the Jewish nation had done to many a prophet in their past

history, and as they were soon to do again to the preachers of the gospel. Active opposition to the gospel had often arisen when it has come in conflict with the evils of the world. Persecution, hatred, reviling, has often been the portion of God's people, even from those who have professed to be his servants.

VI. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE INCORRIGIBLE.—V. 7. THE KING . . . was wroth. Not in a passion, but with an abiding indignation against wrong, against those who not only despised every effort to make them better, but prevented others from coming into the kingdom. It is the feeling that demands punishment. HE SENT FORTH HIS ARMIES. Better, troops, soldiers. Those persons and those forces, whether consciously or unconsciously, whether animate or inanimate, which accomplish God's purposes of judgment. AND DESTROYED THOSE MURDERERS, AND BURNED UP THEIR CITY. This took place literally forty years later, when Jerusalem was destroyed, A. D. 70, and the people were slain by millions, the ground around the city being scarcely able to contain the crosses on which the Jews were crucified. There has been no Jewish nation since. All this might have been avoided if the nation had accepted Jesus as the Messiah.

VII. THE WIDER WELCOME.—Vs. 8-10. 8. THEY WHICH WERE BIDDEN WERE NOT WORTHY. As they proved themselves by rejecting the invitation. The Jews had been trained and guided by God for the very purpose of bringing in the kingdom of God through the Messiah, and when the time came, they refused him. A similar result often follows from those who are organized to do a fine special work.

9. GO YE THEREFORE INTO THE HIGHWAYS. Or "the partings of the highways," public places, cross-roads, etc., in the king's city—the world.

10. GATHERED TOGETHER ALL . . . BOTH BAD AND GOOD. There is no condition of coming to Christ, but just to come.

It is still the business of all Christians to go out into the highways and hedges and invite all, both good and bad, to come to the gospel feast. The worse men are, the more degraded and sinful, the fewer their opportunities, the more they are opposed to good, so much the more do they need the invitations of the gospel. THE WEDDING WAS FURNISHED WITH GUESTS. Christ's purposes and plans shall not fail. Here we have the assurance of the success of the gospel.

VIII. THE GUEST WITHOUT A WEDDING GARMENT. At the royal marriage of Sultan Mahmoud, a few years ago, every guest invited to the wedding had made expressly for him, at the expense of the Sultan, a wedding garment. No one, however dignified his station, was permitted to enter into the presence chamber of that sovereign without a change of raiment. This was formerly the universal custom in the East. But inasmuch as these garments were very costly, and some of the guests might plead poverty, and thus appear unclad in the guest chamber of the king, the cost was defrayed at the Sultan Mahmoud's expense. To each guest was presented a suit of wedding garments. Had any, therefore, appeared before this absolute sovereign without the wedding garment, the Sultan would have deemed his dignity insulted, and his magnificent gifts despised. It would be an avowal that he denied his authority and despised his power.

14. MANY ARE CALLED. Invited with offers of the freest grace, most earnestly, most lovingly, most persuasively. BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN. Few accept and come into the chosen number who partake of the feast. Only a few of the Jews became Christians.

The wedding garment is the robe of righteousness, the new heart, the new spiritual nature, which the Holy Spirit imparts to every one who accepts the invitation.

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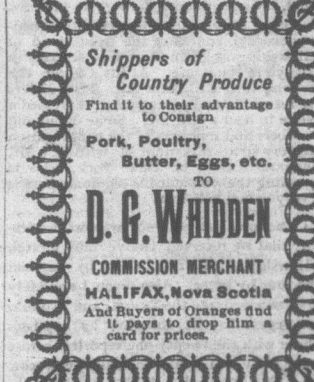
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