

LESSON VI.—May 8th, 1898.

THE MARRIAGE FEAST. Matt. 22 : 1-14.

Read the whole chapter. Commit vs. 2-4.

1 And Jesus answered and spake again in parables unto them, saying,

2 The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, which made a marriage feast for his son.

3 And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the marriage feast : and they would not come.

4 Again he sent forth other servants saying, Tell them that are bidden, Behold, I have made ready my dinner : my oxen and my fardings are killed, and all things are ready : come to the marriage feast.

5 But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his merchandise :

6 And the rest laid hold on his servants, and entreated them shamefully, and killed them.

7 But the king was wroth ; and he sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.

8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they that were bidden were not worthy.

9 Go ye therefore unto the partings of the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage feast.

10 And those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good : and the wedding was filled with guests.

11 But when the king came in to behold the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment :

12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding-garment ? And he was speechless.

13 Then the king said to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and cast him out into the outer darkness ; there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth.

14 For many are called, but few chosen.

HELPS TO GET THE LESSON.

The parable in our lesson is the third in a series spoken by Jesus in answer to an attack upon Him by the priests and elders. Matt. 21 : 23. Read Matt. 21 : 28 to 22 : 14.

Verse 1.—Jesus spake by parable. Why ? To present the truth in vivid picture fitted to instruct and attract attention. This was his main object in using this method of teaching. But sometimes he intended to show the sinful blindness of those who could not or would not see the truth when most plainly set before them. Matt. 13 : 13.

2.—"A certain king," etc. This shows the provision of Grace revealed by God through His Son. It is a feast, and meets all the spiritual wants of men for time and eternity. It is a marriage feast, and sets forth the relations of love between God and those whom He calls by His gospel. Isa. 25 : 6 ; 61 : 10 ; Hosea 2 : 19 ; 2 Cor. 11 : 2.

3.—His servants. These are ministers of the Gospel and all others who urge men who are bidden in the word to come to Christ. The Jews had many such in their own prophets whose warnings and invitations they had despised and rejected. Then there were John the Baptist and the seventy, and the apostles during our Saviour's lifetime.

4.—"Again he sent forth other servants." After the crucifixion and ascension of our Lord, other bands went forth delivering the invitation, such as Stephen, and Barnabas, and Paul. "All things are ready." This was the substance of their message.

5.—"They made light of it." They counted it not worthy of their serious attention. So yet. Others did even worse. They entreated them spitefully. The Jews slew the prophets, and "stoned them that were sent to them." Acts 5 : 18 ; 7 : 52 ; 8 : 3 ; Matt. 23 : 34. The same conduct has been repeated thousands of times in the history of the church.

7.—The king was wroth. What is meant by

the wrath of God ? It means the manifestation of the necessary and eternal opposition of his nature to sin. God cannot but hate sin. He has always hated it, and will do so throughout eternity. "Sent his armies." The Roman armies are meant who destroyed Jerusalem and avenged the blood of the prophets, Matt. 23 : 34, and brought righteous punishment upon the people for having crucified the Son of God.

8.—"Not worthy." Why not ? Because of their deliberate and wilful rejection of the invitation given them. See Acts 13 : 46.

9.—The highways. Literally, the outlets of streets where multitudes pour out into an open space. The meaning is that the gospel call is universal, embracing all classes.

10.—Both bad and good. The worse men are, the more need have they to be loved and cared for. In this is manifest the love of God.

11.—"A wedding garment." A dress provided by the host on such occasions. It rendered guests who appeared without the proper garment inexcusable. And so in relation to the Gospel feast, the robe of Christ's righteousness—his doing and suffering instead of the guilty—is provided freely for all.

12.—"How camest thou." Our true character and inmost secrets are known to God. Pretense and sham may pass unchallenged and even gain the approval and applause of men. but God is not mocked. Rom. 3 : 19.

13.—"Bind him hand and foot." This is the doom of all who despise and reject the Christ of God. They may persuade themselves that it will be otherwise. They may think that mercy is the sole attribute of God, and that sin, and especially the sin of unbelief, is a trifle ; but the day will come when the hypocrite's hope shall perish. Job 8 : 13.

14.—"Many are called," etc. This was true of the Jews as a nation. Most of them rejected Christ.