

BLOOD, BREAD AND FIRE

The Christian's Threefold Experience

by

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CHAPTER EIGHT

AND HE STOOD SPEECHLESS"

IN the first fourteen verses of the twenty-second chapter of Matthew, our Lord gives a parable setting forth God's dealings with man concerning salvation from the very beginning. The story of the wedding feast is unusual in that it combines past history with future prophecy. Some of it has already taken place; more of it is happening before our eyes; and the rest is sure to come.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for His son."

The King is God, Who prepares a wedding supper for His Son, Jesus Christ, and His Son's bride, the church. The Jews were familiar with the Old Testament figure of Jehovah and His wife, Israel, long since become adulterous. Now a new figure arises to picture the union of Christ with believers. Paul wrote of having espoused the Corinthian Christians unto one husband, the risen Lord. Then there is the beautiful passage in Ephesians 5: 22-32, using the marriage relationship to illustrate the same truth. This marriage reaches its heavenly consummation at the marriage supper of the Lamb described in Revelation 19: 7-9, where the bride is arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, the righteousness of the saints — a detail we should remember in connection with this parable.

"And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come."

The servants here are all the prophets from Moses to John the Baptist, inviting Israel. But they would not come, and our Lord lamented as He wept over Jerusalem that He would have gathered them but they would not.

"Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage" (Matthew 22:4).

Between verses 3 and 4, Christ has come, has died, and has risen, and all things are ready. The bread of life, the water of life, the Passover Lamb, all are ready, the gracious provisions of the gospel are spread, and the servants, the early Apostles and witnesses, go out to invite the Jews again. Peter preached on Pentecost to a Jewish audience.

“But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise.”

This reminds us of those in Luke 14: 18-20, who had bought land and oxen and married and could not come. This crowd was not hostile, just preoccupied. In the days of Lot they did eat and drink, they bought and sold, they planted and builded, and most people today miss heaven because they are taken up with things perhaps not evil in themselves, but secondary interests that keep them from God's best. These invited guests excused themselves, and so do men today offer silly arguments to explain why they prefer to go to hell. There are no reasons, only excuses, and an excuse is but the skin of a reason stuffed with a lie. **“They went their ways”** and so have we **“turned every one to his own way.”** But the wicked must **“forsake his way if he is to be saved”** (Isaiah 55:7).

“And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.”

The Jewish rulers persecuted the early witnesses, slew Stephen and James.

“But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.”

This is ancient history. God was angry and sent the Roman armies, His armies in the sense that they were the instruments of His anger as was the Assyrian in Isaiah 10: 5, to destroy Jerusalem. Jesus prophesied it clearly, and it came literally to pass in the slaughter of over a million Jews and the demolishing of their city. Truly, their house was left unto them desolate.

“Then saith he 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.”

The gospel preachers went forth from then unto now into the highways and hedges to compel them to come in. We are debtors to everyone, the progressive throngs on the highways, the poor and despised in the hedges. We are to compel them with the compulsion of urgent love, snatching some from the fire, for it is a day of good tidings, and we do not well to hold our peace. The objective is that His house may be filled, and when His elect number is gathered, He will come.

“So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.”

Into the professing church will come both the true and the false. The minister has no way of reading hearts, but **“the Lord knoweth them that are his.”** Just as the net gathered good fish and bad (Matthew 13:47-50) so do soul-winners gather into the professing church both true possessors and mere professors. Many are called with the general gospel calling, but not many are chosen, not many belong to the effectual calling of Romans 8: 30; not many truly receive Christ and are born again.

But now I come to the climax of this parable, and the part with which I am most concerned just now:

“And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment.”

Our Lord seems to have in mind a passage from Zephaniah: **“Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God: for the day of the Lord is at hand: for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests. And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord’s sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king’s children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel”** (1:7,8).

I have heard many sermons on the man who bought land, the man who bought oxen, the man who married a wife and could not come. I have never heard a sermon on the man who came and yet went to hell. This man offered no excuses; he did not persecute the servants. He came, yet he was cast out as though he had bitterly opposed the whole matter. What was the reason? I read that the king **“saith unto him, Friend, how earnest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.”**

Why was he speechless? Maybe he had not heard that a certain garment must be worn. Maybe he was not able to secure one or perhaps he did not have time. But we are told that on such occasions the host provided wedding garments, which were put on when the guests arrived; so there was no excuse.

There are thousands in our churches today called but not chosen. They appear righteous before men, but they wear not the wedding garment of the righteousness of Christ.

“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels” (Isaiah 61:10).

“Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6) but the Lord Jesus Christ is made unto us righteousness (I Corinthians 1:30) and we are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh (Romans 13: 14).

You may hear and answer the general gospel invitation; you may go to church, belong to a church, pray in the church, pay to the church, be active in a church; but if you are not robed in the righteousness of Christ Himself, the wedding garment the King provides, you will stand on that day condemned, hearing the King say, **“How earnest thou in hither?”**

It is only as we are “clad in His righteousness alone” that we are “faultless to stand before the throne.”

“And he was speechless.”

The word means “*muzzled*.” Men can talk aplenty now; we run into many long-winded and loud-mouthed individuals who can talk like phonographs as they try to justify themselves, but there will come a day when their little speech will not do; they will stand muzzled before the King.

“Then said the king to his servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

God commands the angels not only to cast the offender into outer darkness but first—and we read of it nowhere else—to bind him hand and foot. Mind you, it is the Lord Jesus Himself who gives us this awful detail. We seem to forget that the most fearful pictures of future punishment recorded in the Bible come to us from the Lord Jesus Himself.

“For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Many are basing their hopes on an external call instead of upon an eternal choice. Many are called, but only those who accept the righteousness of God and put on the Lord Jesus Christ and are thus made the righteousness of God in Him, only these pass inspection before the King. All others are but spots in the feasts (Jude 12).

Then let us give diligence to make our calling and election sure (II Peter 1:10) lest after living in a church all our lives, we end in outer darkness. **“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith”** (II Corinthians 13:5).

“Put on the Lord Jesus Christ”!

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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