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Godliness with Contentment.

(Convention Address.)

“Godliness with contentment is great gain.” (1 Tim. 6:6.)

OFTEN when we take time to think upon a text or verse of Scripture, we find there is more of helpfulness than we may have thought.

Each line bath a pleasure, each promise a pearl,

That all if they will may secure.

Real contentment is a wonderful thing. Like the writer of Proverbs who directs men to animals, insects, etc., to teach them lessons (Prow. 6:6), we might direct our minds to beasts in the field for a picture of contentment. A cow or sheep lying contentedly in the field chewing its cud is a peaceful study—no fear for future provision. But man, who is endowed with so much more than the brute creation, does not seem to be able to experience the same measure of content. Jesus drew attention to this fact during His earthly ministry, when He said: “Behold the fowls of the air, they sow not neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they.” (Matt. 6:26.)

Looking up the dictionary concerning the word “contentment” it was found to be simply rendered “satisfaction of mind”, and a better definition probably could not be given. If we were to take a Gallup poll of people in the street and ask them what they believed they needed to make them happy and contented, practically all could be relied upon to state a desire for material gain of some kind. But the spirit - enlightened Christian knows that no amassing of material things will necessarily bring real contentment or satisfaction of mind. In fact, it would be widely acknowledged by even natural men that some of the most discontented are those who have amassed fortunes. Possibly we have all found in our observations and experience that the happiest or most contented people we have known have been those who have not been richly endowed with material things. Often families are much happier through the years when life was a struggle and hardships had to be endured, than when with a turn of fortune they found themselves affluent in worldly goods. This bears out the wisdom of God in setting man to gain his living by the sweat of his brow, amidst the thorns and thistles.

Natural man, out of touch with his Creator, can know no real contentment or satisfaction of mind; but if he is busy with tasks and labours it assists him to keep a better balance than would otherwise be possible. So we know what God meant when He said to Adam, “Cursed is the ground for thy sake.” (Gen. 3:17.)

Now what is this contentment, possible to some, and which the Apostle tells us is great gain to attain? Note that it has a prerequisite—godliness. Meditating upon the words, “godliness with contentment is great gain”, the thought is suggested that there may be forms of godliness without contentment, but there cannot be real contentment without true godliness.

In Paul’s day there were gods many and lords many whom the people worshipped, but to Paul there was only one God and that the true one. (1 Cor. 8:5, 6.) The “gods many” of those days were idol gods, and the people’s worship of them was a superstitious one, and such never gave rise, nor ever can, to a real rest and contentment of mind.

To our own day there are still gods many and lords many—creed gods, torment gods, idol gods, etc.—whom the people ignorantly and superstitiously worship without satisfaction. And these are not confined to heathen lands (commonly so-called) but are rampant in that portion of the world known as Christendom.

For some years past the nominal church seems to have been well portrayed in verse 5, the Diaglott rendering of which is: “Wrangling of men corrupted in mind and destitute of the truth, supposing piety to be gain.” Pulpit and pew have taught and sought a godliness that goes hand in hand with worldly gain.

The story of the wooing of the church to worldly ways is well told in one of the “Poems of Dawn”, one verse of which is as follows:

“Your house is too plain”

“Your house is too plain”, said the proud old World,
“I’ll build you one like mine:
Carpets of Brussels and curtains of lace,
And furniture ever so fine.”
So he built her a costly and beautiful house,
Most splendid it was to behold;
Her sons and her beautiful daughters dwelt there,
Gleaming in purple and gold;
Rich fairs and shows in the halls were held,
And the World and his children were there:
Laughter and music and feasting were heard
In the place that was meant for prayer.
There were cushioned pews for the rich and gay
To sit in their pomp and pride;
While the poor, who were clad in shabby array,
But seldom came inside.”

Those who read and study their Bible and endeavour to walk according to its light have no difficulty in recognising the lukewarm condition of the professing church (so manifest over the last half century particularly), and that such is due to the fact that pulpit and pew have succumbed to the wooing of the world to seek present gain. It was the urge and aim for present gain that gave rise to sectarian bickerings—wranglings of men corrupted in mind as the Apostle expressed it. The Diaglott renders 1 Tim. 6:3, 4 thus: “If any assent not to the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to that teaching which is according to piety, he is puffed up being master of nothing, but is distracted about questions and verbal contentions, out of which arise envy, strife, revilings, evil suspicions.”

So long as the form of godliness offered a present gain—monetarily, socially, nationally, etc.—it always found adherents who were never much concerned about doctrines or creeds. But the few true Christians who adhered to the Word of God, and sought not the emoluments of the world and illicit union therewith, are not amazed to see the coming judgments beginning to fall upon Babylon now, the full extent of which are pictured in Rev. 18 and other places. Though there may have been a period when Babylon enjoyed a measure of content and lived deliciously, it was short-lived and now torment and sorrow are upon her.

Now let us leave the counterfeit and turn to the true. What constitutes true godliness and contentment? A knowledge of the true God and His character, of Jesus Christ whom He has sent, and the Divine Plan for the salvation of all who will, culminating in the successful accomplishment of all by Christ’s righteous Kingdom. How do we get this information? Answer again, through His Word—“Thy Word is truth.”

Again, someone says, Does not this Word tell us that if we follow Jesus we shall have much tribulation in this world and have to endure suffering? How can anyone really be contented under such circumstances? They can, but only the spirit-begotten can experience it. Like the writer of Genesis pictures Joseph—“Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall.” (Gen. 49:22.) There may be difference of thought as to the meaning of this verse, but the thought of one will serve a point here. He pictured a walled-in city (common in Bible times). Over the top of this wall and draping down inside are luxuriant branches of a fruit tree or vine. Outside the wall where it is planted is a well, and the roots draw continually from the water. Those inside the city view in wonderment the green branches and rich fruit, for it is a dry place and the wall of the city was hiding from their view the source that was providing for the rich fruit and green boughs of the tree.

So it is with Christians! As people view and learn of our experiences they wonder and say, How can you be happy and contented through all that? The natural mind of unregenerate man is a wall that shuts off from view the source of a Christian’s comfort and joy. They know not of the hidden springs of the water of life, nor of the songs in the night that He giveth to those who are learning to sing yet another and still more wonderful song that only the 144,000 can sing. (Rev. 14:1-3.)

According to God's Word there is a day coming when all the earth will be at perfect rest. Verses in Isaiah 35 and 65, Micah 4 'and Rev. 21:3, 4 show that in a day to come all who dwell upon the earth will rest in perfect contentment with no sorrow nor sighing, or want of any kind. Finite minds cannot fully comprehend the glory of that coming day, with every mind at perfect rest.

But that time is not yet! No, much of sorrow, due to sin, must still pierce human hearts before that glad day comes. But some minds, even now, enjoy a rest and contentment unbounded, because they are privileged to know God's plan through His Word of truth—the purposes of the present, and the glorious consummation of the future. It satisfies our longings as nothing else could do. When we know the true God and that the way and circumstances in which we are placed are His will and way for us, that He is guiding with unerring skill toward the richest gain it is possible for mortals to attain, then we can rest. But do we? Read 2 Cor. 4:6, 7.

We have great treasure, but it is in "earthen vessels" all right, and we need reminding often that our experiences and circumstances are but working out God's purpose in us, if we are to keep that sweet contentment which this world cannot give and should not take away. We are told in Heb. 2:10 that our Head or Chief Leader was perfected through sufferings, and why should we expect a different method? Is there any sorrow we have been permitted to pass through that has not had a mellowing effect upon our characters? Is there anything that increases sympathy and desire to help troubled ones more, than to have passed that way ourselves?

Could Paul, or we, have better learned the folly of "kicking against the pricks" than to have had just such experiences? Surely we agree that the lessons learned have been the means of richer spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. (Eph. 1:3.) As Paul shows us in Rom. 5:2-5, our experiences increase the love and hope of the glory of God in our hearts. Then let us praise His name and let our minds be at rest—content!

Some little time ago it was my experience to be associated with others in a severe affliction, a sickness of a kind in which experience was lacking. Later again a second affliction, another sickness of another nature, was experienced with still others. Looking back, it is realised that it was an effective way of kindling my sympathies for those similarly afflicted, not only for the sick person, but for others (kinsfolk, etc.) who desired to do all they could to alleviate the trouble and found so little could be done.

These are not isolated cases; one hears of similar cases almost every day, but dismisses quickly from his thoughts and with scant sympathy until the experience comes to his own door, as it were. It was written of Jesus that He is our High Priest and that He was touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Heb. 4:14, 15), and as the prophet Isaiah says—"He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." (Isa. 53:4.) Because of this we readily understand how we can have His sympathy and why He is so desirous of helping us when we look to Him for aid. And are we not to be associated with Jesus when His wonderful Kingdom is established? And won't we be better able to serve and bless mankind by having had such a deep appreciation of their great need brought home to us? Surely we will!

The isolated miracles of healing that Jesus performed in His earthly ministry, at His first advent, serve as illustrations of what He is going to do for all at His second advent, when He reigns as King over all the earth. A few of these word pictures are as follows:—Luke 5:12, 13; 13 :1 0- 1 3 ; Mark 5:1-6, 15; John 5:5-9.

Won't we delight to be known as members of the Christ, helping Him in all His wonderful works for men? And won't we perform our part with so much more pleasure because of our association with such afflictions now? What a wonderful blessing nursing sisters can be to sick folk even now, under all the circumvention of this present evil world. They know just what to do and when, for the comfort of their patients. Thousands daily have cause to thank God for the ministry of nursing sisters. But they were not always able to perform their work with such ease. There was that long period of probation when things were anything but easy at times, yet what sister looks back to lament her training? One was heard to say that although it was nice to have reached the top and won through, she thought that her training days, during which she shewed as fitted for her work, were really the best of all. It gave a sense of satisfaction and pleasure to recall the experiences that taught her to excel in the calling she had chosen.

Do we wonder if it will be like that with us? When we reach the Kingdom, with all the joy and glory of being forever with the Lord and reigning with Him, will we look back on our training days here below and feel that we would not have dispensed with them for anything? Surely they have taught us to excel in the ministry of shedding abroad the love of God from full hearts. If we could keep such thoughts in our minds now, while we are still here below, we could say with Paul—"I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." (Phil. 4:11.)

One has said

“The path of sorrow and that path alone,
Leads to the world where sorrow is unknown.”
There is another nice little poem

“I walked a mile with Pleasure,
She chattered all the way;
But she left me none the wiser
For all she had to say.

“I walked a mile with Sorrow,
And ne'er a word said she;
But, oh, the things I learned from her
When Sorrow walked with me!”

Like Samuel of old who built a stone of remembrance at the Lord's deliverance of Israel in battle against the Philistines (1 Sam. 7:12), we can say with true thankfulness—“Hitherto has the Lord helped us.” Hitherto! Ah yes, we thank the Lord for realized past mercies, but what about to-morrow? Our course is not yet finished. Certain it is that we will be called on to face further tests, endure trials, and suffer for righteousness' sake. Our minds go back over the past—Yes, hitherto we have got through by the Lord's grace, but oh, how near to complete failure we were time and again! Only for this or that deliverance we would surely have failed, perhaps for ever. What if the Lord does not send the deliverance next time? Perhaps He will want us to pass right through it successfully next time without special help, for His Word tells us He wants us to grow stronger and bear better daily.

The disciples of Jesus, even from the days of His earthly ministry, have needed all the Lord's persuasive powers to keep their minds from disquiet. We cannot do better than remember the rule of life the Lord laid down for them and for us: “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” “Lo, I am with you always.” “My grace is sufficient for thee.” “As thy days so shall thy strength be.” “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee.” “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

There are some nice words of a poet also

“Don't seek from the future new trouble to borrow,
But leave in Christ's hands the keys of to-morrow;
Your way may be clouded, your future concealed,
And scarcely the present is clearly revealed;
'Twill strengthen in weakness and comfort in sorrow,
To leave in Christ's hands the keys of to-morrow.”

In conclusion we quote the first and last verses of one of the “Poems of Dawn” based on Matt 6:8 “Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of.” “Our Father knows what things we need

Each step along the way,
His eye of love doth never sleep,
He watches night and day.
Then let us leave it all with Him.
Assured that come what may,
Our Father knows just what we need,
Upon our pilgrim way.”

H-Bomb Scientist turns to Prayer

AS the result of President Truman's direction for the production of the hydrogen super-bomb to the United States scientists some weeks ago, press statements have given reports of the reactions of various leaders in the field of research into the nuclear processes for making hydrogen bombs. From New York comes the following statement, appearing under the above heading in the Melbourne press recently:

Dr. Harold Urey, who played a big role in the development of the atomic bomb, declared in Columbus, Ohio: "I hope the hydrogen bomb doesn't work."

Dr. Urey, one of the world's leading nuclear physicists, said: "Frankly, I am scared to death. Sometimes I feel that prayer is the only solution. I wish I had a direct line to the Almighty to ask Him for guidance."

"Nobody would know the effectiveness of the H-bomb until one was actually exploded," he said. "Furthermore, it was not yet known whether the bomb would work. To hope it doesn't work, however, is no way to solve the problem. We must know what can or cannot be done or someone else will find out before us," Dr. Urey said.

He added that there was no chance of agreement with Russia on atomic or hydrogen bombs. Dr. Urey advocates a strong Western Union or federation to prevent war.

At the time of President Truman's declaration he was reported as follows:

"It is part of my responsibility, as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, to see to it that our country is able to defend itself against any possible aggressor. Accordingly I have directed the Atomic Energy Commission to continue its work on all forms of atomic weapons, including the so-called hydrogen or super-bomb. Like all other work in the field of atomic weapons, it is being and will be carried forward on a basis consistent with the over-all objectives of our programme for peace and security."

Another report attributed to Lieut.-General Leslie Groves, who directed the manufacture of the first atomic bomb, is also of much interest:

"I see no other course that we can follow with justice to our present or our future. People died from small bombs in the First World War and from bigger bombs in the Second World War. I cannot see how we can stop now, although God knows I wish we could."

An analysis of the above statements surely proves that the words of our Lord are having fulfilment in our day.

At Jesus' first advent, looking down the stream of time for over nineteen centuries, He declared: "There shall be upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring, (the restless masses of mankind in commotion.) Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." (Luke 21:25, 26.)

The fact that our Lord made particular reference to the end of the age, the time in which we are now living, is further substantiated by His words—"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." Matt. 24:21, 22.)

Bible students, while accepting these statements of Jesus as applying to the closing scenes of this present evil world, have wondered over the years respecting the fulfilment of the words—"Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved.

Now, in recent times, with the dread possibility of the mass destruction of humanity with atomic and hydrogen bombs, it is clearly evident that without the intervention of the Lord to "shorten those days" no flesh would be saved.

While it is true that "The wrath of man shall praise Thee, and the remainder of wrath Thou shalt restrain," (Psa. 76:10) , and that following the great time of trouble the Lord will "turn to the people a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent." (Zeph. 3. 8, 9), it is equally a fact that prayers to Almighty God, on the part of fearful men, cannot alter what the Lord in His wisdom sees will work out for the ultimate good of His human creation. Sincere prayer is of course always acceptable to God from those who approach Him in Jesus' name, but in praying to the Heavenly Father His children are required to adopt due reverence to their Creator, and not seek to have their own wills done on earth. For a scientist to assist in creating a weapon of mass destruction and then pray to God that He may prevent its use is, to say the least, a gross

contradiction of desires.

Again, the statement by President Truman that the production of super-bombs is consistent with the over-all objectives for peace and security is the attitude which, adopted by opposing nations, has produced the two World Wars. And the Lord and the Apostles predicted that the same attitude continued in would result in the ultimate passing of this present order of things from the earth. St. Paul, writing of the end of the age, declared; "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child: and they shall not escape." The two World Wars have been notable spasms, in harmony with Paul's words, after which important proclamations of "peace and safety" have been heard throughout the globe. No doubt further spasms are due with increasing intensity and rapidity, which will work out the Lord's designs in preparation for the setting up of His Kingdom, so that His will may be done on earth, even as it is done in heaven.

The remark by Lieut.-General Groves, "I cannot see how we can stop now, though God knows I wish we could," is a pathetic acknowledgment of man's inability to control this world's affairs. Mankind, with all its boasted civilisation, is shortly to be humbled to the dust, and what will add to the confusion is the fact that also "the powers of heaven shall be shaken." That is, the church systems of to-day will go down in the tumults, and be manifest as really belonging to "this present evil world." (Heb. 12:26, 27; 2 Pet. 3:10.)

No wonder, then, that the Lord is calling His people out from the religious heavens before these systems collapse (Rev. 18:1-5), that they may become united to Him, "receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved," (Heb. 12:28), and so rejoice in the establishment of the "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." (2 Pet. 3:13.)

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The Marriage Feast

Matthew 22:1-14

A CAREFUL scrutiny of this parable, as found in Matthew's record, shows it to be in full accord with the similar parable recorded in Luke 14:16-24, though they differ somewhat in minor details. It is, therefore, wise to study the two records in unison.

Both records show three distinct calls to the marriage supper, or rather three divisions to the call which gathers the guests. There can be no difference of opinion respecting what the parable signifies; the thought brought to our attention is the same which pervades the Scriptures throughout, namely, that God is selecting from among mankind a peculiar people, a little flock, to be joint-heirs with Christ Jesus, their Lord, in His Kingdom and in all the gracious work of that kingdom, and symbolised as a "chaste virgin" who enters into a covenant of betrothal to the King's Son, her Redeemer and Lord, in harmony with which ultimately the great marriage shall take place, and the virgin becomes "the Bride, the Lamb's wife."

This thought was enunciated by John the Baptist, who, in introducing our Lord, presented Him as the Bridegroom, saying, "He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom, but the friend of the Bridegroom, when he heareth the Bridegroom's, voice, rejoiceth greatly; this my joy, therefore, is fulfilled." John heard the Bridegroom and rejoiced, though he was not invited to become one of the Bride class.

The First Call.

The Lord had specially called Israel as His peculiar people, and had made ready His arrangements by which the first invitation to be the Bride of Christ was extended to the people of that nation. This invitation was given at our Lord's first advent during the three and a half years of His ministry. His message, sent throughout all the land of Israel, was, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand; repent and believe the good tidings." This was the invitation mentioned in verse 3, which was not heeded by Israel as a people. Following this, their "house", or nation, was left desolate—Messiah was slain.

The Second Call.

But our Lord did not abandon the people of that nation when He rejected the nation as a whole, and hence at His resurrection, in directing His apostles no longer to confine their efforts to Israel, but to preach the Gospel to every creature, He added, "beginning at Jerusalem." And we know that for a number of years following the crucifixion the Gospel message went again to Israel under

the power and blessing of the holy spirit. Speaking of this, the Apostle Paul said to some of the Jews, “It was necessary that the Gospel should be preached first to you”—Acts 13:46.

There was the second call to the marriage, recorded in verse 4. It says: “Tell them which were bidden”—previously bidden, and who had during the three and a half years of our Lord’s ministry refused to come. Moreover, now the servants were commissioned to tell them that “the oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things ready.” This comprehensive statement of readiness could not be made in the first invitation before our Lord’s death, for He Himself, in His own sacrifice for sin, was the bullock that was killed (as typified in Lev. 16), and it is the eating of His flesh, given for the life of the world, that is to bring eternal life to as many as receive Him.

To the first call none seem to have responded, save the servants only who bore the message. To the second call some responded, though only a remnant, as is shown by Luke’s account (Luke 14:21, 22).

Moreover, the second call is shown to have been not to the righteous and prominent ones among the Jews, but to the morally and mentally poor, blind and maimed; not to the Temple class of Israel, the leaders of religious thought, the Scribes and Pharisees, but to the poor, found in the streets and lanes of that city or kingdom. This second message found a considerable number of this apparently inferior and unsuitable class, and gathered them to the wedding, where they were made presentable under the provided “wedding garment.” Respecting the gathering, under this call, notice the record found in Acts 2:41-47 and 4:4—three thousand were found willing in one day and five thousand subsequently.

Nevertheless, as the Apostle Paul clearly shows, these Israelites who received the message of grace after the day of Pentecost, under this second call of the parable, were but a remnant as compared with the whole of Israel, but a part as compared to the entire number predestinated to be the number of the elect Church, the Bride of Christ.

In proof of his assertion that only a remnant of Israel was acceptable to God, Paul quotes Isaiah, in Romans 9:

27—”Though the number of children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved.” Paul proceeds to show that “the fall of them was the riches of the world”, and that in consequence of their not completing the elect number, not providing the full complement of guests to the great marriage feast, therefore, the invitation was extended beyond them to the Gentiles. He points out that God spared not the natural branches of the olive tree, but broke off the unfit ones, and during this age has been grafting Gentiles into the places formerly reserved for Israelites according to the flesh in connection with the root and fatness of the great Divine promises to Abraham’s seed (Rom. 11).

It was after the remnant had been gathered out from the “streets and lanes”, and after the great and influential of that nation had rejected the Divine invitation to the marriage feast, and had imprisoned the King’s messengers, the Apostles, and had slain some of them (see Acts 8:1-4; 12:1-3, etc.) that God sent His judgments against that city or government, and utterly destroyed it, in a great time of trouble, referred to in verse 7. John the Baptist, speaking of that trouble, likened it in parable to “fire”, which was to burn up the chaff of that nation. This was the baptism of fire which came upon them in contradistinction to the baptism of the holy spirit, which came upon the Israelites indeed, who accepted the invitation to the marriage feast (Matt. 3:11). It was respecting this fire and wrath that John said to the Scribes and Pharisees who came to his baptism, “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Matt. 3:7, Luke 3:7). Concerning this same destruction of these rejectors of the Divine favour, the Apostle Paul wrote, saying that they “killed the righteous and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved; to fill up their sins always; for wrath is come upon them to the uttermost” (1 Thess. 2:- 15, 16).

The Third Call. ,

Thus the way was left open for ‘the third division of the call to the marriage feast (the call of the Gentiles) by reason of an insufficient number of worthy ones being found amongst those which were originally bidden—the Jews, the natural seed of Abraham. This third call, mentioned in verse 9 and in Luke 14:23, is in both accounts designated as a call in “the highways” among the nations, the Gentiles, outside the city of the parable, which represents Israel. This call among the Gentiles has progressed for nineteen centuries, and according to various lines of testimony in the Lord’s Word, it has almost accomplished the purpose intended, namely, the filling up of the elect, predetermined number which shall constitute the joint-heirs in the kingdom, by becoming the Bride, the Lamb’s wife.

Both evangelists state that a sufficient number will be found; and Matthew declares that “both good and bad” were amongst those found willing to participate in the feast. His description reminds us of another of our Lord’s parables, illustrative of the same point, namely,

The Parable of the Drag Net,

which, being cast into the sea, caught fish both good and bad-suitable and unsuitable. The separation of the fish, gathering some

into baskets for use and casting the remainder back into the sea, implies a discrimination on the Lord's part, as between the numbers who eventually would profess to be of His kingdom class and seek to share the feast, but who in some way come short, and those whom the Lord will esteem worthy, according to certain conditions and tests of character.

This part of the parable brings us down unquestionably to the close of the Gospel Age, because the Gospel Age is for the very purpose of calling those who shall participate in the marriage feast.

We read in 1 Peter 4:17 that "judgment must begin at the house of God." This judgment of the consecrated church is shown in the parable by the statement that the king inspected or examined the guests. Among them He found worthy ones evidently, and also unworthy ones which, in the parable, are represented by one man—a representative of the class.

The unworthiness of this guest is represented in his lack of a wedding garment, hence it is important for us to ascertain the significance of such a garment. Secular history shows that the custom of that time amongst the Jews was that when any notable person made a feast of this kind he provided for the occasion an outer robe for each guest, so that however different the guests might be in respect of their circumstances, wealth or apparel, on this occasion, while at the feast, as guests of one host, they were on a common level; for the wedding garments were alike, probably of white linen, embroidered.

The significance is readily seen. The Lord's people, gathered from every nation and people and tongue, are dissimilar in their intellectual, moral, physical and financial conditions, but when they have accepted the Lord Jesus, the redemption which His blood provided and an invitation to the wedding, they are reckoned as "new creatures in Christ Jesus", and all are on a common footing, the robe of Christ's righteousness making up for the deficiencies of each one, so that there is no difference as respects previous situation or condition, bond or free, male or female, they are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28).

Without a Wedding Garment.

The class represented as without this wedding garment of Christ's righteousness is, therefore, very evidently a class which denies the necessity, value or merit of the great atoning sacrifice accomplished for us at Calvary—denies totally any necessity for a covering for their sins—attempting to appear at the feast in the filthy rags of self-righteousness.

It is one of the explicit terms or conditions of the call of the great feast that God has prepared, that all who will come to it must first accept by faith the redemption which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, otherwise they can gain no admission. It follows, therefore, logically that the guest found without a wedding garment must have taken off the wedding garment after he had entered as one of the guests, since he would not have been admitted without it. We can readily see the application of this in the Church. While none could have access to the grace of God in Christ without first accepting by faith the merit of His sacrifice as the ransom price for their sins, yet after having entered the grace of God, we find so many who do despite not only to the King who made the marriage feast, but also to the King's Son, by rejecting the robe of His righteousness, while attempting to enjoy the benefits of His grace.

Where may we look for this class? We answer we may look for them -among the others, who still retain the, wedding garment. As we should expect, we find now, at the end of the Gospel Age, that various no-ransom doctrines have come to the front, "denying that the Lord bought them." These theories, in derogation of the ransom, seem to have a special, fascination for certain classes: (1) For a class which is anxious to appear more independent in thought, and to be known as critics and advanced thinkers. (2) They have a fascination for a class whose consecration is lax, or partial only, and who like to take a broad view and to claim universal salvation, partly because they realise that they are not walking in the narrow way of self-sacrifice.

At all events, such a class is to be expected at the present time, and such a class we find quite numerous, some of them openly scoffing at the thought that a ransom was necessary or was given; others tacitly acknowledging the ransom, but in heart and in life denying it, ignoring the logical 'consequences, and propriety of participation with. the Lord in the sufferings of this present time.

The parable shows at this juncture the full number of the guests had been gathered and are now in the house of their host. We may imagine the provision for their entertainment, etc., and these correspond in our case to the blessings enjoyed by the living members of the consecrated Church now; we are enjoying many of the blessings provided by our host, the Lord, and we have before us the menu describing to some extent "the things which God hath in reservation for them that love Him." We can even occasionally see some of the preparations for the great feast progressing, and it is from such favourable conditions, into the ignorance, uncertainty and "outer darkness" of the world that all who do not have on the wedding garment shall be thrust.

Into Outer Darkness.

We may question how the latter part of the parable is fulfilled, We see it accomplished by the presentation .of the truth, in contradistinction to the error, the influence of the truth being the binding or restraining influence circumventing the error on this subject. -

It is the duty of all who see the truth on the subject of the ransom to be thoroughly loyal to the King, and to thus assist in binding, restraining with the truth those who may be exercising an influence to the contrary. In the parable it is said that in the outer darkness there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is generally understood to mean "eternal torment" (hell-fire), although those who offer such interpretation seem to entirely ignore the fact that outer darkness and inner fire would be opposites of thought; wherever there is fire, the darkness is absent. Moreover, they claim that people will be shut up in hell, whereas in the parable the place or condition is an outside place. None of the conditions favour the ordinary interpretation, though all favour the interpretation which we are giving. The wailing and gnashing of teeth has not yet commenced; but, as the parable states it, "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Those who are now ejected from the light and from all participation in the joys and blessings of the present time will have their portion, their share in the great time of trouble coming upon the whole world, which is thus signified,

"a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation." None then living shall escape that trouble, except the little flock, the kingdom class, the Bride class, to whom the Lord said, "Watch ye that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all those things coming upon the world."

Our Lord sums up the significance of this parable as meaning that "many are called, but few are chosen." How true! Not all have been called to this marriage feast. Hundreds of millions never heard a word about it all through these nineteen centuries, and hundreds of millions are living to-day without the slightest knowledge of it, and none of these can in any sense of the word be reckoned among the "called." Nevertheless, many have been called—all of the Jewish nation who had ears to hear the message were called, because they, by Divine arrangement, were a covenanted people to whom the first call belonged, but only a few of them were chosen. And so, during the offer of the Gospel to the Gentiles it has gone to a comparatively small proportion of the whole Gentile world; nevertheless, it has reached millions during these nineteen centuries.

A considerable portion of these, we may reasonably suppose, have had ears to hear, but generally the call has been ignored; the vast majority have found other attractions and ambitions. Comparatively few, therefore, care to accept the invitation. Finally, of those who have accepted, the Lord makes choice and separates and rejects all who do not accept the invitation and all its privileges as a grace, a favour. The others constitute the little flock, addressed by our Lord, saying, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

"Go out in the by-ways and search them all:

The wheat may be there, though the weeds are tall;

Then search in the highway and pass none by,

But gather from all for the calling high.-

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