

TERMS OF SUBSCRIPTION: One copy, one year, \$1.00; six months, \$0.50; three months, \$0.25; single copies, 10 cents.

International Sunday School Lesson.

SECOND QUARTER, 1880. LESSON VII.—MAY 16th. BY REV. J. B. TAYLOR, Wilmington, N. C.

THE MARRIAGE FEAST

Matthew xxiii: 1-14.

Comment to memory verses 11-14.

1 And Jesus answered and spoke unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.

GOLDEN TEXT

"As many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage."—Matthew xxiii: 9.

Daily Readings.—Monday, Matt. 22: 1-14;

Tuesday, Matt. 22: 29, 30; Wednesday, Luke 21: 2-23; Thursday, Rom. ch. 11; Friday, Matt. 20: 1-13; Luke 12: 36-38; Saturday, Ex. 4: 16; Isa. ch. 5; Sunday, Rev. 19: 1-3; Matthew 22: 1-14.

Preliminary Note.

This lesson is found only in Matthew. It is somewhat similar to the parable of the great supper (Luke 14: 15-24) spoken on another occasion.

Comments.

V. 1. Spoke unto them again by parables. They were in the temple where Jesus had spoken the parables recorded in the chapter previous.

V. 2. The kingdom of heaven. The phrase here means the new dispensation, Christ's spiritual reign. The idea is, God will deal with men in this gospel dispensation as the king did, &c. A certain king, God, Son of Jesus Christ. A marriage for his son. Rather, a marriage festival. These feasts were usual, and generally very magnificent in the East.

The feast here refers to the rich blessings of the gospel. Compare with Isaiah 25: 6-8; Isa. 55: 1-3. Barclay says: "The gospel is here compared to a feast, because in a feast there is plenty, variety, and delight; also to a marriage feast, because full of joy, delight and pleasure; and to a marriage feast made by a king, as being full of state, magnificence and grandeur."

V. 3. His servants. The first preachers of the gospel. Alford says they were "John the Baptist, the twelve, and the seventy." To call them to work. It is said to have been usual to invite the guests some time before the wedding was to come off, and then to give them another invitation notifying them that the time was at hand. The allusion here, is probably to the Jews who had long before been invited by the prophets.

The wedding. The marriage referred to in verse 2. The same word is used here as there. They would not come. Did not accept the invitation. Jesus once said to the Jews, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life."

V. 4. He sent forth other servants. The invitation is repeated. These "other servants" may represent the apostles and other preaching "Jesus and the resurrection." All things are ready. Every thing has been made. The fullness of time had come, the promised Messiah, the Servant, had appeared. "This coming of the King represents the gospel offer, which preaches its message, and multiplies its messengers. Various preachers, different providences, and the Holy Ghost Himself, reiterates the call, and press it for immediate action. Sinners are entreated to come to Christ, by every gospel messenger, every good tract, every providence, and every motion of the Holy Spirit in the heart. Everything is prepared for them, inasmuch as Christ has actually died, and the redeeming work is done, and now they are invited to a feast, spread and waiting on the table. Pardon is proclaimed. The grace is free."

V. 5. Made light of it. The idea is, not that they "made fun" of the invitation, but by their course of conduct, treated it as a matter of no importance. This class characterizes the great majority of those who now neglect the gospel offer.

V. 6. The rental, &c. The rent, the others. This was true of the Jews who drove the prophets, and of the bitter enemies and Pharisees. John the Baptist was rejected. Stephen was stoned, Peter was imprisoned. Paul was stoned, and beaten. This class reminds us also of those who are very positive and bitter in their hostility to the truth.

V. 7. Wrath, angry, &c. The Romans, just as the Assyrians is called "the rent of God's anger." Jer. 10: 6. The city of Jerusalem and the people were destroyed by Titus some forty years afterwards.

V. 8. Not worthy. They showed their unworthiness of the privilege offered by failing to accept the invitation.

V. 9. Whosoever. Great thoroughness, whether in city or country. As many as ye

shall find. All classes and conditions of people, irrespective of station in life, or previous moral character. The gospel is universal in its call. There is no distinction now, as under the other dispensations. The Gentiles are addressed as well as the Jews. All are invited to come.

V. 10. Bid and send. The servants invited all kinds, as they had been directed. Alford says: "Observe, the invitation is to be extended without discrimination, and all, both bad and good, are to be brought to the feast. There is no condition of coming to Christ, but just to come. The bad are invited, that they may be made good (1 Cor. 9: 24-27). Of the good, Matthew and Gamaliel are illustrations; of the bad, Matthew and Zacchaeus, and Saul of Tarsus."

V. 11. When the king came in to see the guests. This is a most expressive reminder of the omniscient inspection of every professing disciple of the Lord Jesus. We are known now. At death, Jesus comes to each man, and to all at the judgment. He says, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Rev. 22: 12.

V. 12. A wedding garment; i. e., one suitable for such an occasion. He was speechless. He had no excuse to offer. "What this guest lacked was righteousness, both in its root of faith and its flower of charity. He had not 'put on Christ,' in which putting on of Christ both faith and charity are included—faith as the power putting on, charity, or holiness as the thing put on.—Trench. We may say and ought, when God calls, to come as we are; but we may not, if we would see his face and enjoy his last feast, remain as we are.—Stier. 1. The wedding garment was something conspicuous and distinctive. As soon as the King entered the room, he detected the single man who wanted it. It was not a necessary part of a man's clothing, but rather a significant badge of his loyalty. The primary use of the symbol was neither to keep the wearer warm, nor to make him elegant, but to manifest his faithfulness. 2. The want of it was a decisive mark of disloyalty. It is confessed and silently assumed that the guest had not, but might have had the wedding garment on.—Arnott.

Abbott says: "To be without a wedding garment, implied that the man thought his usual attire good enough for the King's wedding; he thus represents those who profess to follow Christ, but who think themselves good enough as they are, and do not seek from him that new birth without which no man can see the kingdom of heaven. The lesson, then, of this incident of the wedding garment, is that no one can enter heaven except through humility, and a change of nature; that we must not only accept Jesus Christ openly, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ."

V. 13. Servants. A different Greek word is used here from that in the earlier verses, and therefore does not refer to those who had given the invitations, but probably to the angels. See Matt. 13: 41, 42. Blind men. The stammer will not be able to see his punishment. Take his enemy. Rev. 21: 8, 9. 15. Outer darkness. The figure of a feast is still present, the guests being supposed to be in a brilliantly lighted room, and this one cast into the darkness outside. He is excluded from the joy of Heaven, from the brightness of Christ's blissful presence. Matt. 8: 12. Weeping and gnashing of teeth. A vulgar language expressive of agony, rage and despair. Matt. 25: 30.

V. 14. Many are called, &c. (see verse 9, 10). "Preach the gospel to every creature." Ye are chosen, because they do not accept and come in the right manner. Jesus says of such, "ye will not come to me that ye might have life." John 5: 40. This shows that the man without the wedding garment (V. 12) is a type of a numerous class. The important and striking passage which constitutes our present lesson, may well remind us of Olafsen's remark, that, "parables are like many-sided prisms, out so as to cast lustre in more than one direction." Surely this parable is very suggestive, and we should learn important lessons from it. All things are ready, come to the marriage. Let us not be as those who "made light of it." "So that ye refuse not him that speaketh." Heb. 12: 2. "Soon we will be in the presence of the King. Here we on the wedding garment." It is provided for us. We are asked to the heavenly feast, and to us a glorious robe is offered. We are "called," shall we be chosen? "Choose ye, this day." Don't forget the King's invitation, COME.

COMMUNICATIONS.

Reminiscences of a Long Missionary Life

NUMBER 18.

BY REV. M. T. YATES, D. D.

SHANGHAI, CHINA.

Itinerant Preaching.

The typhoon of 1840, that caused a famine in this rich and populous plain, was the means of bringing from the interior cities scores of thousands to this market—the port of entry for grain from other ports. The foreign settlement, within the city, being the lions of the place, we met and preached to many of these interior people. Some of them responded to our invitations to call at our houses. We talked freely on many subjects. Our religion they did not understand, and it was evident, they did not have much reverence for their own systems of religion. They were simply curious. And, as we were civil to some, some of them invited us to go to their places and preach; not that they were at all interested in the gospel message, but they thought it would be an innocent amusement for the people of their town, as they had never seen the foreigners of whom they had heard strange stories. We

therefore commenced making short excursions to the nearest interior cities. An elephant, compared in the grandest style of an oriental prince, would not have excited more curiosity than our boat did, as we passed through towns and villages. By some means, the news of our coming went ahead of us, so that when we approached a village or town, we found the banks of the canals, and the fine stone bridges, crowded with gossamers—men, women and children. We were not long in discovering that the wisest policy, to avoid being stoned out, was to stand out on the bow of the boat, so that all could have a full length view.

What was more satisfactory, was to stop the boat and go on shore, where all could have the full gratification of a near approach to, and a thoughtful examination of the Western man, who was supposed to be hairy, like a horse. Under these circumstances it was necessary to command the crowd, and the only way to do that was to speak to them—get the floor and keep it—till I was ready to return to my boat; and thus leave immediately, for parts unknown to the multitude. In carrying out this expedient to preserve order, and prevent a riot, I addressed myself to the more intelligent and thoughtful looking portion of my spectators in front of me, while at my sides and back, as many as could get to me, were deeply interested in examining my clothes, and pulling up the leg of my trousers to see if my legs were really covered with hair like the legs of a horse. While thus engaged, they were warned by friends of the danger of being kicked. When they reached their destination, I heard their reply to the warning given, "Why, he is not like a horse. His skin is white, and smoother than ours." We have been deceived in buying those hairy pictures." They had an impression too, that a foreigner's legs were stiff, having a knee joint, one thorough examination, by a dozen persons, was quite sufficient to inform and satisfy a town, or a large region of country. It is passed around from one to another, that a foreigner is the same as ourselves, except he has no one, and he eats rice differently. They were more than curious to see us take our meals. As you may readily imagine, in these exciting excursions, we preached under difficulties. These attempts served the good purpose of keeping me still, to be examined, and maintaining something like order, so that all could be satisfied with one good look, close to. There was then, a large amount of curiosity that had to be gratified before we found it possible to get access to their minds. This is the first missionary work that has to be done in any strange locality, even now. We had to pass through excursions, and an exhibition from city to city, and some time to time, till I found it practicable—by requesting two or three persons, to keep the barking dogs away, to have a chance to preach to an attentive audience. But it is a depressing thought, that it takes a Chinaman, in a strange locality, a long time to hear what a foreigner is saying. Not that they do not understand each word—they have not apprehended the subject he is talking about, or thinking, mind unaccustomed to thinking, and we leave old rates very easily. I remember a case in the British Court here in point when I was requested to interpret the testimony of some Chinese witnesses in a murder case. The judge was on the bench, and the lawyers, reporters, etc., were at their places, and the first witness was called. He was a common countryman. I asked the question propounded by counsel for plaintiff. The witness replied, "I do not understand foreign talk." I asked the question a second time, and got the same answer. There was a slight commotion. I asked the judge, to allow me to enter into a little conversation with the witness on my own account, in order to convince him, that I was speaking Chinese. I then asked him if he had his rice? "Yes." Where do you live? He told me. How many children have you? "Why," he said, "you speak Chinese." Certainly, don't be alarmed, you are to tell me what you know about this murder. I then put to him the original question, and he answered it, as he did every other question put to him. His mind had to be aroused. And it is so with the masses, in regard to our message. They can hear sermon after sermon, at first, without apprehending the subject presented to them. So, when I appear before a strange audience, I commence with some familiar conversation, in order that they may realize that I am talking, in their own language, and about something that they can understand. I then tell them what I am going to talk about, and try to make them see that it is a matter in which all should feel an interest. After these preliminary remarks to place myself in accord with my hearers, I repeat a text, or theme for their consideration, and talk about it, and its applicability to us, in the state of sin and death, in a style suitable for a Sabbath school class, for in religious knowledge, the Chinese are children. The speaker soon discovers the few who are able, or who have a mind to follow him. When he discovers that his hearers are in attentive, he must go after them with some device, or a sudden change in the subject, to attract attention, or he will soon lose his congregation. Thus a preacher

in China must keep two objects before his mind. One to interest, and the other to instruct his hearers. It is a mistaken idea to suppose that the heathen rejoice at the good news of the gospel—salvation by faith. They would rejoice at any scheme that would enable them to secure the pleasure of the pleasures of the flesh. But they do not care to be told that they are sinners and must die. The gospel that requires them to mortify the deeds of the flesh, though it promises eternal life to the faithful, is not at first view, a matter of rejoicing to a Chinaman. His great object, and the aim of most of his religious ceremonies, is the enjoyment of this life. Our work, then, is pre-eminently one of faith and prayer for the blessing of the spirit upon the words of truth which we preach. We sow the seed, and pray and wait for God's blessing. Having been alone for seventeen years, I have had no time for itinerant work. Brethren, "the harvest is plenteous but the laborers are few," etc. When the churches at home awake to the fact that this is their work God will bless it.

NOTES OF TRAVEL.

A Sermon Preached by Rev. G. Washington Jones at Gregg's School House.

"And he came to the first and said, See, ye work to day in my vineyard." Matt. 21: 28.

This parable, my dear hearers, was spoken as a rebuke to the scribes and chief priests "who made a fair show of regard to the authority of God; but alas! their lives were a constant violation of their profession." Jesus shows that true obedience is better than a profession of loyalty, while the life is real disobedience. We better not promise so much, and do so little. But it is not my purpose to-day to exhaust your patience in abusing those old brethren mentioned in the context. That could not help you nor them, but it would injure me, for it always injures a man to abuse any one.

I hope to speak about entering and working in the vineyard of the Lord. This is a practical matter with each of us and should concern us all for our eternal destiny may hinge upon it.

I. Let us consider the entrance into the vineyard. Of what it means, and how to get into it, or every kind of animal could have free access to it. Hence we do not find all sorts of characters in Christ's service.

If all sorts were sent into the vineyard and they were just told to go in and to go to work, we would doubtless have the work done wrong. A man whose life has been spent in the culture of cotton or tobacco would make a poor hand in a vineyard—he would need instructions in how to work the vines. So a man whose life has been spent in sin and put into the service of Christ without being properly prepared for it, is not likely to do good first class work. It is sheer nonsense and a woful perversion of the Gospel to tell a man to go in and to go to work. We had as well tell a slow stupid pig-boy to go to the brickyard and to go to making bricks. Don't you think that they would make bricks! The man in the parable told his sons to go and he knew that they had had some training for the work.

A man must be renewed in heart; not be like Simon with a "heart not right in the sight of God." He must be converted and become as a little child, or he can never enter the vineyard, and without this new heart in Christ he would have no heart to work, even if he could manage to enter the vineyard. He would be in the wrong element and become restless and unhappy. A renewed man in much better contented in the way of service of Christ. Some may say that it is easy to enter the gateway into the vineyard. That there is no need of crying, groaning, waiting and praying at the gate! That is very pretty talk, my hearers, but it is not the Bible way. Some one may say, "Ah! is there not a gateway or entrance into the vineyard and is it hard to pass through a gate? That depends upon several conditions. It may be very hard to go through a gate."

I. It depends upon the width of the gate. If the gate is wide and the man is small, of course he can slide in very nicely, provided he has nothing on his back wider than the gate, or nothing about him which is unlawful for him to take with him and against which the gate will shut forever. If the gate is not wide and he is large or has something very large on his shoulders, he may find it very hard to squeeze through. For example, I could enter a gate some two feet wide without difficulty, but I could not pass that gate easily, if I should attempt to take a ton of hay on my back for my saddle-pony. Either I should have to struggle hard or give up the hay.

Now this we know, my hearers, the gate is narrow for Jesus says so

and we must accept what he says, it matters not who may teach to the contrary. Hear what he says, Matt. 7: 13. "Enter ye in at the strait gate, and also 'Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life and few that find it.'" The word strait means narrow. Hence all may well remember that they have a narrow gate to pass through when they go into the vineyard of the Lord.

2. We may also ask whether we have any thing that is unlawful for us to take with us into the service of Christ and whether it is hard for us to give it up.

It seems to me that the depraved heart contains many evils within it that must be left behind, before we can be accepted as obedient working hands in the vineyard or even before we can pass the narrow gate.

I would not say that the gateway of strait and into the vineyard that leadeth into it. It is no wonder that Jesus said, "Strive (agonize) to enter in at the strait (narrow) gate; for many shall seek to enter and shall not be able." Do mark these words of the Master—he knew what he was talking about and for us to represent to proud, self-willed, unrepentant and self-righteous sinners that they can put on their good clothes and step out of the vineyard of strait and into the vineyard of Christ at their leisure and at any time, is to make Jesus Christ talk a twaddle and nonsense in the above Scripture.

The other gate is broad and we may go through with ease and can carry all that is in our hearts, but they must all be left behind when we enter the service of Jesus. And it is a struggle to lay them aside. We have this to encourage us. Jesus is ever ready to help and will help and he is all powerful and can save. But I have spoken too long and must stop—I will preach on the other part of my subject this P. M.

P. S.—"Will Bro. G. Washington Jones please tell us whether among all the strange things he has found, has he found anything more strange than that a man should be allowed to preach who persistently refuses or neglects to pay his just and honest debts?" J. A. STRADLEY.

Brother Stradley is one of our best pastors and a man full of integrity and good works and I must not pass his question by without notice. I confess that a "preacher" who "persistently refuses or neglects to pay his just debts?" is not a preacher in the earth. He must preach honestly and practice fraud. He claims to be a servant of God, while he follows Satan. He preaches toward heaven while he is sliding down toward the pit. He is a miracle of impudence and iniquity. But I have found two stranger things than the preacher himself. 1. That honest and worthy ministers will recognize and honor such a preacher as a worthy minister. 2. That any church will listen to a preacher who "refuses or persistently neglects to pay his just and honest debts." When these two strange things shall cease from the earth, perhaps the aforesaid "preacher" will disappear forever. May God hasten the day of his going.

G. WASHINGTON JONES.

MODERN EVANGELISM.—No. 10.

Brother Editor:

Another objection to the kind of evangelism under consideration is, that the effect of the system upon the churches is injurious.

I do not say that no good is done by the use of this system, and that no souls are ever truly converted under it; but that its injurious effects more than counterbalance the good. True, we cannot give statistics referred to, and let each one decide upon the correctness of the above opinion.

In the first place, the character of the revivals produced under this system is objectionable. It is generally admitted that there is more reason for distrusting these than other revivals. There is room for doubt as to the wisdom of some of the preliminaries. The meetings for mutual confession, and for the settlement of difficulties and the removal of alienations between Christians, have not always commended themselves to the judgment of candid and wise observers. The fact that these things have been required by the evangelist, as a condition of his labors, has sometimes put an unwise constraint upon church members; and while the effect has been produced in form, there has been room to doubt its genuineness. Cases have been known where professed reconciliation was short-lived, and offences that had been confessed and confessed, were soon repeated. A pressure which few can resist is brought to bear upon offending and alienated ones, and the sensibilities may yield without the heart; and a mere sentiment, temporary in its effects, may be mistaken for a permanent principle of mutual love.

Furthermore, the measures generally used on these occasions have a tendency to awaken unauthorized and faithless hopes of a renewal of the heart. The influence of sympathy is felt in its intensest form; the pressure of persuasion is great; the appeals to the natural sensibilities are fervid, and made through the instrumentality of machinery which increases their power; and the consciousness given to those who are interested has a mighty effect. All these things conspire to encourage hopes which may have no scriptural basis. The counterfeits of religious experience are so many and so appealing, that under all circumstances, the calmest and wisest judgment, needed in deciding upon the genuineness of a Christian hope, but such sense as above referred to cannot be universally a just discrimination between the true and the false in re-

ligious experience. But these counterfeits "counted" by scores, and admissions into the churches; and it is soon proved that a considerable portion of them—often much the larger part—have been misled and decline. This is surely most injurious.

But in the second place, the effect upon the training of the churches is injurious. Read Rom. 4: 16. The principle here laid down is, that the truest and most perfect oblation of the church, the body of Christ, is to be obtained by the members all working together to this end. As a body that is fully exercised in all its parts grows in stature and in symmetry, so with the body of Christ. As the exercise must be habitual in the one case, so in the other. This is true of a local church. So the training of a church should be such as to lead all the members to active, practical religion, every-day, in every part of the church, the body of Christ, is to be obtained by the members all working together to this end. As a body that is fully exercised in all its parts grows in stature and in symmetry, so with the body of Christ. As the exercise must be habitual in the one case, so in the other. This is true of a local church. 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