

::R0049 : page 5::

THE WEDDING GARMENT

No. Two.

When the king came in to see the guests (assembled for the wedding), he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called but few are chosen." Matt. 22:11,14.

As the parable of Christ relates the history of the living phase of the gospel church, this closing scene must refer to the condition of those who are "alive and remain" and are *expecting* to share the glory promised to the church. All who were thus gathered by the servants, were *supposed* to be ready for the marriage, but the great Inspector, who knows even the thoughts and intents of the heart detects the lack and *sifts out* the unfit. The "chosen" are those who have that qualification represented by the "wedding garment." The *one* who is without it, doubtless represents a class who *thought* they were ready for the marriage, and were bitterly disappointed; their great sorrow may be expressed by the "weeping and gnashing of teeth." As the wedding garment represents readiness, we can not be indifferent as to what it is.

There are two views of this subject which we wish to consider. Some believe that the wedding garment is a "clean theology," and others that it is a "holy character." Now we confess that the latter view strikes us as more in harmony with the spirit of the gospel and the teachings of the apostles. We do not, however, ignore the importance of the knowledge of what our Father has been pleased to reveal in reference to His plans. The apostle exhorts to "grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Pet. 3:18. Men are in danger of being extremists on this as on almost all other Bible themes—some making too much and others too little of the importance of knowledge of theory or correct theology. But we are quite sure that the relation between knowledge of truth and character is not lost sight of by the apostles. It is believed by some that it is not possible to have a right theory or theology, without its producing the right condition of mind and consequent obedience. And such ones endeavor to be consistent with their theory by never talking or writing on practical themes, and never exhorting to obedience. There is, however, a marked difference in this respect between the writings of such brethren and the writings of the apostles. There has been a time in the past when the writer of this was inclined to the extreme view that knowledge was sufficient of itself to produce practical results, and therefore, that it was necessary only to preach the right theory, and that *exhortation* was of very

little importance. But the reading of the inspired letters to the churches aroused us to the consciousness that in taking such ground we were contradicting the Holy Spirit. No one can read carefully the apostles' writings and not be impressed with the fact that a large portion of such writings are *exhortations to practical holy living*. Knowledge does not always produce obedience or all such exhortations would be in vain. We cannot resist the inference that the Holy Spirit does nothing in vain. But we are not left to inference. Paul tells us of some who "*hold the truth in unrighteousness*," (Rom. 1:18,) which would be impossible if the view presented were correct. The wrath of God is revealed against the *ungodliness* and *unrighteousness* of such men. "Because that when they *knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.*" (Ver. 21.) "Wherefore God also gave them up to *uncleanness.*" (Ver. 24.) If knowledge is righteousness Paul should not and would not have written as he did. The nature of the unrighteousness is apparent in the context.

John gives us a definition of a righteous man which is worthy of our attention. "Little children let no man deceive you; he that *doeth righteousness* is righteous, even as he is righteous." 1 Jno. 3:7. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever *doeth not* righteousness is not of God neither he that loveth not his brother." (Ver. 10.) Who can fail to see that the object sought in giving men the truth, is *character*—to bring men into a *Godlike* condition, and that if men do not *obey* the truth, and fail to realize and to express *love* in their lives, *all is vain*.

::R0050 : page 5::

Truth *obeyed* will prove the savor of life unto life, but disobeyed, the savor of death unto death. Knowledge is power either for good or evil; and the greater one's knowledge the greater his responsibility. "To whom much is given much is required." "This is the condemnation, that *light* is come, and men loved darkness rather than light because *their deeds were evil.*" If knowledge is righteousness, how could any man sin willfully after having come to the knowledge of the truth, and how could any human being be lost? for God has arranged that "all men shall come to the knowledge of the truth," because he is the "True light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." We have the unmistakable testimony of Paul that though a man "have the gift of *prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though he have all faith* so that he could remove mountains, and have not *charity (love)*, he is nothing." 1 Cor. 13:2.

We are referred to the statement of Paul: "Abraham *believed* God and it was counted to him for righteousness," as proof that faith *is* righteousness. With this idea James is made to contradict Paul, for he says Abraham was justified by *works* and not by faith only (Ch. 2:24); and John contradicts Paul when he tells us that "all unrighteousness is *sin*," and as we have seen already,

that righteousness is doing right. And Paul is even made to contradict himself in what we have quoted from him. But these men do not contradict each other, and their harmony will be apparent when we remember that Paul commends the “faith that *works by love*.” Gal. 5:6. That Abraham’s faith, and that of all other bible worthies was of this type—i.e. a *working* faith—will be seen by reference to their history. They were *justified* by faith, when their faith led them to do what God required of them. “By faith Abel *offered sacrifice*.” Heb. 11:2.

“By faith Noah ... *prepared an ark*.” (Ver. 7). “By faith Abraham ... *obeyed and went out*” &c. (Ver. 8.) “By faith Abraham ... *offered up Isaac*.” Ver. 17. They *acted* by faith, so says James of Abraham. By works his faith was made perfect. Ch. 2:22. The woman’s faith saved her, but not till it led her to touch the Saviour. It existed *before* she was healed. So we see that faith alone or separately considered does not save, and is not righteousness.

We have no doubt that the “wedding garment” is the “fine linen, clean and white” with which the Bride is clothed, and “the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.” Rev. 19:8. But we can not believe that it is *limited* to her *theology*, but that it must *include* her *character*. It is the righteousness of her heart *manifested* in her life. The garment *expresses* her condition—her loyalty, her purity and her fellowship with God. Her righteousness is that to which she is called: “God hath not called us to uncleanness, but to *holiness*.” 1 Thess. 4:7. The garment expresses the *effect* sought and gained, rather than the means God uses to bring it about. “This is the will of God even your *sanctification*, that ye should abstain from *fornication*.” Ver. 3. To sanctify is to set apart for holy use, or to make holy or free from sin. Merely to “set apart” for any purpose is not to sanctify. “Now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your *fruit* unto *holiness*, and the end everlasting life.” Rom. 6:22. “Herein is my father glorified that ye bear much *fruit*.” “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me.” “If ye *keep my commandments* ye shall abide in my love.” “This is my

::R0050 : page 6::

commandment, that ye *love one another*.” John 15. “He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.” “He that *loveth not* knoweth not God, for God is love.”

“The object of our union with Christ is to develop his life and love in us, and that by his spirit the *deeds of the flesh* might be mortified.” Rom. 8:13. A garment spotted with the *flesh* shows that the carnal or fleshly nature is not wholly subdued. “If ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but if ye, through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

If any one will take the trouble of examining the New Testament with the help of a concordance on this subject of purity, spotlessness, holiness and kindred ideas, they will be surprised that any one

should even think of applying them to anything else than purity of heart and life. Get your theology corrected as fast as the truth is made plain to you, but do not let any one think that theology is a *garment*. We must be clothed with *righteousness*. "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart" shall ascend into the hill of the Lord. Ps. 24:3,4. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." The wedding garment is the divine nature developed and manifested.

That those who live late in the dispensation should have more light than those who lived further back in the shining path, is true, but the same overcoming of the flesh and loyalty to God was required of those who fell asleep as of us. They were tested in their life, as are we and found the character which fitted them for the kingdom before they slept. If a perfect theology were the wedding garment, then none but the last generation (even if they) could be the Bride. But the Bride made ready evidently refers to the whole company, whether waking or sleeping who were in Christ Jesus and consecrated to God's will. He has become the author of eternal salvation to all them that *obey* him." This spirit of *loyalty* to Christ is one of the most essential qualities of a true disciple, or learner, and will be of great assistance to us all in perfecting our theology, and getting the victory over every element or characteristic of the beast.

If any should inquire of us what was the leading and controlling "mark" or quality of the beast, we would write in large letters: DOGMATISM AND INTOLERANCE.

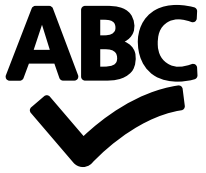
It is no proof that a doctrine is false because the Catholics believed it. Neither is it proof that a doctrine is true because a reformer, one whom God has used and led, promulgates it. Let us beware what we receive from any one; and "prove all things" by the word of the Lord.

And above all may we be able to *adorn* our lives with holiness: "Add to *faith*, virtue; to virtue, knowledge, and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, CHARITY. Last the greatest! If we have *these*, we shall have the "abundant entrance." 2 Pet. 1:5,11. To such the king will not say, "Why camest thou in hither;" but, "Well done, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Amen.

J. H. P.

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