

## Lesson 11: “The Wedding Garment”

To refuse the wedding invitation of the King as did the Jews is an insult, but to respond to an invitation in our day and then refuse the King’s gift of raiment is an even greater slight. In Sunday’s lesson, which focuses on recounting Jesus’ last days on earth and the Jews’ hardness of heart to receive truth, the question is asked: “Is there any reason to think—even as Seventh-day Adventists, living with so much light—that we are much different?” The answer has to be “Yes.” There is a truth (or “light”) that cannot be neglected, *especially* for Seventh-day Adventists. It is the truth that separates our denomination from the others—the Good News of the cleansing of the sanctuary. If it were not for our High Priest’s current work of cleansing the sanctuary on this our cosmic Day of Atonement, there would be no “wedding garment.”

“The parable of the wedding garment [Matthew 22:2-14] opens before us a lesson of the highest consequence [it is present truth!]. By the marriage is represented *the union of humanity with divinity*; the wedding garment represents the character which all must possess who shall be accounted fit guests for the wedding. In this parable, ... are illustrated the gospel invitation, its rejection by the Jewish people, and the call of mercy to the Gentiles. But on the part of those who reject the invitation, this parable brings to view a deeper insult and a more dreadful punishment. The call to the feast is a king’s invitation.” ... “When the king came in to view the guests, the real character of all was revealed. For every guest at the feast there had been provided a wedding garment. *This garment was a gift from the king*. By wearing it the guests showed their respect for the giver of the feast. ... The garment provided for [one of the guests] at great cost he disdained to wear. Thus he insulted his lord” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 307, 309).

“The man who came to the feast without a wedding garment represents the condition of many in our world today. ... They have never felt true repentance for sin. They do not realize their need of Christ or exercise faith in Him. ... they rest upon their own merits instead of trusting in Christ. ... they come to the banquet, but they have not put on the robe of Christ’s righteousness” (ibid., p. 315).

The “present truth” in this parable lies in Ellen White’s words above, and in the words of Revelation: “Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb *is* come, and His wife hath made herself ready” (vss. 9, 7).

These verses show us, because the wedding day is still future, that Christ is a disappointed Bridegroom-to-be longing for His wedding day to come. We know He does not want to delay His second coming, for He loves His people who appreciate His sacrifice in their behalf and wants them to be with Him (John 14:3). We know He sympathizes with the sufferings of His people (Isa. 63:8, 9). Surely it is reasonable to understand that He longs to bring all this suffering to an end. He is waiting for the heavenly angel to tell Him, “Thrust in thy sickle and reap, for the time is come for Thee to reap” (Rev 14:14).

The entire Bible is full of the idea that He loves us; and if you love someone, you must want to be with that one. The important truth is not ourselves, that is, how much WE long for His second coming, but how much HE longs to come the second time! James says that He is “quietly awaiting His precious harvest” (1:7, Phillips). As a farmer eagerly watching his precious crop day by day, longing for the harvest, so Jesus yearns for His people (His Bride) to get ready for His coming.

What is causing this delay of the wedding day? Can God do something to force His sleeping “Bride” to get ready? No, God’s omnipotence must be restrained: never has a bridegroom dressed his bride for the wedding. That’s her job to “*make herself ready.*”

No bride ever “makes herself ready” for the marriage if she is afraid of her bridegroom, and moves under coercion from him. In fact, “perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18), and the word used there for “love” includes conjugal love between husband and wife (see Eph. 5:25, Greek, *agape*). Nothing can motivate a woman to “make herself ready” for a wedding except a heart-response on her part to what she perceives in her fiancée is genuine love. Any bride in such a wedding is herself a little illustration of the church at last responding to the Lamb of God, her true Lover.

“The marriage of the Lamb” is based on the same principle. No church will ever “make herself ready” to marry Christ unless she has discovered the breadth, length, depth, and height, of the love He has for her. Being a “woman” of mature and marriageable age (in spiritual maturity), the church will come to the place where “she” will grow out of the egocentric mind-set that has characterized her supposed devotion to Him.

The 1888 idea of the cleansing of the sanctuary is Good News better than most Adventists have ever thought it is. In early 1890 Ellen White was moved to write a series of articles for the *Review and Herald* that connected the 1888 idea of justification by faith with the work of Christ in the Most Holy Apartment (January 21 through April 8; some excerpts follow):

"We are in the day of atonement, and we are to work in harmony with Christ's work of cleansing the sanctuary from the sins of the people. Let no man who desires to be found with the wedding garment on, resist our Lord in His office work" (Jan. 21).

"Christ ... is cleansing the sanctuary from the sins of the people. What is our work? ... To be in harmony with the work of Christ" (Jan. 28).

"Christ is cleansing the temple in heaven from the sins of the people, and we must work in harmony with Him upon the earth, cleansing the soul temple from its moral defilement" (Feb. 11).

"The slumbering Church must be aroused. ... The people have not entered into the [most] holy place. ... There is spiritual drought in the churches" (Feb. 25).

### **Do you get the point?**

*Cleansing the sanctuary is the work the High Priest does.* We LET Him do it. And He *will* do it if we don't "resist Him"! The garment of His character is given to both good and bad during the investigative judgment in order to vindicate them. It is left for each one to choose if he/she will put it on. People worldwide are awakening to realize that now is the time for this resistance to the High Priest to cease! The entire plan of salvation and the great controversy between Christ and Satan are dependent on Christ's final work being done successfully.

The marriage metaphor is the most profound expression of the atonement—the uniting of divinity with humanity (see *Christ's Object Lessons*, above). The wedding garment *is* the atonement! Choosing to put it on is identification with Christ.

The heavenly Bridegroom will not stand embarrassed before the world and the universe. Receive His gift of the "wedding garment."

—*Compiled mainly from the writings of Robert J. Wieland*