

COME TO THE FEAST . . . R. S. V. P.

build. But Moab's arrogance and threatening need not be feared by God's elect for He will bring their enemies down to the dust of the earth. And so it has been through the ages. The faithful Covenant-God has protected and sustained and fed His kingdom upon the earth and it is alive and flourishing today. In contrast, those enemies who have threatened and warred against God's kingdom have come and gone and dissolved into dust, one after another. So shall it ever be.

QUIZ

1. Which "mountain" is referred to in v. 10?
2. What is the point of this passage in connection with the rest of ch. 25?
3. How will Jehovah accomplish the demise of Moab?

SPECIAL STUDY

COME TO THE FEAST . . . R.S.V.P.

Enjoyment of God's provision is limited
only to the invited guest's response

by Paul T. Butler

"You are cordially invited . . ." or, "The honor of your presence is requested. . . ." This is the way an invitation to a special festal occasion usually starts. It may conclude with "R.S.V.P." *Repondez, s'il vous plait* (French for "Please reply").

"Come to the feast!" has been the invitation of man to man since time began. There is no better opportunity for men to integrate their personalities, show their regard for one another, and help one another than at the festal table. Man has also

learned to use the word "feast" in a figurative way to express the joyful experience he knows when he has nurtured his soul on something aesthetic or spiritual.

God, the omniscient Father, fully aware of man's frame of experience, sent His messengers in times past inviting men, "Come to my feast!" The amazing fact is, millions have rejected His invitation and most of those few who accept the invitation somehow miss the festivities.

The Christian life a feast

God ordained the physical feasts of the Jews for a purpose deeper than mere satisfaction of the flesh or of national pride. Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, and all the lesser festivities provided by the law pointed to a time of profound spiritual feasting when the Messiah was to come with His kingdom.

The prophets spoke figuratively and glowingly of the festal nature of the coming kingdom (Christian dispensation).

And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined (Isaiah 25:6).

Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness (Isaiah 55:2).

The Jewish nation, with the exception of a small remnant, misunderstood their own prophets and the typical nature of their own law. They were looking for a literal fulfillment of the types and prophecies. It was their desire that God should give them literal feasts, literal peace, literal prosperity, and a literal king.

Then Jesus came! He took up the figurative way of the prophets in speaking of the coming kingdom. He taught in parables that the kingdom-time would be a time of feasting. He intended that the people should anticipate a spiritual feast, but

again most would not receive His words, for they looked for a literal fulfillment as their fathers had before them.

In Luke 14:1ff Jesus gives one of His longest dissertations on this subject. He had been invited to a Pharisee's home to dine. While there He healed a man of dropsy. And as He observed men wrangling and striving over seats of honor at the Pharisee's table, He taught that humility marked the proper decorum for dining. He also attacked the social injustices against the poor.

The miraculous healing; the talk of honored seats; the attack upon social injustices; all caused one of the Pharisee's guests to jump up excitedly and cry, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God."

This guest was sure the Prophet of Nazareth was giving instructions in protocol for the soon-to-be-established kingdom of the Messiah in Jerusalem, and he was overcome with the anticipation of it all. So Jesus took this occasion to teach that the call to the kingdom of God was a call to a great feast, but those who were first bidden refused to come. Others, out in the highways and hedges, were "constrained" to come. Those who were first bidden and refused shall not taste of His supper.

On several other occasions Jesus spoke of the kingdom in the figure of a feast (compare Matthew 22:1-14; 25:1-13).

Jesus spoke also of men eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and said that He was the manna come down out of heaven. In this He referred, of course, to men assimilating His word into their hearts and minds (compare John 6:63). He spoke of men drinking from the effervescent water of life, meaning the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (compare John 7:37-39).

The epistles testify to the festal nature of the Christian life. In I Corinthians 5:6-8 we are exhorted to keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Paul did not mean to limit "the feast" to the Lord's Supper. In I Corinthians 10:1-5 Christians are told that they eat and drink the same spiritual food the Israelites shared in the wilderness.

Our spiritual feast

Now feasts are to be joyfully festive. Yet some Christians live the Christian life as if they were being force-fed some bitter medicinal compound. Christianity for them is a diet of unpalatable rules and regulations—of “dos and don’ts.” This is because some Christians, like the Jews of Jesus’ day, still have a materialistic concept of Christianity. That is, unless their Christianity affords some worldly joy, worldly fame, or worldly satisfaction, they “all with one consent begin to make excuse.” But, as Paul says, the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit (compare Romans 14:17). Or, as Jesus put it, man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from God (compare Matthew 4:4).

When we become Christians we “have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come” (Hebrews 6:1ff). We join with angels in festal array when we come to Zion (the church) (Hebrews 12:22, 23). Paul said he fed the Corinthians on the milk of the word (I Corinthians 3:2) and the book of Hebrews speaks of the word in the same way (Hebrews 5:12-14). Peter writes, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (I Peter 2:2, 3). Paul wrote, men should not become drunk with wine, but they should be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). Jesus is the living water, and none shall ever hunger or thirst if they come to Him (John 4:13, 14). For, “blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6).

Studying and receiving the word is not all there is to the “feast.” Jesus tells us, “My meat (food) is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work” (John 4:34). We must not only contemplate the festive table of Christianity, we must become participants. We shall never taste nor be filled until we partake.

R.S.V.P.

There are at least three reactions to Christ's invitation to the sumptuous Christian feast.

Some refuse to come at all. Most of these seem to feel they have more satisfying things to do. Some think to satisfy their souls with power and the temporal security. Others think they may satisfy their souls with pleasures of the flesh. Still others seek to satisfy their souls with the vain glory of fame and pride. Little do they know that they are starving to death spiritually while feeding on "husks." Isaiah in a Messianic context said, "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed" (Isaiah 65:13).

Why do people spend their money (life's energies and soul's desires) for that which does not satisfy? Some discover—and most of them too late—that the bread of rebellion and worldliness does not satisfy the soul. Christ said that everyone who drinks of the water that is temporal will thirst again. Sooner or later the worldling finds that surfeiting himself on worldliness and sin has left only the taste of wormwood and bitterness in his heart. Jeremiah wrote, "I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall."

A second kind of response to the invitation is made by those who come to the feast but partake only of the rudimentary things. These are the Christians who stay on the same diet week after week. Rich fare is spread before their hearts and minds but they are so lazy they wish only to partake of that which is "spoon-fed" to them. They never know the thrill in going on to new heights of spiritual knowledge and experience. They never grow. They are satisfied to remain on their milk diet, never to partake of the meat of the word. For this reason many become spiritually weak and sickly, and some actually die a spiritual death (compare I Corinthians 11:27-32). They will never mature into full-grown men in Christ (compare Ephesians 4:11-16). It is not a lack of available food that causes

so much sickness and trouble in the Christian "body" (the church). It is rather the laziness of the "body" to partake. Finally, there are those who come and are eager to partake of every rich dish set before them in this heavenly feast. Here is one place where a person can never eat too much! Before him are such tasty dishes as the joy of salvation; the peace and security found in Christ; the thrill of soul winning; the challenge of having a wisdom and knowledge which transcends the vastness of the universe or even our own thoughts; the satisfaction of having an eternal purpose; the eagerness of hope in sharing a future glory with Christ; the boldness we have in Christ our high priest; the anticipation of a heavenly inheritance; being in partnership with God—a colaborer in His eternal scheme of redemption; and comradeship with the redeemed both in heaven and on earth. These are just a few of the satisfying, rich dishes in the Christian feast. The table is prepared before you, there is heavenly bread and living water; there is fruit from the tree of life and the fruit of the Spirit. All things are ready, come to the feast!

If your Christian life is lacking in joy and festive spirit, it is not God's fault. His table is bountiful and you are an invited, honored guest.

Perhaps in the past you have been pushing away His bountiful provision and have been eating at the devil's table. Have you found that the devil's table is filled with ashes and bread of mourning—with husks and pigs' food? If you are a prodigal son, you need to return to the Father's table. You need to "come home" rededicated, reconsecrated, ready to hear the Father as He commands to bring forth the robe, the ring, and the shoes, and to kill the fatted calf so that we may feast together.

Perhaps you have been sitting too lazily at the table and need to rouse yourself from your milk diet and partake of the rich satisfying, strengthening food that is there.

It may be that you have never accepted the King's invitation to come to His feast at all. Would you refuse an invitation to dine with the President at the White House? I tell you a greater

than the President has sent you a special invitation. The invitation of King Jesus is not to a select few. The invitation is printed, "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely."

The only requirement is that you put on the festive garment. In the parable Jesus told (Mt. 22) one was found at the king's feast without the proper garment and he was banished from the feast. But thanks be to God, our King has provided not only the feast but also the white robe to wear. You may put on this garment by faith and obedience to Christ, for it is through faith and obedience that we are "united with His death," and there have our robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

All things are ready, come to the feast! R.S.V.P.!

C. JUSTICE AT LAST FOR JUDAH, CHAPTER 26

1. JUSTICE'S ORIGIN

TEXT: 26:1-6

- 1 In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah:
We have a strong city; salvation will he appoint for wells and bulwarks.
- 2 Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth faith may enter in.
- 3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee.
- 4 Trust ye in Jehovah forever; for in Jehovah, even Jehovah, is an everlasting rock.
- 5 For he hath brought down them that dwell on high, the lofty city; he layeth it low, he layeth it low even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust.
- 6 The foot shall tread it down; even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy.