Contemporary Comments on the Adult Sabbath School Lesson

[Title] The Wedding Garment
[Use] June 11, 2011

If you’re attending a wedding this summer, you’ve probably received an invitation in the mail. But there have been some brides and grooms who have opted (by necessity or choice) to invite strangers to their wedding. And as this first story tells, the results can be disastrous!

Bride Sharon Shelley and groom Philip Dunne didn’t discover until their wedding day that a terrible mistake had been made when their invitations were sent out.¹ The couple was married in a private civil ceremony that was simple yet beautiful. But when the newlyweds arrived at their reception destination, the crowd waiting to greet them was sparse. Of the 40 guests they’d invited and planned on, only about 15 had come. “We had so many phone calls that evening from people saying that they wouldn’t be able to make it, and my family had come from Southampton and had to leave before tea time, so although we had said 40 there were a lot less” said Sharon. With a hired DJ and food for 40, what were they to do?

Although the bride and groom had rented the whole facility for the evening, the management argued that there weren’t enough people to merit closing the place to the public. So they took matters into their own hands and invited local people in to make up for the missing guests. The strangers were told to come in and enjoy the food.

Somehow word spread, and the number of people coming to attend the free reception got way out of hand. The wedding party was finally asked to leave. Sharon was forced to change out of her wedding dress in the restroom before they left. “There was me,” the bride said, “walking down the street with my wedding dress in my arms, crying, looking for a station so that we could go home.” Philip said, “We were disgusted with what happened. We expected to have a very, very good night and then this happened.”

How sad for this young couple. But there’s a story of another couple, who invited strangers to their wedding, that has a much happier ending.

Catherine Webb and Mark Campbell decided they wanted a low-key wedding ceremony. So they told their families not to worry about making the trip to Devon, England. It’s just going to be “the two of us” they told everyone. But they still needed two people to witness their nuptials, so they decided to put an ad in the local newspaper.²

They were amazed when 15 locals responded! One volunteered to be the bridesmaid, while another the pageboy. A local florist provided the bride with a bouquet and another stranger organized a reception after the ceremony. After the wedding, the new bride said, “It just goes to show there are still nice people out there. We were really moved by the fuss. We expected to get nobody—or weirdos—but we got really lovely people. There were 17 of us altogether.” The groom was equally pleased. “Every one came as strangers and left as friends,” he said.
Jesus told a parable about a wedding to which the invited guests chose not to come. And since we know this parable is really about Jesus inviting us to the wedding feast in Heaven, the word “chose” is an important one. The king invited, and no one came. He even sent his servants not just once, but also a second time to remind the people of the invitation. Yet the choice was theirs, and they chose not to come.

So the king sent word to everyone—anyone who wanted could come! And the wedding hall was filled. But not all who came did so for the right reason. One man came with no wedding garment and was cast out of the wedding. This man’s lack of a garment represents us if we lack the robe of Jesus’ righteousness.

In the end, what separates those who will enter the wedding and those who will be denied won’t be how “good” or how “bad” someone was. We’re all a mixture of both. It’s the invisible robe that will be the deciding factor. The robe of Jesus’ righteousness that is offered to all, just as the invitation is offered to all. It’s hard to believe that it can be so simple, yet for those who love Jesus and are truly faithful guests, Paul promises that, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus....” No condemnation. No one to condemn us. Only an invitation to come.

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1. Now Public
2. Telegraph

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