

2. The Wedding Feast

Matthew 22:1-14

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And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, ²“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, ³and sent his servants^[a] to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. ⁴Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.”’ ⁵But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. ⁷The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. ⁸Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’ ¹⁰And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹“But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. ¹²And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. ¹³Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ¹⁴For many are called, but few are chosen.”

- 1. Often, the context of a parable helps us to understand the purpose and the meaning of the parable. Read Matthew 21:23-27 and determine the context and the audience for this parable.**

Context: Jesus was teaching in the temple. The chief priests and the elders were challenging His authority to preach, and the message that he was sharing.

Audience: The chief priests and elders were ultimately the ones who captured Jesus and turned Him over to the Romans for crucifixion. Matthew 26:3-5 & Matthew 26:14-16. If you read the gospel of Matthew as a whole, you begin to see that Jesus rebuke of the chief priests and the Pharisees grows as his ministry progresses. As time goes on He becomes increasingly direct and specific with them about their sin and rejection of the Gospel.

- 2. Read Matthew 21:45. What does this tell us about the context or the application of these parables?**

Matthew 21:45-46 - ⁵When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.

The Chief Priests and the Pharisees understood that the preceding parables were about them. Jesus was rebuking them for the unbelief and identifying them as not the chosen people that they believed they were, but as enemies of the kingdom.

Jesus accused them of not doing the fathers will, killing the prophets and messengers of God, and finally he predicted His own death in the Matthew 21:37-39 (The parable of the Tenants)

Matthew 21:37-39 - ³⁷ Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ³⁸ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’ ³⁹ And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

3. **Sometimes it is difficult, or dangerous, to try to identify the characters represented in a parable, however sometimes it helps to understand them. Identify (as best we can) the representations of the following characters or events in the parable of the wedding feast.**

The king: God – Who sent His son and is described in Scripture as arranging the church as the bride of Christ.

Revelation 19:6-9 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. ⁷ Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; ⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. ⁹ And the angel said^[a] to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”

2 Corinthians 11:2 ² For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

The wedding feast: This may refer to Heaven when God will host the event depicted in Revelation 19, but it would seem that in the context of the parable, it is referring more to the kingdom of God on earth. God had a plan from the beginning to redeem all mankind, and He pre-ordained that the Jews would reject Him so that the Gospel would spread to the gentiles. We are in that age today. This makes sense in this parable because the initial guests that were invited (the Jews, the chosen people) rejected Jesus and the wedding feast was filled up with gentiles (both good and bad).

The invited guests who do not come: The Jews that have rejected Jesus and are stuck in their traditions and worship of the law and themselves.

Romans 9:30-33 - ³⁰ What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹ but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. ³² Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, ³³ as it is written, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

Romans 11:25-36 - ²⁵ Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written,

“The Deliverer will come from Zion,
he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”;
²⁷ “and this will be my covenant with them
when I take away their sins.”

²⁸ As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. ²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰ For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹ so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. ³² For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

³⁴ “For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?”

³⁵ “Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?”

³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

The good and bad guests that arrived: Gentiles. The Jews rejected Jesus, and turned Him over to be crucified. They rejected their king, and the Gospel spread to the gentiles. The final stage of the new Testament era would seem to involve a change of heart in the Jewish people and the acceptance of Jesus by many Jews.

Romans 11:11-12 - ¹ So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. ¹² Now if their trespass means riches

for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

The one without the wedding garment: This is a more difficult one. The story seems to lend itself to the idea that these are people that are in the church, professors of Christianity, that never truly gave their lives to Christ. Ones that still hold on to their own lives and idolatry instead of the fountain of living water. The amazing thing is here in the context of the parable, they see the king, they see the wedding feast, they see the joy of the saints, and still hold onto their own idols. They are not clothed in the righteousness of Christ's blood and they do not have a place in God's kingdom.

Matthew 7:15-23 - ¹⁵“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

²¹“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

4. Somebody once said that the people who Jesus had the most difficulty with in His earthly ministry were those who's doctrine was most like His. How does this parable illustrate the resistance of the invited guests to Jesus' salvation message?

The Pharisees memorized massive amounts of the Torah, they tried to follow every law of Moses, and made up new laws to add to them. They believed everything that we do about the OT and the law of God, they followed God's commands more than we would think possible – but they missed the point. They missed Grace. They missed the fact that God spared a “sinful and stiff-necked” people, that God did not destroy Israel regardless of the times that they turned from Him. God showed Grace throughout the OT to Israel, it's kings, and the remnant that He preserved – that was the whole point of the OT narrative - the fact that we can't keep the law!

Romans 3:19-26 - ¹⁹Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

The Pharisees of Jesus time were counting on their own righteousness to enter the kingdom. They rejected Jesus because they didn't think they needed Him. They thought they had a plan to get to God, but didn't see the level of depravity in their own ways. The parable tells of them rejecting the free invitation to the wedding and going about their own business (one to his farm, another to his business).

5. What is the meaning of this parable? Is there only one meaning or purpose of this parable? Is the parable relevant to us today?

The meaning of the parable seems clearer as we study it. The invitation to attend the wedding feast went out to everybody. Come in and enjoy the food and celebration. God is calling everybody to enjoy Him. Many rejected it for many different reasons and their unfortunate end is destruction. The message of salvation goes out to all people as well. Come to Jesus and He will give you forgiveness and grace. The freedom of having your sin lifted from your back and thrown into the pit. Jesus offers forgiveness and attendance at the free celebration of His kingdom, and all are welcome. *Matthew 22:10* tells us, "and those servants went into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad." Everybody is called to come into the kingdom – both "good" and "bad" because Jesus paid the price for our sins. The Gospel is that Grace covers all sin. Not just part of it, but ALL of it. There is none too bad to be forgiven in God's kingdom, but unfortunately, there are many who are too "good" to seek forgiveness.

6. Explain Matthew 22:11- 14, Who is this person that is thrown out of the wedding feast, and what is the wedding garment that he is missing?

The end of this parable is a reminder to all of us that salvation is a personal decision, and not one by association. It is individual and personal, not given to groups, or attendees, or denominations. Many were called into the wedding feast, and Jesus calls all to himself.

John 12:31-33 - ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." ³³ He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

The person who entered the feast without the proper wedding garment seems to refer to one who associates with those that are part of the kingdom, the saved, but does not possess the necessary repentance to be saved.

The Gospel Transformation Bible notes put it this way:

“The final paragraph of the section (22:11-14) is a sobering reminder that the warning Jesus issued to the leadership of Israel in these parables is still valid for the people of God today. People are attracted to the church for a variety of reasons: it offers a place to socialize, opportunities to meet people of one’s own age and interests, and organizational structures for helping the needy. As a result, people whose hearts have never been transformed by God can find themselves associating with the church. This heart-transformation, evident in the repentance, faith, and obedience to Jesus is the “wedding garment” that the guest in 22:11 lacked.

The Gospel Transformation Bible <http://gospeltransformationbible.org/>

Jesus offers the same chilling warning in Matthew 7:21-23

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

This reminds us to make sure that our faith is in Christ Jesus and him alone. God calls us to repent of our sin and hold on to Jesus for our salvation. It is a free gift, nothing we can do can deserve it. The only way to God is repentance and acceptance of Jesus.

Romans 6:23 - ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.