

Wedding Feast Parable (Matthew 22:1-14)

We all love weddings. In every culture, they are among the most important and joyful of celebrations. In this parable, God's salvation is portrayed as a wedding banquet. All are invited, but we come on God's terms. And there is a dress code for God's banquet.

To better understand the context of this story, it's important to know some basic facts about weddings in Jesus' day. In Jewish society, the parents of the betrothed generally drew up the marriage contract. The bride and groom would meet, perhaps for the first time, when this contract was signed. The couple was considered married at this point, but they would separate until the actual time of the ceremony. The bride would remain with her parents, and the groom would leave to prepare their home. This could take quite a while. When the home was ready, the groom would return for his bride without notice. The marriage

ceremony would then take place, and the wedding banquet would follow.

The wedding banquet was one of the most joyous in Jewish life and could last for up to a week. In His parable, Jesus compares heaven to a wedding banquet that a king had prepared for his son (v. 2). Many people had been invited, but when the time for the banquet came and the table was set, those invited refused to come (vv. 4-5). In fact, the king's servants who brought the joyful message were mistreated and even killed (v. 6).

The king, enraged at the response of those who had been invited, sent his army to avenge the death of his servants (v. 7). He then sent invitations to anyone his servants could find, with the result that the wedding hall was filled (vv. 8-10).

During the feast, the king noticed a man "who was not wearing wedding clothes" (v. 11). When asked

how he came to be there without the furnished attire,
the man

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had no answer and was promptly ejected from the feast “outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (vv. 12-13). Jesus then ends that parable with the statement: “For many are invited, but few are chosen” (v. 14).

The king is God the Father, and the son who is being honored at the banquet is Jesus Christ, who “came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him (John 1:11). Israel held the invitation to the kingdom, but when the time actually came for the kingdom to appear (see Matthew 3:1), they refused to believe it. Many prophets, including John the Baptist, had been murdered (Matt 14:10). The king’s reprisal against the murderers can be interpreted as a prophecy of Jerusalem’s destruction in 70 AD at the hands of the Romans (Luke 21:5). More broadly, the king’s vengeance speaks of the desolation mentioned in the book of Revelation.

God is patient, but he will not tolerate wickedness forever (Obadiah 1:15). His judgment will come upon those who reject His offer of

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salvation. Considering what that salvation cost Jesus, is not this judgment well-deserved?

Note that it is not because the invited guests could not come to the wedding feast, but that they would not come (see Luke 13:34). Everyone had an excuse. How tragic, and how indicative of human nature, to be offered the blessings of God and to refuse them because of the draw of mundane things!

The matter of the wedding garment is instructive. It would be a gross insult to the king to refuse to wear the garment provided to the guest. The man who was caught wearing his old clothing learned what an offense it was as he was removed from the celebration. We can only attend God's feast on God's terms, which is faith in His Son, expressed in lives of obedience.

We see here so much of the character of God. We see God's patience in his repeated invitations to come to

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him. We see his holiness in his demand for righteousness. We see his wrath on those who repeatedly spurned his love. And we see his amazing grace in inviting even the most unworthy into the joy of His salvation.

Just as the king provided wedding garments for his guests, God provides salvation for mankind. Our wedding garment is the righteousness of Christ, and unless we have it, we will miss the wedding feast. When the religions of the world are stripped down to their basic tenets, we either find man working his way toward God, or we find the cross of Christ. The cross is the only way to salvation (John 14:6).

For his crime against the king, the improperly attired guest is thrown out into the darkness. For their

crimes against God, there will be many who will be consigned to the “outer darkness”—existence without God for eternity. Christ concludes the parable with the sad fact that “many are invited, but few are chosen.” In

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other words, many people hear the call of God, but only a few heed it.

To summarize the point of the Parable of the Wedding Feast, God sent His Son into the world, and the very people who should have celebrated His coming rejected him, bring judgment upon themselves. As a result, the kingdom of heaven was opened up to anyone who will set aside his own righteousness and by faith access the righteousness God provides in Christ. Those who spurn the gift of salvation and cling instead to **their own good** words, will spend eternity in hell.

The self-righteous Pharisees who heard this parable did not miss Jesus’ point. In the next verse, verse

15, “the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap Him in His word.” The Parable of the Wedding Feast is also a warning to us, to make sure we are relying on God’s provision of salvation, not on **our own good** works of religious service.

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So, what are the **lessons** we can learn from this Scripture reading in Matthew.

This parable of the Wedding Feast conveys several important lessons about God’s kingdom and human response. First, it illustrates that God’s invitation to his kingdom is extended to everyone, regardless of their background. The king sends out invitations to many, symbolizing God’s desire for all to come to him. Some invitees reject the invitation, which signifies how people ignore or dismiss God’s call. This rejection can lead to consequences, as seen when the king punishes those who refuse to attend. The requirement of wearing a wedding garment

highlights the necessity of being spiritually prepared to enter God's kingdom. This garment symbolizes righteousness and the proper attire needed to accept God's invitation. The man without a wedding garment is cast out, emphasizing that merely accepting the invitation is not enough, one

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must be prepared and worthy. These lessons encourage reflection on how individuals respond to God's call and the importance of being spiritually ready for his kingdom.

Please bow your heads as I pray.

Gracious God, in love, you open wide the doors and welcome us into Your presence—saints and sinners alike. You spread a table before us, filled with the richest fare—a feast of love and mercy for the body and soul. We come with joy to meet You here, to eat and drink at Your table, to taste and see Your

goodness, to celebrate Your grace and mercy in our lives. May Your Spirit inspire our praise and thanksgiving, our prayers and petitions as we worship together in Your presence. We ask this in the name of your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ.
Amen.