

THE PARABLE OF THE MARRIAGE FEAST: ISRAEL'S REJECTION OF GOD'S GREAT INVITATION MATHEW 22:01–14

Introduction: Lord's Great Marriage Feast

Several things need to be noted about this parable.

1. This parable should be compared with the parable in Luke 14:15-24. There are many similarities, but they do differ. Mathew's parable is *The Great Marriage Feast*; Luke's parable is *The Great Supper*. Luke's parable was told at a much earlier date. Mathew's parable was shared during the last week of Christ's life. Each parable had a different purpose and was shared in a different place. Some details also differ.

It is important not to confuse the two parables with each other. Each has its own lesson and truths. Christ is bound to have repeated His parables and teachings often, for all trials are common to all men (1 Cor. 10:13). All men need the same lessons and the same truth. Christ just varied the details to apply to various congregations and their particular needs.

2. This parable, the Great Marriage Feast, deals with the *Kingdom of Heaven* (v. 2). This is important. Although the parable tells how God dealt with Israel and turned from Israel, its major point is God's dealings with His new people, the church (See Israel, Gentiles, Church, New Creation, Mt. 21: 43; especially point 6.)

3. The meaning of the various points of the parable is clear.

=> The King is God.

=> The Son is Christ Himself. Note that He again claims to be the Son of God, distinctive from the servants of the King. This is a critical point to see. There is no question about Christ's understanding just who He is (See Jesus Christ, Deity, Mt. 21:37-39).

=> The Great Marriage Feast is the glorious day of redemption. It is the glorious day when the church will see Christ for the very first time and be joined with Him forever (see 1 Th. 4:13-18).

=> Those "who have been invited" to the marriage refers to Israel. They were called by God from the very first, beginning with Abraham.

However, this point can be applied to any of us — the farmer, the businessman, the religionist, the worldly — any who scoff, abuse, persecute and deny that Christ is the Son of God.

=> Those "on the street corners" are the Gentiles, people from all other nations who are willing to accept God's glorious invitation to His dear Son's wedding.

=> The wedding clothes represent righteousness. No guest is acceptable for the wedding unless he is properly clothed, and the only proper clothing is righteousness, the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The parable has both an historical and personal meaning. That is to say, its points can be applied to any of us. A quick glance at its points, both major and minor, will show this.

- I. Jesus again shared a parable (vv. 1-2).
- II. God's invitation to Israel (vv. 3-7).
- III. God's invitation to any and all (vv. 8-10).
- IV. God's confrontation with the guests (vv. 11-14).

MATHEW 21:43
ISRAEL, GENTILES, CHURCH: NEW CREATION

"Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.." Mathew 21:43

God shall take away His kingdom and give it to another nation. Christ gave a prophecy that dramatically affects world history: His vineyard or kingdom is going to be taken away from Israel and given to another people.

There are several important facts that need to be understood at this point in order to grasp the significance of the Lord's prophecy.

1. Israel was the nation of people raised up by God to be His witness to the world (Jn. 4:22).

a. Israel bore up the name of God in the world.

***Psa 76:1-2** In Judah God is known; his name is great in Israel. His tent is in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion.*

b. Israel was given the very words of God, that is, the Word of God, the revelation of God to the world.

***Rom 3:1-2** What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.*

c. Israel was a greatly privileged people in spiritual things.

***Rom 9:4-5** The people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.*

d. Israel was given the glorious plan of salvation.

John 4:22 *"You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews."*

- e. Israel was given the glorious privilege of being God's witnesses upon the earth.

Isa 43:10 *"You are my witnesses," declares the Lord, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me."*

2. Israel failed God in its God-given mission and failed God miserably. Therefore, God took His kingdom away from them. As Christ points out in this parable, they "took [God's] servants, they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third" (v. 35-36). Then they committed the most atrocious crime of history: they rejected and killed God's very own Son (v. 39). All through its history Israel was unfruitful except for a bright spot here and there. They opposed the reins of God upon their lives, and in the final step of rebellion, they rejected and opposed the gospel of Christ. Therefore, they forfeited their Godly privileges. The Kingdom of God was taken from them and given to another nation.

- a. God turned from Israel because they killed His Son.

Mat 21:39, 41 *So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time."*

- b. God turned from Israel because they were unfruitful.

Mat 21:43 *"Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit."*

- c. God turned from Israel because they sought after righteousness by law and not by faith.

Rom 9:31-33 *But Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone." As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."*

- d. God turned from Israel because they would not submit themselves to the righteousness of God.

Rom 10:2-3 *For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.*

- e. God turned from Israel because they did not obey the gospel.

Rom 10:16 *But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?"*

- f. God turned from Israel because they were a disobedient and obstinate people.

Rom 10:21 *But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."*

- g. God turned from Israel because of unbelief.

Rom 11:20-22 *Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.*

3. Israel as a nation was never saved. Not all citizens believed in God. When God chose Israel to be His people, He did not mean *national salvation*. God knew that not all the citizens of Israel would believe. Not all citizens of any nation believe. What God meant, very simply, was that Israel as a nation was to be the *primary recipient and messenger* of His Kingdom and gospel. Salvation was never a national matter, not a matter of race or heritage. It was always a matter of personal belief. There was never a moment in Israel's history when every Jew believed in the promises of God.

Rom 9:6-8 *It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.*

Rom 9:27, 29 *Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved." It is just as Isaiah said previously: "Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah."*

Rom 2:28-29 *A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.*

Rom 4:13 *It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.*

Rom 4:3-8 *What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."*

4. Israel did, however, always have a remnant, a small number of genuine believers (Rom. 11:1-10; see 9:27-29).

Rom 9:27, 29 *Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved." It is just as Isaiah said previously: "Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah."*

Rom 11:1-5 *I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah — how he appealed to God against Israel: "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me." And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal." So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.*

5. God turned to a new nation and gave His kingdom to them.

Mat 21:43 *"Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit."*

Rom 9:25-26 *As he says in Hosea: "I will call them 'my people' who are not my people; and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one," and, "It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"*

Rom 9:30-33 *What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone." As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."*

Rom 10:20 *And Isaiah boldly says, "I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me."*

Rom 11:30 *Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience.*

6. God's new people or nation was to be a new creation; that is, it was not to be an existing people or nation. Just as God had created Israel to be a new nation through one man, Abraham, so God was to create another new people through one Man, Jesus Christ.

Two things need to be noted about God's new people or nation.

- a. The land or inheritance of this new nation is not of this earth but of heaven. The inheritance is of the spiritual dimension of being; it is heavenly and eternal. It is not of the physical dimension of being; it is not worldly and temporal.
- b. The citizens of this new nation are people from all earthly nations who truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. When a person from any nation of the earth believes in Christ, God takes that person and gives him a new birth spiritually. (Jn. 3:3-17; 1 Pet. 1:23; 1 Jn. 5:1, 4-5). The person becomes a new creature and a new man (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).

All believers counted together are said to comprise...

- the citizens of the new people or nation (Eph. 2:19; 1 Pet. 2:9).
 - the family and household of God (Eph. 2:19; 5:1, 8; see Rom. 8:16-17).
 - a new body of believers (1 Cor. 12:12-14; Eph. 2:16).
 - a holy temple (Eph. 2:21-22).
 - a new race (Eph. 4:17).
 - a spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:5).
 - a holy priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5).
 - a chosen people (1 Pet. 2:9).
 - a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9).
 - a peculiar people, a people belonging to God (1 Pet. 2:9).
 - the people of God (1 Pet. 2:10).
 - strangers, aliens, and pilgrims on earth (1 Pet. 2:11).
7. God is going to restore Israel; that is, He is going to have mercy upon Israel and turn them from ungodliness. Why? That He might have mercy upon all, both Gentile and Jew (Rom. 11:32). □

MATHEW 21:37–39 JESUS CHRIST, DEITY – DEATH

*“Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’ So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.” **Mathew 21:37–39***

God finally sent His Son. God wanted to speak to man Himself. Perhaps they would listen to His voice and reverence His rights. He condescended and asked His Son to leave the glory of eternity and to bring His Word to earth, speaking face to face with man.

Note five facts.

1. Christ claimed to be God's Son. He was different from all the servants sent before. He was more than another man-servant; He was God's very own Son. There is no question that Christ was making this unique claim for Himself.
2. The tenants saw God's Son. There were all kinds of evidence: Old Testament prophecies; the testimony of John the Baptist; Jesus' own claim and the miraculous works; the signs of the times (Gal. 4:4); the feeling that He was the promised Messiah, even among those who now opposed Him (Jn. 3:1-2; cp. Jn. 11:47-52). This is the tragic indictment against the Jews. Down deep within they had a sense that Jesus really was the Messiah, but sin and greed for position, esteem, power, and security kept them from acknowledging Him. Their unbelief was deliberate and obstinate (Mt. 21:23-27).
3. The tenants plotted His death (Mt. 12:14; Jn. 11:53).
4. The tenants planned to seize His inheritance. Man wants to possess the kingdom, nation, property, power, rule, reign, position, esteem, fame, recognition, and wealth. Whatever the possession is, man wants the possession himself; and he will deny, deceive, lie, cheat, steal, and even kill to get it. (Mt. 12:1-8).
5. The tenants murdered the Son. They committed the worst crime in human history. They killed the Son of God Himself. Note that Christ's death was being prophesied. He was predicting His death Himself, and His death was to be a willing act on His part. He knew death lay ahead and could have escaped, but He chose to die. It was in "God's set purpose and foreknowledge" (Acts 2:23).

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

Rom 5:8 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Eph 2:4-5 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. □

I. Mathew 22:01–02 The Great Marriage Feast

Jesus again shared a parable about the Kingdom of Heaven. God has prepared a Great Marriage Feast for His Son and His true followers. The intimate relationship between Christ and His Church are often compared to a marriage (see Mt. 9:15; Jn. 3:29; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23-32).

Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

Rev 21:9 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”

The covenant of faith is like a covenant of marriage. When a person believes, Christ promises an eternal relationship with Himself. The relationship or union is forever, once and for all.

II. Mathew 22:03–07 Invitation to Israel

God's invitation to Israel is both historical and prophetic. This is clearly seen as we see the various events covered by Christ in verses 3-7. The various invitations sent out by the King were the practice of Jewish custom. The King would announce the upcoming occasion and then send out reminders as the day approached (Est. 5:8 with 6:14). Note four points.

1. God invited Israel, but they rejected.
 - a. The words “who have been invited” refer to the fact that Israel had *already* been invited. From the very first, beginning with Abraham himself (Gen. 12:1f), God had invited Israel to the great feast of His Son.
 - b. The servants “sent” with this particular invitation were those living during the life of Christ. In relation to time, this parable picks up the story of God's dealing with Israel during the life of Christ. The servants would, therefore, be John the Baptist, the twelve apostles (Mt. 10:5f), and the seventy who were sent out into every city to prepare the people for the coming of Christ (Lk. 10:1f).
 - c. “They [Israel] refused to come.” The words are few and simply stated, yet the fact is so tragic. This was the first invitation, and they would not accept it. Why would anyone not accept the first invitation of a King to the marriage celebration of His only Son? (Lk. 13:34-35). A person...
 - can be too busy
 - can set aside the invitation to accept later

- can be committed to something else
- can not care enough for the King
- can prefer some other festivity
- can wish to show personal dislike
- can not trust, not believe, that the King will actually have a feast
- can not believe in the Son
- can dislike the Son

Rom 10:2-3 *For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.*

Rom 10:21 *But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."*

Psa 81:11 *"But my people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me."*

Jer 7:13 *While you were doing all these things, declares the Lord, I spoke to you again and again, but you did not listen; I called you, but you did not answer.*

2. God showed great mercy. He had been spurned and rejected with all the disrespect and disgrace imaginable. Yet He did not react — despite the people's disregarding the invitation of the King the way they had. He acted with mercy and grace, still asking the people to attend the Great Marriage Feast of His only Son.
 - a. God extended a second invitation. The servants who carried this invitation were the witnesses who went forth immediately after the Lord's resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Note that the dinner was now said to be ready: "everything is [now] ready." The great sacrifice necessary to prepare the meal had taken place. They were to come now, come immediately to the feast that *preceded* the marriage itself. Everyone was still invited (2 Cor. 5:11, 20; 2 Cor. 6:1).

- b. God prepared an abundance.

=> It was time for all dislikes and differences to be laid aside. The day for the King's only Son to be married had arrived.

=> It was time for joy: the only Son of the King was about to be married. The Feast was to be the greatest feast ever held. It was to be the most joyful of all occasions.

=> It was time for feasting.

Thought 1. The very fact that God calls and calls reveals how His heart is ready to receive us. He longs for us to be present and prepared for His Son's Great Marriage.

3. God saw His second invitation rejected. The people treated it lightly. The word for *paid no attention* (amelesantes) means to care little if any; to be careless. In the Greek, this is an aorist participle: they were *making light of it*. They were *definite* in their decision not to attend the Great Marriage Feast. They were *careless and negligent* about it. They were too busy to be concerned with the King's invitation, *too busy* with the world and making a living and getting more and more for pleasure and comfort (Jas. 4:13).

a. Some were busy farmers. Property and crops needed to be looked after. Note the words *His field* (ton idion agron). It was his *own* farm or property. The idea seems to be that of selfish enjoyment. The man went to the selfish enjoyment of his own property. He was *wrapped up* in the possessions of this world.

Mat 16:26 *“What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”*

Luke 8:14 *“The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.”*

Luke 12:29 *“And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it.”*

Psa 39:6 *Man is a mere phantom as he goes to and fro: He bustles about, but only in vain; he heaps up wealth, not knowing who will get it.*

Eccl 2:20 *So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labour under the sun.*

b. Some were busy businessmen (city dwellers). They were engaged in commerce, business, trade. They were wrapped up in the business of the world.

James 4:13 *Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.”*

2 Tim 2:4 *No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs — he wants to please his commanding officer.*

Luke 14:18-19 *“But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’ Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’*

c. Some were worldly-minded and religious. They were so attached to the world that they wanted nothing to do with the King. He disturbed their interests and their lives. He was a threat to their position, prestige, wealth and security. Therefore, they were hostile to Him. In fact, they would have overthrown His reign and taken His kingdom for themselves. They persecuted and killed His servants, anyone who reminded them of their obligation to keep the Marriage Feast of the King (Acts 4:3; 5:40; 7:58; 9:2; 12:2f; 14:19; 16:23; 2 Cor. 11:23-25).

Thought 1. Men are always rejecting God's invitation. Why? Not because they have to but because they want to.

John 5:40 *"Yet you refuse to come to me to have life."*

Thought 2. What a paradox! If anyone should ever be received with open arms, it is the messenger who brings the invitation to the King's Great Marriage Feast for His Son. Yet, the very opposite is too often true. The King's messengers were often unwelcome, ridiculed, criticized, mistreated, abused, cursed, persecuted, murmured against and sometimes killed.

1 Cor 4:13 *When we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.*

4. God judged Israel for rejecting His invitation. Some interpret this verse to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. by Titus. Perhaps such an application can be made, but it would mean that the death referred to is only physical death and destruction. Such an interpretation comes far short of what Christ meant. He was primarily referring to the eternal judgment which will take place in the future. Wrath will come upon all rejecters to the uttermost (1 Th. 2:15-16). This is a parable, so the reference to armies and the burned city is parabolic language. Israel had the privilege of attending the Great Marriage Feast of God's only Son, but the people of Israel abused their privilege by rejecting the invitation and killing the messengers of the King. They have, therefore, lost their witness as God's people and are to be judged eternally just as all rejecters of God's invitation are to be judged.

Note the words, "Those I invited did not deserve to come." They were not worthy to attend the Feast and wedding. And they shall not attend.

Thought 1. Note the two sins that bring the judgment of God upon our heads.

- 1) Ridiculing and abusing God's servants. Note that God "destroyed those murderers" (v. 7), the people who had persecuted His messengers.
- 2) Rejecting God's invitation. Note the words: "did not deserve." The thing that made them unworthy was rejecting God's most gracious invitation. It is the rejection of the invitation that caused their judgment, not the act of God. When we reject God, it is our rejection that causes us to be condemned. Rejection equals condemnation.

John 3:18 *"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."*

Luke 3:9 *"The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."*

2 Th 1:7-9 *And give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful*

angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.

III. Mathew 22:8–10 Invitation to the Gentiles

God's invitation is now given to any and all. This is what is meant by the word "street corners." God's servants are to go out on the street corners of the world, inviting any and all to the Great Wedding Feast of His Son. Note several things.

1. God's servants are to invite as many as they can find. The invitation is no longer just to the few. It is universal: to the Jew and Gentile, the rich and poor, the high and low, the free and slave, the moral and immoral, the religious and irreligious. Note an important point. Few, if any, on the street corners would ever expect an invitation to a King's wedding.

Acts 10:34-35 Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right."

Rom 10:12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him.

1 Tim 2:4 Who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

2. God's servants are to invite both good and bad, that is, both the moral and thoughtful (for example, Cornelius, Acts 10:1f; the devout Greeks, Acts 17:4), and the immoral and irreligious (1 Cor. 6:9-11). This could also mean that some bad do presently accept the invitation, but never really dress for the occasion (vv. 11-14). The visible church contains both bad and good (see Mt. 13: 1f).

Mat 9:13 "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Luke 19:10 "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

3. God's servants are to fill the wedding with guests *from the street corners*. God assures His Son: His wedding will have guests; but note, only as many as they can "find" (v. 9).

Mat 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Rev 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

Isa 55:1 "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost."

IV. *Mathew 22:11–14 Confrontation with the Guests*

God's confrontation with the guests was a momentous occasion. However, note the emphasis of this parable. The emphasis was not on the joy and festivity of the Marriage Feast but on a guest who came improperly dressed for the occasion. A man tried to attend the wedding without the proper clothing. He was not clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Christ said three things.

1. God entered the Feast to see the guests. Upon entering, He immediately saw the man without wedding clothes. The words *to see* (*theasasthai*) mean to view attentively; to carefully look over; to closely look upon and contemplate and inspect. The stress is upon the person who is seeing. He beholds and inspects. The idea is that God entered the banqueting feast *for the purpose* of looking over and inspecting the guests. He wanted to make sure everyone and everything was in order for His Son's great celebration.

No one can be allowed to detract from His Son by being improperly dressed or clothed. (See *Righteousness*, Rom. 13:14; See *Justification* Rom. 4:22.)

- a. The guests did not know that the man lacked the proper clothes, but the King did. The man deceived the other guests, but the King knew the kind of dress He had spelled out for all His guests to wear. And observe: the man was showing disrespect and dishonour by not following the King's request for proper dress.
- b. He asked only one question, and He asked the question before the feast began: "Friend, why have you come not wearing wedding clothes?" He could not allow an eyesore to detract from the joyful occasion. He had to deal with the detraction. The man had been invited, and he was responsible for wearing *proper* and *clean* clothes (Eph. 4:24f; Eph. 4:1; Ph. 1:27).

Mat 5:20 "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."

Eph 4:24 And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Phil 1:11 Filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ — to the glory and praise of God.

Col 3:10 And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

- c. The man was *speechless* (*ephimothe*). The word means muzzled, muted, silenced, tongue-tied, closed-mouthed. He had no excuse. He stood guilty of disrespect and dishonour for wearing the wrong clothes, clothes that were not right for a kingly occasion. The garment was unclean.

2. God judged the man who was not clothed properly. Note that God called His servants together. The *servants* (*diakonois*) were not the same servants who delivered the invitations. They were not the disciples (vv. 3, 4) and preachers (vv. 8, 10) of the Lord. They were the angelic guardians of heaven who minister to the Godhead (see Mt. 13:41-43. 49-50). Three things were done.
 - a. The man was bound hand and foot. The hand and foot are usually the bodily parts used by man to sin. The hands are bound so there is no resistance. The feet are bound so there is no escape. Whatever the King says is done in the Great Day of the Feast. No man can resist or flee.
 - b. The man was taken away, out of the King's presence and out of the presence of His Son and of the other guests. He was not allowed to share in the joy and bounty of the occasion.
 - c. He was cast into outer darkness, far, far away from everyone else. He was not only cut off from the sharing of the occasion but from ever seeing the occasion. Whatever light and brilliance there was in the Great Wedding Feast, he was cast into the darkness, never to glimpse the light.
3. God calls and invites many, but few are chosen. Christ had said this before (Mt. 20:16). In the context of this parable, there were several calls of God to the Great Wedding Feast of His Son.
 - a. There was God's call to the Jews, but few responded.
 - b. There is God's call to the Gentiles, but few are responding.
 - c. There is God's call to all those who enter in, but few wear the wedding clothes. The only clothes they have is that: of hypocrisy and false profession.

What Christ was saying becomes clear if we look at the church and consider all who are in the church...

- There are those within the church who care more for the things and possessions of this world than they do for Christ.

Luke 12:29-30 *“And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such thing; and your Father knows that you need them.”*

1 Tim 6:7-10, 17-18 *For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope*

in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

- There are those within the church who do not deny self nor sacrifice all they are and have to follow Christ (See *Cross and Discipleship*, Lk. 9:23).

Luke 9:23 *Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."*

- There are these within the church who are still conformed to the world.

Rom 12:2 *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

- There are those within the church who are careless in their conversation.

Eph 5:4 *Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.*

2 Tim 2:16-18 *Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.*

James 3:2, 5-9 *We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness.*

- There are those within the church who demonstrate spirits other than the spirit of love.

John 13:33-34 *"My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."*

- There are those within the church who live after the flesh or sinful nature instead of living for Christ.

1 John 2:15-16 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world.*

- There are those within the church who do not worship God consistently, either daily or weekly.

Heb 10:25 *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

- There are those within the church who profess Christ, but live hypocritical lives.

Mat 6:2 *“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.”*

- The warning of Christ was clear and should cause thought and concern.

Mat 22:14 *“For many are invited, but few are chosen.”*

Luke 13:24 *“Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.”*

Mat 7:14 *“But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”*

Mat 7:21 *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”*

Thought 1. The Lord walks among the churches. He knows how much or how little we work, labour, endure and love (Rev. 2:1-2).

Thought 2. Note that God in particular sees the hypocrite. The hypocrite stands out like a cancerous sore in God's eyes, and God is forced to treat the hypocrite as the master physician treats a cancerous sore.

Thought 3. The Great Feast Day is first of all a Great Inspection Day. Before God presents us to Christ, He is going to cast out all who do not wear the garment of righteousness (See 1 Cor. 3:10-17).

Thought 4. The wedding clothes which the man lacked represented righteousness. The man did not possess the righteousness of Christ nor did he live righteously (See Mt. 5:6).

- 1) The man had not trusted the righteousness of Christ to make him acceptable to God. (See *Justification* Rom. 5:1)

Rom 10:3-4 *Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*

2 Cor 5:21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

- 2) The man had not lived a moral and self-denying life (See Lk. 9:23). He was not what he had professed to be.

Luke 9:23 Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." ■

ROM 04: 22 JUSTIFICATION: FAITH, RIGHTEOUSNESS

This is why "it is credited to him as righteousness." Romans 04:22

In simple terms justification means that God takes the believer's faith and counts it as righteousness (Rom. 4:3; see Gen. 15:6)

When a person really believes that Jesus Christ is his Saviour, God takes that person's faith and counts it for righteousness (Rom. 4:3, 5, 9, 11, 22, 24). The person is not righteous; he has no righteousness of his own. He is still imperfect, still sinful, still corruptible, still short of God's glory as a sinful human being. But he does believe that Jesus Christ is his Saviour. Such belief honours God's Son (whom God loves very much), and because it honours God's Son, God accepts that person's faith for righteousness. God counts that person's faith as righteousness. Therefore, that person becomes acceptable to God. A person's belief — the right kind of belief — is critical.

Gen 15:6 Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Rom 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Gal 3:6 Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

1 Cor 6:11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Phil 3:9 And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. □

ROMANS 13: 14 BELIEVER, PUT ON SPIRITUAL CLOTHING

Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. Romans 13:14

Scripture lists seven things that the believer is to put on or with which he is to clothe himself.

1. The believer is to put on and be clothed (endusesthe), with the Holy Spirit (Lk. 24:49).

2. The believer is to put on and be clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 13:14; Gal. 3:27).
3. The believer is to put on and be clothed with immortality (1 Cor. 15:53-54; 2 Cor. 5:3).
4. The believer is to put on and be clothed with the new self or new man (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).
5. The believer is to put on and be clothed with the nature of God (Col. 3:12).
6. The believer is to put on and be clothed with the armour of light and of God (Rom. 13:14; Eph. 6:11f).
7. The believer is to put on and be clothed with love (Col. 3:14). □