

You Are Invited to the Wedding Feast

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[0 : 00] The book of Matthew, chapter 22. I'll start reading at verse 1 through to verse 14. This is a parable, a story from Jesus about the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew chapter 2, sorry, Matthew chapter 22, verse 1. Let's hear God's word. Jesus spoke to them again in parables saying, The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son.

He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. Then he sent some more servants and said, Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner.

My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet. But they paid no attention and went off, one to his field, another to his business.

The rest seized his servants, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

[1 : 12] Then he said to his servants, The wedding banquet is ready, but those I have invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you can find.

So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes.

Friend, he asked, How did you get in here without wedding clothes? The man was speechless.

Then the king told the attendants, Tie him hand and foot and throw him outside into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

For many are invited, but few are chosen. Amen. Let's hear the preaching of God's word. Well, the Bible tells us that when Jesus Christ returns and wraps up this present age that we're now living in, that the eternal age will be started by the Father giving a wedding for His Son and His bride, a wedding that will far surpass any wedding here on earth.

Let me read it for you as you keep your Bibles open to Matthew 22. Hear these words from Revelation 19. Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters, and like loud peals of thunder, shouting, Hallelujah, which means praise the Lord, for our Lord God Almighty reigns.

[2 : 54] 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.

Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints. And then the angel said to me, Write, Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb.

Now back to Matthew 22, our text for today. A story. An earthly story.

A common story, to some extent, that carries with it a spiritual meaning. And it's about a king and a wedding banquet.

Now our Lord has come to Jerusalem as we dip here into Matthew 25. He's in Jerusalem for the last time. This is the capital city of the Jews.

[3 : 53] And in less than a week, Jesus will be nailed to a cross, dying there, accomplishing the very purpose for which He came into the world, suffering the punishment due to sinners.

And in that way, to save all who would repent and put their faith in Him. To save them from endless torments. So, He's in His final week.

Three years earlier, when He began His earthly ministry in public, the Jewish religious leaders had already decided that they did not accept Him.

And they were already looking for a way to kill Him. So, this is a plot that's been developing for some three years. He wasn't the Messiah they were looking for.

He wasn't the king that they wanted. And so, they condemned Him as a false Messiah, a false prophet, who was simply leading the people astray. And this parable of the wedding feast is one of Jesus' last public addresses.

[5 : 02] There are several here, but this is one of the last of these public addresses before He dies. And it comes with application, not just for the Jews, but for us Gentiles as well, which simply means a non-Jew.

It begins, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. So, the kingdom of heaven, the gospel of the kingdom of heaven is the same gospel that you and I who are saved have put our trust in.

It's not some different gospel. The gospel of the kingdom of heaven is the one gospel of Christ's death, burial, resurrection to save us from our sins.

And we, by trusting in Christ, have been rescued out of the kingdom of Satan and brought into the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of love and light. And now are citizens of the heavenly kingdom and living under God's rule and blessing.

[6 : 16] So, the king here in the story is God the Father. And he's preparing a wedding banquet for his eternal son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the banquet was all part of the whole wedding festivities.

And so, this is a royal wedding. It's a big deal. It's the biggest event happening anywhere in the whole realm. Now, you and I have seen royal weddings in England on TV.

Think back to the wedding of 2011 of Prince William and Catherine Middleton there in London. It was the talk of the nation, indeed of the world.

Imagine the honor of receiving a personal invitation to attend that wedding there in Westminster Abbey and also the festivity of the wedding banquet to follow.

I suppose you'd be telling your friends about that invitation and probably canceling whatever other things you had on your agenda and your calendar so that you could attend.

[7 : 23] That surely is the expected response to such an invitation. And that's the expected response in this story that Jesus is telling.

Well, this king's invitation received a different response. So, we have three points this morning. The first is the invitation rejected.

Verses 3 to 7. He, we read in verse 3, the king sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come but they refused to come.

Notice in that verse there are two invitations given. There was the initial invitation that had already gone out and now he sends the servants to those who had been invited telling them to come but they would not.

They didn't want to come. Now, that was an affront to the king and to his son who did you the honor of inviting you to this wedding of the century, of the millennium, of ever when we think of God's wedding for his son.

[8 : 40] But this king is amazingly patient and that's what comes through loud and clear. Verses 4 and 5. Then he sent more servants and said, tell those who've been invited that I've prepared my dinner.

My oxen and fat and cattle have been butchered. Everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet. I wonder if you see the king's heart in this way that he's going about things.

He sincerely wants these guests to come. He's even telling them what's on the menu. It's more than peanuts and punch.

There's filet mignon and there's T-bone steaks. The fat and calves have been grilled. A royal spread befitting a king's wealth. He's trying to whet their appetites.

Trying to woo them to the wedding. But to no avail. It says, but they paid no attention and went off one to his field another to his business.

[9 : 47] They paid no attention. I wonder, have you ever talked to someone who was paying no attention to you? It's annoying. It's worse than annoying.

It's an offense, isn't it? As you're speaking to them, they just walk away and pull out their phone and they start talking to somebody and you're still talking or they walk away and just leave while you're

speaking.

They pay no attention. They act like you're not there. They act like you've never said anything.

Indeed, the literal translation is they made light of it. And isn't that a penetrating response.

They made light of it as if it was of no importance to them whatsoever. The wedding of the king's son, poof, not interesting, not even worth listening to.

No, no, I've got more important things to do. The field, the business and off they went. So they added insult to injury in the way they responded to the invite.

[10:52] Now let's pause the story here and let's turn to the spiritual application of the parable.

What's Jesus' point? What is he saying? Well, he's saying that in the gospel of Jesus Christ, God is inviting people to enter his kingdom.

He's inviting them to be saved and to become part of his kingdom, to share in all the blessings that he's provided in his kingdom and in Jesus Christ, a rich and full salvation.

Look at the feast that is spread, rare delicacies like the forgiveness of all your sins. Past, present, future, a free and full pardon from eternal punishments in hell.

To be reconciled to God, to go from his enemy to his friend, even to be adopted into his family as one of his children, to have access to him at any time and to be continually receiving from him mercy and grace that he constantly gives.

His favor, his smile, his fellowship, his wisdom, his joy and peace and guidance. All of his promises, yours.

[12:14] His presence with you, his spirit in you, his providence, working everything together for your good, his protection and provision for all your need and then the certainty of heaven to come, eternal life in fellowship with him.

Now, that's just some of the rich bounty to be served up in the gospel of Jesus Christ. In receiving him. All this is yours, come to the feast, come to the banquet and it's yours.

Notice, everything is ready. Everything is ready. The guests didn't need to bring their food with them.

No, it was all provided for them. That's salvation. The only thing we bring in coming to Christ is our sins. We don't, we don't bring any of the remedy.

We bring our sins to have him forgive us and pardon us and change us and forgive us. No, everything's been made ready by the work of Christ, provided at God's expense in Jesus, giving up his own son.

[13:33] Amazing cost to put up this wedding banquet for us. He assumes the debt that we owed and punishes his own son on Calvary's cross.

He, the righteous one, is treated as we, the unrighteous, deserve that we might be forgiven and enjoy this never-ending feast.

So, you, dear friend, are invited, invited in the gospel of Jesus Christ. You're invited to this glorious wedding. Doesn't matter who you are, what you've done, how long you've rejected this feast.

Did you see the Father's heart? Do you understand God the Father's heart? In grace, he just keeps sending servants your way. Saints, isn't that the way it was with you?

You weren't converted, perhaps, on the first invitation. And he just kept sending more servants your way to bring the gospel to you. I must have heard it hundreds of times before I answered the invitation.

[14:41] I don't know about you, but it shows us the Father's heart. He is so patient and he so delights to save sinners that he's not put off.

Oh, well, if he's going to count his business and his money and his pleasures as more important than me, then that's it. No, he didn't do that.

He just kept coming. Come on. Here's what it will be like. Here's what's on the menu. Here are the blessings found in Christ. And yet, some still refuse to come.

Still refuse to come that they might be saved and enter his kingdom of grace. Well, that's to make light of it. That's to say, I see no real need for it, so I have no interest in it.

I'm content to live life without God, without his son, and I've got more important things to do and to consider. Now, I want you to understand the insult that that is to God, and I think that comes through in the story.

[15:46] After all that he has done to prepare this gospel feast, it's his son after all, his eternal son with whom he enjoyed fellowship for all eternity, and he delighted in his son.

He's the treasure of heaven. He gives him to the hellish cross that you might be forgiven, and you say, no, I'm not interested.

Do you see that you may not think that your rejection of Christ is anything. You've done it so long, it just comes natural, but each time you do it, it's a smack in his face.

This is what I think of you, king, and of your son, king, and of this whole wedding, king. It's an insult to the God of heaven.

It's not a small thing to neglect the gospel invitation. According to Jesus, it's the greatest sin someone can commit. Sodom and Gomorrah will have it better off than those who have heard the gospel and rejected it.

[16:51] It is an insult to neglect so great an invitation. How will you escape if you neglect so great a salvation?

You will not escape. So here we learn that some will miss heaven just because of their indifference, just because they neglect it.

They're busy with the farm, they're busy with the business, their pleasures, their entertainments, their fields, their money, their job, and just no time, no time for God.

But we see what an offense it is and how many will miss heaven just for that reason. But you know something? He's still ready to receive you.

That's the wonderful thing about this king. Just renounce what you've done in the past, turn your back on it and come, come and I'll receive you. He's even willing to have you though you've rejected him for so long and willing if you just make him your last resort.

[17:54] Well, I'm at the end now and there's nothing else so yeah, I'll come. And if you come, he will receive you. What a savior. What a father. Now, we need to understand this gospel invitation was sent first to the Jews and then later to the Gentiles and that was all by God's design.

The Jews were the one nation out of all the nations of the world that God entered into a covenant with and chose them to be a favored people. To them, they had many advantages.

To them came the scriptures. To them came the gospel. They had the gospel in the Old Testament that promised to them a savior to come. They were the ones who had his presence with them as a cloud of covering by day and a fire by night.

God with them in all their travels. They had his temple, the sacrifices that pointed to the coming lamb of God who could actually take away the sin of the world.

They were the nation from which the Messiah, the Savior, would eventually come. And so it's this nation where Jesus was born, where he lived, he ministered, he preached, he healed, and he invited people to enter the kingdom.

[19:10] And then he died and rose again and ascended into heaven. All here in Israel, the land of the Jews. And so they were the first to be invited. They had been invited for centuries.

Adam and Eve were invited in Genesis 3.15 as they were told about the coming seed of the woman who had come to crush the serpent's head. But oh, how the Jews had rejected and turned away and gone after other gods and ignored the one living and true God who had been so generous to them.

And yet God just kept sending more and more servants, more and more prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Micah, Amos. And he sent these prophets to call them, come to the banquet, come to salvation, put your trust in this coming Savior, turn from your sinful ways.

But one prophet after another was sent and they just kept refusing the invitation. Only a remnant repented and trusted and sought the Lord and his salvation.

And Jesus was finding the same thing in his own day as he's just five, a few days away from his crucifixion. No, they were interested in other things, a different kind of Savior, not one who came to save them from their sins.

[20:38] So most ignored the invitation, treated it with indifference, but there were some who treated the Lord's servant even worse than indifference. And here, the meaning of the parable really far outreaches anything that happens in a wedding invitation, doesn't it?

But this is more the application side. It really outreaches the story. This kind of thing doesn't happen at weddings, I don't believe. You tell me if you've ever heard of it.

Because verse 6 and 7 say, in response to the invitation going out and some paying no attention and going off to their other concerns, verse 6, the rest seized his servants, mistreated them, and killed them.

The king was enraged and he sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. I don't think any postman bringing invitations to weddings have been treated like that.

But the point is that God's servants were treated that way. They were mistreated. They were persecuted. They were killed. Some were tortured, jeered, flogged, imprisoned, stoned.

[21 : 43] Isaiah was sawn in two. Jeremiah was thrown into a deep well and left there to die. Only later was he rescued. Zechariah was slain between the altar and the temple and the sanctuary.

John the Baptist was rejected and beheaded. Jesus, the prophet himself, the prophet that had been promised, was despised, persecuted, crucified.

The apostle John, Jesus was kept sending servants even after his death. He's exiled to the island of Patmos for preaching. His brother James lost his head.

The rest of the Lord's apostles died. For carrying this gospel invitation to a world that didn't want it. And what we read is that there is an end to the king's patience.

And because of what they did to his prophets, he was enraged. You have now touched the apple of my eye. And he sent his army. Notice he calls it his army. It was the Roman army.

[22 : 46] But he is Lord of hosts, Lord of the armies of heaven and earth. They all answer to him. And he sent his army. Seventy years after they killed Jesus, the father sent his army.

Titus, the son of Vestavian, Vespasius, the emperor of Rome, came to Jerusalem, surrounded, besieged it.

In 70 AD, they broke through the walls, burned the city, burned the temple, and slaughtered as many as a million Jews.

All in fulfillment of these words here of Jesus in his parable. They rejected, they rejected, they rejected the invitation and even mistreated those who brought it and slaughtered them.

So, here it is. Some five, six times times, Jesus had warned about this and indeed it did happen in 70 AD. But still, the king would have people to come to his son's wedding.

[23 : 54] That's something. He will not have this feast go unenjoyed. And if the Jews as a whole refused to come, there were exceptions.

But if as a whole they refused to come, he would send his servants not only to Jews but to the Gentiles as well. And so, we come to the second point. The wedding hall filled with guests.

Look at verses 8-10. Then he said to his servants, the wedding banquet is ready but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.

So, the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad. And the wedding feast was filled, the wedding hall was filled with guests.

Now, we see this played out over and over in the book of Acts in the New Testament, especially in the life record that we have of the Apostle Paul who was sent out as one of God's postmen with the gospel invitation to the wedding feast to enter the kingdom of heaven by coming to Christ.

[25 : 02] And his policy was always to go first to the Jew and then to the Gentiles. Very often, the Jews turned violent against his invitation so he would go to the Gentiles.

That's the way it happened in Pisidian Antioch in Acts chapter 13. He goes first to the Jewish synagogue and he preaches the gospel and invites them to enter the kingdom, to come to Christ. The next Sabbath, the whole city gathered. Some believed. And the next Sabbath day, the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. And when the Jewish leaders saw the crowds, they got jealous and envious.

And they talked abusively against Paul and his gospel invitation. And Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly, we had to speak the word of God to you first.

You see, we were sent to the Jews first. But since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us.

[26 : 04] I made you a light for the Gentiles that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and they honored the word of the Lord and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

They honored the invitation by believing it, by receiving Jesus Christ and full salvation in Him. They trusted in Him. So the gospel, it's going out today.

It's going out to all people, Jew and Gentile, and mostly Gentiles are answering the invitation today. But everyone is invited to come to Christ and the marriage feast in God's kingdom.

None are excluded except those who exclude themselves and show by their rejection that they're not worthy to be at the wedding. Amen. It's true that some Gentiles are just as resistant to coming to

Christ as the Jews.

They've got all the same excuses of why they're not, they're taken up with the world and its things. And so these many excuses that we saw the Jews turning to other things with indifference toward the Savior are also true of Gentiles.

[27 : 20] And so what we learn is that it's not only gross sins that take people to hell. Not everyone, just people who persecute the servants of God. No, it's far more go to hell because they just ignore the invitation.

They just aren't interested in those sorts of things. But we also see that the gospel of God's kingdom is for both good and bad. Go and invite all you can find, both good and bad.

That is, those that the world considers good, the people that walk upright, moral lives, and then those that are, you know, the scum of the earth that just are involved in the worst sorts of sins.

The world's way of valuing good and bad. Go to them all and invite them, the king says, so that my wedding hall will be filled with guests.

And that's exactly what is happening. It's being fulfilled today. As people, in the eyes of the world, both good and bad are coming to faith in Christ.

[28 : 29] The message is, if you don't come, others will. He's inviting. He's not going to have it empty. He's going to fill it with guests. I think it was John Newton, the author of Amazing Grace, who said, when we get to heaven, we're going to have all kinds of surprises, but there'll be three things that will surprise us.

So there we are. Think of being there at the wedding banquet, sitting down to the feast with Christ in heaven for the wedding of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.

The first thing we'll be surprised by is who's there? Who's there? Her? Really?

Him? Where am I? Am I in the right place? Yes, this is heaven. He's here. How can that be?

Zacchaeus, that thieving tax collector? Saul of Tarsus, who persecuted and killed Christians?

Manasseh, that king of Judah, the cruel tyrant who sacrificed his son to a pagan god, put idols in the very temple of the Lord and worshipped the stars and foreign gods and led the whole nation into his sin?

[29 : 47] That thief who spent his whole life in criminal activity and yet at the last moment finds himself dying on a cross beside the Son of God? He's there?

Jerusalem sinners who killed the Lord of glory? They're there? We'll be surprised who's there.

Good and bad. Jesus told the Pharisees in the chapter before Matthew 22, Matthew 21, he said to the Pharisees, to the goody-good two-shoes, those who are very upright and religious in the land, he said to them, the tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you.

Yes, the bad are coming in before you good people because they see their need for a Savior. You don't. And so we'll be surprised to find homosexuals and adulterers and mass murderers and drunkards and prostitutes and thieves who were there at the feast on that day because they renounced their sinful ways.

They confessed them to God. They sought His forgiveness. They trusted in His Savior. And they were forgiven and welcomed into the wedding feast.

[31 : 10] They were washed. They were sanctified. They were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. You see, if salvation was only for the good people, if salvation was by works, then none of these bad guys would have been there and none of us bad guys and girls would be there either.

For we've all sinned and come short of the glory of God. And unless you were lying, you just sang it, that we like the thief, as vile as he is, have been washed in the blood of Jesus.

Yes, we come arm in arm with the worst of sinners to this Savior and we trust together with them in His work and not our own and have our sins washed away and forgiven.

It's through His merits, He who saves the worst of sinners by His precious blood. And here's the kicker about this wedding of the Lamb at the return of Christ.

We'll see the Lord Jesus in all His resplendent glory, the greatest bridegroom ever. And if you're looking around for the bride, He'll say, you are my bride.

[32 : 27] If you're there, you will be His bride. From heaven, I came and sought you. With my own blood, I bought you. You are mine. I am yours.

Joined together in this covenant of love that will never die. You see, at this wedding, the guests turn out to be the bride of the Lamb.

