

Parable of the Wedding Banquet (Matt 22:1-14)
Rebuking disbelieving religious leaders

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet is the third and final parable that Jesus directs towards the Jewish religious leaders during His last week on earth. The Jewish religious leaders had been questioning Jesus' authority to teach in the temple. In His first preceding parable of the Two Sons (Matt 21:28-32), Jesus tells the Jewish religious leaders that tax collectors and prostitutes will enter the kingdom of God before them. In the parable of the Wicked Tenants (Matt 21:33-45; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19), Jewish religious leaders learn that the kingdom of God will be taken away from them.

1. What do you observe about the king's first invitation of guests to his son's wedding (Matt 22:1-8)? What is Jesus saying about the Kingdom of Heaven? What is Jesus saying about these initial guests and who are they?

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.

"Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. (Matt 22:1-8, NIV)

2. What do you observe about the king's second invitation (Matt 22:9-14, NIV)? Does Jesus say the king's invitation guarantees attendance at the wedding banquet? What is Jesus saying about the Kingdom of Heaven?

So 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, the bad as well as the good, 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. He asked, 'How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?' 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." (Matt 22:9-14, NIV)

3. Parables are seen as stories that are true to life but not necessarily true events. The book of Revelation has an account of a wedding banquet just before Jesus returns to fight in Armageddon. Discuss your observations of Jesus' Parable of the Wedding Banquet and Revelation's account of a wedding banquet.

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

"Hallelujah!

For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

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and give him glory!

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Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" And he added, "These are the true words of God." (Rev 19:6-9, NIV)

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Teacher Notes

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet is the third and final parable that Jesus directs towards the Jewish religious leaders during His last week on earth. The Jewish religious leaders had been questioning Jesus' authority to teach in the temple. In His first preceding parable of the Two Sons (Matt 21:28-32), Jesus tells the Jewish religious leaders that tax collectors and prostitutes will enter the kingdom of God before them. In the parable of the Wicked Tenants (Matt 21:33-45; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19), Jewish religious leaders learn that the kingdom of God will be taken away from them.

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Remind the student: Jesus uses a simile to inform people what the kingdom of heaven is like; it is like a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.

Ask the student: what do you observe about the banquet?

There is a sense of immediacy. The great banquet was ready to start – all of the king's oxen and fattened livestock have been butchered.

Ask the student: what happened to the king's messengers?

Not only did the invited guests ignore the king's entreating invitation, the king's messengers were mistreated and killed. The invited guests disregarded the honor and command of the king's invitation.

The behavior and violence by the invited guests portray the contempt that the nation of Israel treated God's grace. At the dawn of the kingdom of heaven, John the Baptist is murdered.

Ask the student: who, in the parable, was making the invitation? What would you do if you received such an invitation? What does this tell you about the person refusing such an honor?

Inform the student the cultural context of Jewish wedding feasts of the first century: they were large gatherings, and a very wealthy person could invite the entire town or city. They often lasted seven days and guests were expected to attend the whole celebration. Aristocratic landowners may have the luxury of time; however, attending could be a burden for peasants and other workers who were dependent on daily wages. To be invited by the king was a great honor which no one would refuse lest they face the terror of displeasing him.

In Jesus' parable, the invitees were "unwilling" to come. It was not a question of prior commitments, but that the invitees did not want to come. The point of this parable was about the guests of the wedding banquet. The Jews were not the bride, they were the guests. With the dawning of the kingdom of heaven, invitations to the banquet have gone out and were being refused, because the Jews refused to acknowledge the Bridegroom Jesus Christ.

Ask the student: would listeners agree with the king's judgment of sending his army to destroy the murderers of the king's emissaries and burning their city? If you were a Pharisee, what would you realize?

First century Jews recognized that royal emissaries represented the king, and any mistreatment of them was despised. Herein is the first point of the parable, Jesus points out the sin of Israel and God's judgment of it. To the ire of Jewish religious leaders: as they follow Jesus' parable, they agree with the king's judgment only to realize that Jesus is portraying them as the treasonous murderers. It is also possible that Jesus was making Jewish religious leaders aware of His knowledge of their plans to kill Him.

2. What do you observe about the king's second invitation (Matt 22:9-14, NIV)? Does Jesus say the king's invitation guarantees attendance at the wedding banquet? What is Jesus saying about the Kingdom of Heaven?

So 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, the bad as well as the good, 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. He asked, 'How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?' The man was speechless.

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"For many are invited, but few are chosen." (Matt 22:9-14, NIV)

Ask the student: in the second invitation, what sort of people does the king's servants invite?

In his desire to honor his son's wedding, the king sends his servants out to invite everyone they could find including the evil and the good. The invitation was for **everyone who would come**; the invitation was without any conditions or qualifications.

Inform the student: there is no evidence that wedding hosts provided wedding clothes for their guests. Instead, there is evidence that the wedding clothes was newly washed garments; like today, dirty clothing was an insult to the host and wedding couple.

Ask the student: does the king's invitation to the wedding banquet guarantee participation at the table?

The king notices a guest who is not appropriately attired and asks how the guest gained entrance to the banquet. There is irony when the king calls the offender as "friend" and pronounces judgment shortly after. The guest's speechlessness reflects the guest's guilt, and the king has the inappropriately dressed guest forcibly removed and tossed into the darkness outside. The king's invitation does not guarantee participation!

Jesus states that participation in the wedding feast required the appropriate wedding clothes. What does the wedding clothes represent? How do you find this out besides reading someone else's commentary?

1. Go to Biblegateway.com and do a separate search for "clothes" and "garments." This is an example of a concordance search. A separate individual word search is recommended, because a search for the two words together yields a search result of only passages that contain both words.

2. While the search results are ample, take the time to peruse the result to see if the Bible can explain what the wedding clothes might represent. In time, you'll discover Isaiah 61:10.

I delight greatly in the Lord;

my soul rejoices in my God.

For he has clothed me with garments of salvation

and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness,

as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,

and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. (Isa 61:10, NIV)

3. In the context of the wedding banquet, only the King could provide this special “garment of salvation”; but, the guests had to put it on. The idea that human beings even had a choice was established by the original invited guests who refused to even come (Matt 22:3), and the man who came to the wedding feast without his “garment of salvation.”

4. Figuratively elsewhere in the Bible, clothing has been associated with the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49) and Jesus states explicitly that the Holy Spirit is necessary for one to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5-16). This is consistent with the parable - without the garment of salvation, there is judgment and final judgment.

5. It is important to note that only those who were obedient and wore the proper clothing were called by Jesus as “chosen” (Matt 22:14). The use of this term of election indicates God’s sovereign knowledge and control, even as the original invitees refused to come or some participants didn’t wear the appropriate wedding garments. God did not choose to save some and condemn others; the qualification of God’s chosen was predicated on a person’s obedience to accept God’s provision of grace.

Ask the student: what is the meaning of the Parable of the Wedding Banquet?

The greater meaning of the Parable of the Wedding Feast is the identification of the nation of Israel as the original invited guests who declined or ignored the invitation and murdered the King’s messengers – His prophets. Now Jesus makes clear that the invitation to the Kingdom of God is going out to all and anyone.

3. Parables are seen as stories that are true to life but not necessarily true events. The book of Revelation has an account of a wedding banquet just before Jesus returns to fight in Armageddon. Discuss your observations of Jesus’ Parable of the Wedding Banquet and Revelation’s account of a wedding banquet.

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Encourage class discussion. Help the student distinguish between an observation and interpretation. Place an emphasis on stating observations.

Inform the student that a verse in parenthesis is a commentator’s note. How does this compare to what the Bible explanation of what the clothing represents?

Ask the student: is the Parable of the Wedding Banquet simply a parable? Or is it something more?