

Jesus' Parables in Chronological Order

Parable #40 — Matthew 22:1-14 — Wedding Banquet

¹ Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: ²“The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. ³ He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

⁴“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.’

⁵“But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. ⁶ The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. ⁷ The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

⁸“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. ⁹ Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ ¹⁰ 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.

¹¹“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ¹² ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless.

¹³“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.’

¹⁴“For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

Parable #40 — Matthew 22:1-14 — Wedding Banquet

1. How do you feel when you plan a big event and it is poorly attended? What kind of excuses for not coming do you most resent people using?
2. This parable starts in a similar way to Parable #27 about the Great Banquet (Luke 14:16-24) but from Matthew 22:6 on, it is quite different (and much harsher). What do you remember about the parable of the Great Banquet?
3. In Jesus' days, it was customary to send two invitations to a party—the first to announce it and the second to tell the guests that everything was ready. How does the parable of this party (banquet) fit into Israel's history? How did the character of the banquet change given the new guest list?
4. There are many people in this parable: the king, his son, his servants, those invited the first time who did not come, those who killed the servants, and the people on the streets invited the second time. Who do you identify with and why?
5. Verse 22:10 affirms the “Great Commission,” that the Gospel invitation is to be spread to all, both “good and bad” [“evil and good”—NASB]. Were those who refused to come the first time invited again? (22:9)
6. Does receiving an invitation guarantee that all will be allowed to attend the feast, i.e., enter the kingdom of heaven?
7. In the parable, the wedding clothes that were needed for admittance to the banquet represent what? (Isaiah 64:5-6)
8. In Verse 22:11, the king speaks to someone not wearing wedding clothes. In today's terms, who might this be: A) an imposter, B) a non-Christian, C) someone trying to enter the kingdom on his own terms, D) an unrighteous person.
9. Verse 22:14 says, “many are invited but few are chosen.” Who does the choosing?
10. What do you personally take away from this parable? Will you be one of the chosen ones? Are you sure? If not, what must you do to be sure?

7. Many interpreters take the proper wedding attire to be righteousness, and find many passages that seem to support that. But that may be pushing the symbol a little too much in this story. Where would he get the righteousness? The King expected him to have it to join the wedding feast! Some have suggested that the King provided the attire (i.e., righteousness) but this man refused to have it. That is adding quite a bit to the parable, and such an addition is not necessary. We can leave the symbolism a bit general and just say that the man did not prepare properly to act on the invitation he received. So there was an invitation to the banquet, but not all who responded to the invitation were allowed to remain. The King had the man tied and cast out into the darkness, where there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The outcome of this man's situation informs us of the true meaning of the symbolism. We have to say that the proper attire would correspond to all that Jesus said was required for entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven—*true repentance for sin and faith in Christ, and then a commitment to love and obey the Lord as evidence of saving faith*. In Jesus' day many people certainly wanted to enter the kingdom, but when Jesus started telling them to come to him and take his yoke upon them and learn of him, they went away. And in the day of judgment many will claim to have done good deeds, but Jesus will turn them away because they will not have dealt properly with the basic issue of salvation—they will not be prepared properly and spiritually to be received by the King at the wedding of the Son.—Notes above by Allen Rose

Isaiah reinforces the view that the wedding clothes of the guests do not represent their own (or our own) righteousness in 64:6.

⁵ You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved? ⁶ All of us have become like one who is unclean, and *all our righteous acts are like filthy rags*; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

Were the clothes of the expelled guest filthy rags (his acts of righteousness)? Perhaps. But more to the point, this passage says that all of our righteous acts are like filthy rags in God's sight.—DHA

9. In 22:14, the word "many" is not intended to be a restricted number. The invitation has gone out to all who care to listen, but some just refused, and some wanted to come but refused to submit to the requirements of entrance into the kingdom. So none of these will be present in the kingdom. Those Jesus refers to as "chosen" are the people who respond to the invitation to come, and respond in the proper manner so that they are prepared to enter the kingdom.

In Jesus' experience the invitation to the Messianic banquet had been extended to the Jews first, but they refused. Then Jesus began to turn to the Gentiles, and as many as believed in him would enter the kingdom in the place of the others, even if the ones who believed were formerly prostitutes and sinners.

More people will reject the invitation or fail to meet the requirement of faith in Christ than those who are chosen, that is, those who truly believe and enter the kingdom. Which group are you in? Are you sure?

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