

Marriage supper

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[0 : 0 0] We return now to Matthew chapter 22. Matthew chapter 22 and we'll read the first two verses again. Jesus spoke to them again in parables saying, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son.

Now here we have one of Jesus' parables about the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God in Matthew's gospel is called the kingdom of heaven.

There's no difference between these two phrases really. Matthew probably used this phrase the kingdom of heaven because he was writing primarily for a Jewish audience and they preferred to use this expression rather than kingdom of God. They preferred to use the name of God as little as possible.

And so Matthew uses the kingdom of heaven. But it is interchangeable really with the kingdom of God. What is the kingdom of God? The kingdom of God is that realm in which God's rule is obeyed. Now every Christian believer belongs to the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God, said Jesus, is among you or within you. It's an unseen kingdom. It's a kingdom which exists in the hearts and lives of those who obey God.

[1 : 2 3] But it refers to more than that. It refers also to the rule of God over the heavenly realm. Now when Jesus tells a parable of the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God, in each parable he only teaches certain aspects about that kingdom.

He doesn't tell us the whole story about the kingdom. These parables are not meant to do that. Each parable is meant to show that one or two aspects of that kingdom from various points of view. So we shouldn't think of these parables as being allegories in which every little point has a spiritual meaning and which tell us the whole truth about the kingdom. No. These parables tell us certain truths about the kingdom.

What then is the main truth of this parable, which is intended to be taught to us here? Well surely the emphasis is on the invitation here to join the kingdom, to come to the wedding banquet.

The emphasis is on that invitation and upon the response to that invitation. There are some other lessons too as we will see. In fact, the parable can be split up into three distinct parts, each with its own emphasis.

[2 : 4 1] But I would suggest that the main emphasis here is on this invitation which is given. And this teaches us certain truths about the gospel invitation, the invitation which is given to people to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to enter the kingdom of God.

Let's look then first of all at the invitation which is issued and refused. The kingdom of heaven is like a king prepared a wedding banquet for his son.

Now obviously here what is meant is that the king in some respect represents God. God, who is the king in the kingdom of heaven, has prepared a wedding feast for his son.

And this probably refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal son of God. Now you'll notice that in the rest of the parable, the son doesn't figure at all. Not like in a certain other parable of the kingdom where you remember the son is one of those who were sent to the people who had rented out the king's vineyard.

The son was sent and he was killed. No, the son doesn't figure largely here. You see, the emphasis is not on the role of the son here. The emphasis is on the invitation which is given to join in the wedding feast.

[4 : 0 0] And as we read in Revelation, there is in scripture, there's reference to the wedding supper, the wedding feast of the Lamb, the eternal son, which will take place at the end of time after the judgment when all those who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, been born again and joined in this kingdom, will be united with him forever in that kingdom which will never end.

And I think this does refer in some way to that. Of course, it is not an exact parallel, but it does suggest to us that the invitation here is to join in this wedding feast, to join in this joyful occasion of union with the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal son.

It is then a royal invitation. And the gospel invitation is a royal invitation. It is given on the authority of the King of Kings.

And he has sent his people, and especially his preachers, to issue this invitation on his authority to join in the joyful reception of salvation.

I believe this is perhaps a note which is often missing in our preaching, that we often tend to major on the dark and gloomy side of things. But surely here the invitation is to a joyful occasion.

[5 : 20] What is a wedding banquet, but the most joyful occasion that we human beings know? And that is what we invite people to. We invite people to come to the joy of salvation, to know the Lord Jesus Christ, and to look forward to this wonderful marriage supper of the Lamb, which will one day take place.

A royal invitation then, issued on the authority of the King. Now this invitation was to a feast which was prepared.

It was ready. You see, the King had already planned the wedding for a son. He had sent out his invitations, no doubt to the notable people in his kingdom and in that city.

And he had sent out the invitation sometime before, as we normally do. But it was a custom in those days for people to send out a second invitation, when everything was ready.

So the King sent out his servants, verse 4. Sent out his servants to invite people to come to the banquet. Everything is ready. Everything is prepared. Now that just hints to us, I think.

[6 : 35] We can't go into the details here of finding the significance in the oxen and the fatted calf. These fatted cattle, these are not meant to be spiritualized. But what we can say is this.

In the parable, the King says, everything is ready. And so we, who proclaim and issue the gospel invitation, can say on the King's authority, everything is ready.

What do we mean by that? Well, it means, surely, that the Lord Jesus Christ has come, and he has fulfilled all that was planned by God for the reception of sinners like you and me.

The Lord Jesus Christ has lived a perfect life, which no human being has ever been successful in doing. He lived a perfect life of obedience, of service, of being entirely conformed to the Father's will, and then he laid down his life as a sacrifice on the cross.

Everything is ready. He has done all that is necessary. He has lived for us. He has died for us. He has paid the price and the penalty for our sin. He has made a tournament for our sins so that God's wrath is turned away.

[7 : 44] God's justice is satisfied. And he has risen from the dead, triumphant, gaining the victory over the devil, that enemy of our souls.

Victory over hell, victory over the grave. Everything is ready. And so we are sent, the servants of God, to proclaim that message and to issue the invitation.

Come. Everything is ready. Come to the Lord Jesus Christ. What a pressing invitation this one was. There is a royal invitation to a feast that was ready. And the king goes out of his way to press on these people that he has invited, that they really are invited to come.

He had issued the formal invitation. Now we are sending servants actually to plead with them.

Come. Everything is ready. And so we, as gospel preachers, must press the invitation home. It's no good saying, well, just take it or leave it.

[8 : 40] That's all that I can do. I dare not do that. I must press upon you the urgency of receiving and responding to the gospel invitation while there is yet time. For as we shall see, the opportunity was taken from those people who refused.

It is an urgent, a pressing invitation issued on the authority of the king. And the responsibility is yours to receive it, to respond to it.

My responsibility is to issue it on the king's authority in love and in patience and in, and with this, this pressing attitude to invite you to come freely to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

and sadly, this invitation was refused. Verse 3, they refused to come. And then later on, verse 5, they paid no attention and went off.

One to his field, another to his business. First of all, there was just a curt refusal, perhaps even a polite refusal. Perhaps they, they, they sent a note saying, I'm sorry, I can't come.

[9 : 46] Perhaps they were polite. But then, it gets more and more impolite, doesn't it? More rude. They paid no attention. They just ignored the invitation. And, they went off.

One to his farming, one to his business. The materialistic, temporal things of life came before their devotion to their king. He was their lawful king, after all, but they paid no attention to his invitation. They wanted to go and do their own thing. To see to their own affairs, rather than to the, to join in the celebration for their king's son. A refused invitation.

But it became even worse than that. Their six, some of them actually seized his servants, outtreated them, and killed them. Not only did they refuse and reject the invitation, they rejected the messengers, their king's son.

They rebelled against the lawful authority of their king. There was a rebellious attitude against their king. How sad that this invitation issued in all sincerity was rejected in such a callous manner.

[10 : 54] sadly, that is often the way with the gospel invitation. It is a free and an open invitation to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, to be saved, to join in the kingdom of God.

The people just either ignore it, or they try to sell their consciences by going off and doing good works, thinking that by this way they will earn the king's favor.

But others actually bear in a more open way. Not only do they reject the invitation, but they actually scorn the invitation. They argue against it. And in the words of some people in another parable, we will not have this man to rule over us.

How sad that this invitation was refused. Sadly, many people refuse it. And notice that it doesn't need to have this violent response to reject it.

There were those who just ignored it, went about their daily business, and they forgot all about it. And sadly, unless you respond actively by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are already rejecting that invitation.

[12 : 00] Now what is the king's response to those who reject the invitation? It was one, his response was one of retribution, of punishment. Verse 7. The king was enraged.

The king was justly angry. It wasn't that he was wrong to be angry. He was justly angry with those who refused his gracious invitation. And he sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

Now there's no doubt that the first application of this part of the parable is to the Jewish people. I haven't mentioned this so far, but there is no doubt that the first application of this parable was to those whom God had first invited to the feast.

His chosen people of old, the Israelites, the Jewish people. And what happened when the king's son came to them? They rejected him.

And by and large, the people of that first century, they rejected the Lord Jesus Christ, they rejected his messengers, they rejected his message. Well, many of them believed that by and large the Jewish nation did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah.

[13 : 10] They rejected him. And what happened? As is well known in history, in AD 70, the Roman army came, Titus, the son of the emperor came and he razed Jerusalem and the temple to the ground, leaving only the western wall of the temple, which is still there known as the Wailing Wall.

And perhaps up to a million Jewish people were killed. Apparently, they crowded into Jerusalem at that time thinking, well, the eternal city, God's chosen city, it will never be destroyed.

And they perished with the city. Now, sadly, there's no doubt that that historical happening was the fulfillment of this truth.

Jesus was speaking here in the parable in a kind of prophetic way saying that one day those who have rejected me will be punished in this way. And then the Jewish nation was scattered.

How sad it was that those who had refused the gracious offer of their king were punished in this way. This points forward also not just to the God's rejection of the Jewish people in AD 70 when Jerusalem and their nation was destroyed and scattered.

[14 : 24] It refers, I believe, also to all those who reject this invitation. Those who hear and perhaps even understand what is meant and implied in the invitation to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and then refuse it either by ignoring it or by rebelling against it, they one day will be punished.

This is one of the most solemn and difficult doctrines of Scripture but it is one which we find most often on the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. If you read the Apostle Paul, he doesn't often speak about the punishment of the wicked and those who reject the gospel but you read the sayings of the Lord Jesus Christ he often speaks about the punishment of those who refuse to

believe and therefore this we must also proclaim alongside this open and free and joyful invitation to come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we must also make known to people that if they refuse the invitation and reject the invitation they too will be punished one day.

How sad it is that those who have great opportunities great privileges of them more will be required that is what the Lord Jesus Christ said and that is what I must say to you too the more you know about the gospel the greater the punishment will be if you refused to respond to it.

So much then for the invitation issued and refused it resulted in this terrible punishment but the story doesn't end there and praise God for that.

Verse 8 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 we have here the second part of the parable the invitation reissued now if the first part of the parable refers particularly in the first instance to the Jewish people and the rejection of the invitation to believe in Christ surely this reissuing of the invitation refers to the opening up of the gospel invitation the invitation to join the kingdom of God to the Gentiles the invitation then reissued and notice that it is an entirely courageous invitation invitation invite them and indeed press them to come in and did not depend on the worth of the people now you see that although in the first part of the parable the people were punished because they were not worthy they didn't deserve to come yet in the second part of the parable the king still calls those who are not worthy those who didn't deserve to come you see the only qualification is that you receive the invitation and respond to it none of them were really worthy to come but the invitation came to them whether they were worthy or not whether they deserve to come or not

[18:10] I think that's of momentous importance as we preach the gospel we're not to say oh well you're invited to come if you're a good living person or if you've been attending church all your life or if you've never really committed any great sin that's not what the invitation is the invitation is to come to the Lord Jesus Christ even if you're the greatest sinner in the world remember what Paul the apostle said that he experienced grace even to the chief of sinners Paul regarded himself as being the worst sinner that there was whether he was or not we don't know but that was his own view of himself but he by the grace of God became a new creature in Christ and so can you there's not one of us who deserves to enter the kingdom of God not one of us is worthy praise be to God by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ we are received in the beloved it is a gracious invitation it is a universal invitation invite anyone you find all and invite it open universal invitation and that is the invitation of the gospel to all near and far rich and poor whatever color whatever background whatever creed all are invited to come to the wedding banquet through faith in the Lord

Jesus Christ and notice also that this invitation the reissued invitation was successful the wedding ha ha was filled with guests and so it is in the kingdom of God when the invitation is issued throughout the world there are those who will respond who will come in so the wedding supper or the lamb will be full there is not a few who will respond there is many who will respond throughout the world and this surely speaks of the present gospel age the last two thousand years the gospel has been proclaimed throughout the world and sometimes it has made tremendous strides forward at other times not but the gospel has gone throughout the world and many people are pressing into the kingdom it is a successful invitation and that is what gives us as preachers of the gospel encouragement to go on preaching because we know that the invitation is successful that there are those who are coming into the kingdom we come now to the final part of the parable and that is when the guests are reviewed those who have been invited they have crowded into the wedding hall and now the king comes to look at them to see them when the king came in to see the guests he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe all the others were that this man stood out because he was in his own ordinary everyday clothes it may have been that he had very good clothes we don't know but he wasn't wearing the proper dress for that particular occasion and the king asked him friend how did you get in here without wearing clothes now there are those who say well wasn't this rather unfair of the king how could the man be expected to get a wedding robe he was perhaps walking along the street and somebody called him and said look the king's inviting you along to the feast you must come the man went along with all good faith how could he get a wedding robe but the fact is that everybody there did have wedding robes and this would lead us to believe

I think that the king provided the wedding robe that as they went into the wedding hall there were robes to be put on so it didn't matter whether they were rich or poor whether they had washed

themselves or not everyone could come in and they would look the same because they were all dressed in the same way in the wonderful wedding robes that the king had provided at his own expense the man had no excuse that's what it says the man was speechless he couldn't say a word he knew he had done wrong he didn't say well everybody else went home to get their wedding robes he was speechless he knew he had done wrong because everybody else had received had accepted what the king had provided for them and they sat down or reclined at the wedding feast this man was speechless what happened to him the king told the attendants tie him up throw him out into the outer darkness now I think that refers to the fact that the wedding hall would be brightly lit it would probably be an evening dinner and this man was to be thrown out into the outer darkness now again doesn't this speak to us in very graphic language of the punishment for those who do not accept

God's provision of the righteousness of Christ surely the wedding robe here refers to the robe of righteousness which Christ gives to all those who believe in him each one of us is called for whatever background we come whether we're rich or poor whether we're good or bad in the eyes of the world none of us are worthy we all need to be clothed in the righteousness of Christ and when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ he forgives our sins he receives us as if we've never done anything wrong and clothes us in his righteousness and then by his grace we go on day by day to produce the fruit of righteousness in our lives you remember as we read in Revelation that the fine linen in which the saints were robed remember that's also figurative language the fine linen in which the saints are clothed in that wedding banquet of the Lamb are the righteous deeds of the saints first of all we're clothed in his righteousness and then by his grace we're enabled to perform righteous deeds it's no good saying that well alright I believe now I can go and do what I like that's not real faith real faith says yes I believe in the Lord Jesus

Christ he's forgiven my sin I believe I'm clothed in his righteousness and now by his grace I'll go on to produce righteousness to do righteous works to do good works to obey his law because now I love his law his law is written on my heart how sad it was for that man he thought he had arrived because he went in his own strength in his own clothes so to speak and there are many who think that they can enter God's kingdom by their own works of righteousness oh I'm doing my best surely can't God ask more than that of me God does ask more than that because our best is not good enough what he asks of us is this that we leave off trying to justify ourselves believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and have his righteousness made over to us that is what he calls us to do what do we make of verse 14 many are invited but few are chosen does it really mean that there's only very very few in the kingdom of

[25 : 18] God well I don't believe it refers to that what it means is this that all are invited every single person in this world should have his gospel invitation issued to them but only those will respond to whom God has chosen but they will respond by his grace and they must respond they must respond and so we have the authority to issue the invitation knowing that those who believe will come by his grace now there are those who say well a few are chosen well it can't mean me now that is the wrong entirely the wrong way to go about approaching this question the way to approach it is this the invitation is offered openly freely graciously to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and it is your responsibility to respond it is only when you do respond that you will realize that yes there was

God who brought me God who led me God who chose me from the beginning you must you must never use this verse as an excuse by saying oh well I don't know if I'm chosen or not the fact is you are invited on the authority of the king and that is your warrant for coming to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ invitation is open all is now ready the Lord Jesus Christ has done everything necessary for salvation for everyone your responsibility is to respond in faith to believe in him to commit your life to him it is not an excuse for staying away it is rather the warrant for coming and it is the comfort of those who believe that once they do believe and commit their lives to Christ they will never be lost because it is God himself who has chosen them and saved them kingdom of heaven is life a king who prepared a banquet for his son God has prepared everything feast is ready he is calling you to believe in the Lord

Jesus Christ and to join in his kingdom so that one day you too will sit at the marriage supper of the lamb let's pray Lord our most gracious God we give thanks for your word and for the truth that we find oh Lord our God there are so many things difficult to understand but surely this is plain above all else that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in

him shall not perish but have everlasting life oh Lord we pray then that you would help us to respond to this great invitation to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to be saved we ask all these things in Jesus name Amen God and