

**Parable of the Wedding Feast**  
**Pastor John E. Dubler**  
**Matthew 22:1-14**

As background for this parable take note of both Isaiah 61:10 and Revelation 19:7-9:

I will rejoice greatly in the LORD,  
My soul will exult in my God;  
For He has clothed me with garments of salvation,  
He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness,  
As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.  
Isaiah 61:10<sup>1</sup>

Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God." Revelation 19:7-9

**Here then is the Parable of the Wedding Feast from Matthew 22:1-14:**

Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, 2 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. 3 And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they



were unwilling to come. 4 Again he sent out other slaves saying, 'Tell those who have been invited, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast."' 5 But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, 6 and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. 7 But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. 8 Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 9 Go

therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.' 10 Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests.

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<sup>1</sup> All scripture references are taken from the New American Standard Bible, Updated Edition unless noted otherwise.

11 But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, 12 and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And the man was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 14 For many are called, but few are chosen.'" NASU

### **The fundamental message:**

Our King (God Himself) has extended a gracious invitation to the wedding feast for His Son, meaning that we would love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. People respond to God's invitation in 4 different ways:

1. Refusal to come because of worldly concerns
2. Refusal to come because of hatred and animosity toward the king
3. Acceptance of the invitation but an unwilling to accept norms of the kingdom
4. Acceptance of the invitation with a willingness to accept the norms and standards required of those who love the King and His kingdom



This parable is the last in a series of three which are rebukes to the Pharisees of His day, but carry a strong message for believers today. First, a wise man or woman will not neglect the invitation to salvation from the King of Kings in order to pursue worldly ambitions or attend to the mundane affairs of this world. Second, those who hate the Lord Jesus and despise Christians would do well to reconsider their obstinacy. Consider Psalm 2:

Psalm 2:12

Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry,  
and you perish in the way,  
For His wrath may soon be kindled.  
How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

Third, those who have accepted the invitation to salvation should take care that they do not take lightly the sacrifice of the Son of God by sinning against Him repeatedly. The robe of righteousness is not an optional garment at His wedding banquet. And finally, those who have accepted the invitation and are being sanctified by the word of truth must be thankful and watchful. The blessing of the wedding feast of the King of Kings is theirs forever.

### **Comments on the parable of the wedding feast.**

The parable appears only in Matthew, however a somewhat similar account appears in Luke 14: 16-24 with significant differences. We will present the Parable of the Dinner in Luke 14 as a separate parable.

In the parable itself we see that the king has sent out invitations to the wedding feast he desires to give for his son's marriage. There is to be a banquet in honor of the occasion. Figuratively, the King is God and the son of the king is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Despite the invitations being issued by the king himself, there is a problem: The invitations are being refused. In the case of an actual wedding feast in the days of Jesus' earthly walk, invitations to a wedding feast would have been issued well in advance. On the actual day of the feast starting, runners would be sent to the invited guests to let them know that everything was ready and that they should assemble at the location specified. The celebration itself could go on for days. In the parable, when the invited guests received notification that the feast was ready, they refused to come. The imperfect tense is used here in the Greek, indicating that the refusal is repeated and persistent—a continuing state of being, compounding the seriousness of the offense against the king.

Despite their offense in refusing the invitation, the greatness and magnanimity of the king is demonstrated when he repeats the invitation. We get the impression that he wants them to have time to reconsider their response and therefore repeats the notification that the banquet is ready, while at the same time giving some details about how magnificent a banquet it is to be. "My oxen and fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast."



**First category of invited guests. They respond with trivial and worldly excuses:**

However, despite the graciousness of the king, the first category of invited guests slight him with the very triviality of their excuses. They will be going about their business as usual, one returning to his farm, another going about his business. These are indeed selfish and mundane reasons for refusing to come to the banquet.

Further, the king's invitation must be considered both an honor and a command, making the triviality of their refusal and excuses seem even more starkly contrasted with his graciousness. The time of celebration with the king's beloved son would be a special joy; they have lightly discarded the proffered invitation.

**Second category of invited guests. These people are violent and malevolent.**

The scene in the parable as Jesus tells it now turns rather dark and violent, grabbing our attention and commanding us to consider very closely what He is saying. Some of those invited are not content to refuse with trivial and meaningless excuses—they mistreat and kill those servants who came with the king's gracious invitation. The outrageous abuse meets with a strong reaction from the king who is depicted as being enraged. He sends his army and destroys the murders and sets their city on fire. These indeed are

shocking developments, making us focus on the point of the parable which Jesus tells so effectively.

### **The wedding feast is still ready so the king invites others.**

Despite the turn of events, his loss of servants, and the situation having become very bad indeed, the King is determined to have a wedding feast for his son. Those ungrateful people who refused have either gone away or been killed and so the king resolves to start over with his slaves issuing a fresh invitation to those who previously were not invited. The King therefore reminds the servants that the wedding feast is ready, but “those who were invited were not worthy.” They are instructed to go out into the main highway and as many as they should encounter there would be issued invitations.



It is not difficult in this part of the parable to see that the refusal of Judaism in general to recognize Jesus as the long awaited messiah, results in the invitation for salvation going out en masse to the gentile world. However, the point must not be overdone to the place where gentiles begin to think of themselves as belonging to either the third or fourth category already mentioned in the introduction to this article. Gentiles today can refuse the invitation based upon trivial and mundane excuses. Gentiles today can be haters of God and seek to put to death those missionaries who bring the invitation of salvation to them.

The slaves go out into the streets in obedience to their new instructions gather together all the people they can find. This sweep of the neighborhood results in a mixed multitude occupying the dinner hall—both evil and good. The meaning here is not obscure. God is calling those from good backgrounds and rough ones, from the “delicate” sinners to the unrefined and coarse, all were invited and all came.

### **The wedding clothes.**

No matter their background, all of the second wave of invited guests were to be attired in wedding clothes. Though not made clear in the parable, it is likely that those listening at the time Jesus told the parable would have understood that the king would also provide a suitable wedding garment for each of the guests. Whether this point is supportable from actual history or not, it is clear from the parable that the man who was not wearing the garment was speechless when confronted by the king. This is a clear indication that he knew and realized his guilt. Not wearing suitable wedding attire (whether or not provided by the king) would be an insult to his generosity, to the occasion itself and especially to the honored son.

The meaning of the wedding garment becomes clear when both Isaiah 61 and Revelation 19 are considered (see the introduction to the article). Salvation carries with it a “robe of righteousness” which is given us by the Lord. We must wear it. If one refuses to put on the robe of righteousness, or discards the robe through neglect of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and deliberately and repeatedly sins with no concern for the convicting His convicting role, his

status as a true child of God is jeopardized. This does not mean that if a person sins he has discarded his robe of righteousness, but rather that continuous and egregious disregard for both repentance and sanctification through the work of the Holy Spirit is deliberately and repeatedly refused. Such a person comes (or hopes to come) to the wedding feast without a sincere heart of repentance from sin. Such an insult to the Holy Spirit and to the Blood of Christ will not be allowed. A person who hopes for salvation without repentance from dead works is vainly striving against sinking sand.

### **The outer darkness:**

The man who was not properly dressed was bound hand and foot and thrown into the outer darkness by the servants on command of the king. The outer darkness is a place of judgment—perhaps the great tribulation. It is certainly nothing to be trifled with. Those who hope for salvation without repentance are seeking only fire insurance so they can continue with lives and hearts of disobedience, having become slaves of sin yet still having a hope of salvation. The fact is that repentance and salvation go hand in glove. One may not be had without the other. The judgment of the outer darkness awaits these responders to the king's invitation, those not dressed in the robe of righteousness. Take special note of Romans 6: 1-2:

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?  
2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

### **Many called but few are chosen:**

Over the years multitudes of millions of souls have been invited to the wedding feast for the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Jesus Film Project [[www.jesusfilm.org](http://www.jesusfilm.org)] reports that the



most-translated movie of all time has now been seen by more than 5 billion people encompassing every country in the world. The Jesus Film has been translated into 1,000 languages. Millions have responded to this one proclamation of the gospel in our generation alone. Without a doubt we may say with our Lord, “many are called.”

Some refuse the invitation and will not come because of worldly concerns. They persist in their refusal to come even when the greatness of the feast is explained to them.

Some refuse to come and are intolerant of even the invitation, rejecting and in some cases killing those who come with the king's gracious invitation.

Some accept the invitation to the banquet but refuse to submit to the norms of the kingdom, by not repenting of their sins. They are therefore rejected.

Finally others, responding to the kingdom invitation and accepting the norms of the kingdom remain through both belief and repentance from dead works are called “chosen” The Greek: ἐκλεκτοί (eklektoi) indicates the depth of this mystery that so many are invited and yet only God knows those who will be “elect” or “chosen.” In both John 15 we see that we did not choose Jesus, but he choose us. The same Greek word ἐκλεκτοί is used in John 15.

You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. John 15:16

### **Concluding questions:**

Are you among the elect? It is not impossible to know and be assured of salvation. Consider these scriptures from God’s word:

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life,” 1 John 5:13.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life,” John 5:24.



Thank God profusely if you are among the “elect,” the chosen of God. Do not discard your sanctification “without which no man will see the Lord.” (Hebrews 12:14).

Are you among those who have not accepted the invitation? Set aside worldly cares and concerns. “The worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word and it becomes unfruitful.” Thus it is written of the seed sown among thorns (Matthew 13: 18-23).

Are you harboring animosity and hatred toward God? Beware, repent of hardness of heart and turn to the living God “Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!” Psalm 2:12.

Following this parable, the comprehension and acceptance of which was not embraced by the religious leaders, the Pharisees and Herodians chose to change the subject and tried to trap Jesus by asking the question, “Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any. Tell us then, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?” (Matthew 22:16-17).