

# There Is Still Room

*A In-depth Examination of the Parable of the Wedding Feast*



*“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.’ (Matthew 22:8–9)*

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## Introduction

- I. After the Law of Moses had been read in the hearing of the people, and then sealed with the blood of a lamb, the covenant was celebrated in a meal with Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of “the nobles of the children of Israel” (Exod 24:9–11).
  - A. Seventy-four men, representing the nation of Israel, ascended Mount Sinai to partake in a covenant meal with God where “they saw God, and they ate and drank” (Exod 24:11).
  - B. However, there is no mention in this text of God eating and drinking as a human participant at this meal.
  - C. God partially revealed Himself to these men so they would know that He was a willing participant to the covenant.
  - D. As Walter Brueggemann, one of the most influential Old Testament scholars of our day, said, “The narrative intends to leave us stunned, bewildered, and awestruck. And it does! We do not know what happened, for here earth entered into face-to-face contact with the Holy One around the most elemental activity of eating...” (Brueggemann, *Genesis–Leviticus*, 1.882)
  - E. “*They ate and drank*’ describes a covenant meal celebrating the sealing of the covenant described in vv.3–8” (Walter Kaiser, Jr., *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, n.p.)
  - F. “In the ancient world (and many places in the modern world) people would not eat together if they were not somehow allies or family. Eating was understood to convey acceptance, to declare approval of those with whom one dined.” (Stuart, *Exodus*, 2.555)
  - G. Forty years later, as Israel was about to enter the Promised Land, Moses promised the people that they would “eat before the Lord your God” in the place “where the Lord your God chooses” (Deut 12:5–7).
  - H. As you continue reading the Old Testament, you find that covenants were often celebrated by a feast (cf. Gen 26:28–31; 31:44–54; Josh 9:11–15; 2 Sam 3:20–21; Isa 55:1–3).
- II. Nearly a millennium after the celebratory meal at Mount Sinai, the prophet Isaiah looked forward to the days of the Messiah and portrayed it as a time of a great banquet for all people (Isa 25:6–9).
  - A. This banquet was to be open to “all” nations.
    1. The prophet used the word “all” at least four times in these few verses so that we would know that *everyone* was invited to this feast.
    2. Isaiah often spoke of the universal nature of the rule of God over all peoples and nations (cf. Isa 2:2–3; 14:1–2; 45:20–25; 49:22; 60:1–22; 66:18–21).
  - B. At this triumphant feast, God would provide the best of food and the finest of wine.
  - C. At this banquet, all signs of mourning would be removed, and God would banish everything that darkens our lives.
  - D. The reign of death would be destroyed forever, and mourning would no longer be a part of human experience.

- E. In that day, gladness and joy would fill the heart.
  - F. What a remarkable thought it is that the God of all creation would share a meal with His creatures!
  - G. “Sharing a meal has always been one of the most effective means of achieving and celebrating reconciliation and of bonding in general and one of the great metaphors for well-being, and as such it has featured prominently in religious representation and practice throughout the ages.” (Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 358)
  - H. Isaiah employed the same metaphor that David did when he spoke of the rule of the Messiah and also pictured it as a feast (Ps 22:26, 29).
  - I. The prophet used this same metaphor of feasts and celebrations on several other occasions as well (Isa 55:1-13; 65:1-25).
- III. The ancient Jewish writers of the pseudepigrapha often spoke of the days of the Messiah being ushered in with a great feast.
- A. During the intertestamental period, the writer of 1 Enoch longed for the day of salvation when “the righteous and elect ones” would “eat and rest and rise with that Son of Man forever and ever” (1 Enoch 62:13-14).
  - B. In the fifth or sixth century A.D., the writer of 3 Enoch looked forward to the day when Israel “shall eat with the Messiah” (3 Enoch 48:10).
- IV. In the New Testament, Jesus gave a parable about the kingdom of heaven and compared it to a great wedding banquet given by a king for his son (Matt 22:1-14).
- A. It is evident, even to the casual reader, that the “king” in this passage is God Himself and His “son” is Christ Jesus our Lord.
  - B. Nearly every Christian has heard this parable expounded on and marveled at those who would reject a direct invitation from the King of Kings.
  - C. They might have even pondered those who accepted the invitation but showed up unprepared to be a guest of royalty.
- V. Bible students will observe that this parable is similar to the parable of the great supper recorded by Luke (Luke 14:15-24).
- A. However, while these two parables have much in common, they have significant differences (mainly in the details).
  - B. Luke places his parable on our Lord’s way to Jerusalem, while Matthew places it after our Lord’s triumphant entry into the city.
  - C. Luke speaks of a “man,” while Matthew tells us of a “king.”
  - D. Luke speaks of a “great supper,” but Matthew tells us about a “wedding banquet” (HCSB).
  - E. Luke describes the various “excuses” offered by the invited guests, while Matthew tells us the ungrateful guests simply went back to their ordinary lives.
  - F. Luke speaks of “the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind” later being invited from the “streets, lanes and hedges” (back roads), but Matthew tells us of the king’s servants who went out to the “highways” (main roads) to invite people to the wedding feast.
  - G. In Luke’s story, there is no parallel to the furious king sending “out his armies.”
  - H. And finally, Luke says nothing about the sorting of the guests and the expulsion of a man lacking proper wedding attire.

## I. What Prompted The Parable?

- A. As you study the parables of Jesus, you come to realize that they were often given in response to some question or incident.
  - 1. The parable of the two debtors was given in response to Simon the Pharisee who wondered why Jesus allowed a sinful woman to touch Him (Luke 7:36-50).
  - 2. The parable of the good Samaritan was given to answer the lawyer's question, "Who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:25-37).
  - 3. The parable of the Pharisee and tax collector was spoken to those "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others" (Luke 18:9-14).
  - 4. The parable of the ten minas was given as Jesus drew near Jerusalem, "because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately" (Luke 19:11-27).
- B. The parable of the wedding banquet must be considered in the light of the rejection of Jesus as the Messiah by the religious establishment of His day.
- C. Matthew places this parable after the triumphant entry of Jesus into the city of Jerusalem (Matt 21:1-11), which had happened on the Sunday before our Lord's death.
- D. On that Sunday, Jesus cleansed the temple (Matt 21:12-13).
  - 1. The "blind and the lame" came to Jesus at the temple to be healed, and when the chief priests and scribes saw Jesus receive the adoration of the crowds, "they were indignant" (Matt 21:14-16).
  - 2. By calling Him "the Son of David," the crowds were acknowledging that Jesus was indeed the Messiah!
  - 3. Jesus did not rebuke the crowds, but instead accepted their praise.
  - 4. This acceptance of praise from the crowds was seen as an act of blasphemy by the Jewish leaders.
  - 5. Jesus then left the holy city and spent the night in Bethany (Matt 21:17).
- E. The following morning, on His way back to Jerusalem, Jesus cursed the barren fig tree (Matt 21:18-22).
  - 1. Then, as He taught in the temple, the "chief priests and elders of the people" challenged His authority (Matt 21:23-27).
  - 2. Instead of answering their question regarding the source of His authority, Jesus challenged them concerning the baptism taught by John.
  - 3. They claimed they could not tell whether John's baptism came "from heaven or from men" (they saw the trap and were not about to set foot in it).
- F. Jesus then told the story of the man who had two sons (Matt 21:28-32).
  - 1. The lesson to be gleaned from this story was that the temple aristocracy had disqualified themselves from leading the people.
  - 2. Jesus further insulted them by saying, "tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you."
  - 3. This was a message they could not accept!

- G. He then told the parable of a certain landowner who had prepared a vineyard (Matt 21:33-41).
1. Any Jew hearing that parable would immediately think of Isaiah's song of the vineyard (Isa 5:1-7).
  2. The parable given by Jesus takes place at harvest time when the landowner sent his servants to collect his rightful portion of the harvest, but the vinedressers "took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another.
  3. Finally, the landowner sent his best representative, his son, and the vinedressers treated him spitefully and killed him.
  4. Jesus then shows that the landowner was just in destroying "those wicked men."
  5. Our Lord then made the application by changing metaphors: He was the "stone which the builders rejected" and had now become the "chief cornerstone" (Matt 21:42; cf. Ps 118:22).
  6. He added insult to injury when He proclaimed, "the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it" (Matt 21:43).
  7. The chief priests and Pharisees finally understood the teaching of Jesus and realized that He was talking about them (Matt 21:45-46).
  8. To further drive home His point about them rejecting the "chief cornerstone," Jesus gave the parable of the wedding banquet (Matt 22:1-14).

## II. The Great Invitation

- A. A generous king, wanting to honor his son, had invited many guests to come and share in the joy of his son's wedding day (Matt 22:2-3).
1. While some translations speak of a "wedding" (KJV, NKJV), most modern translations tell of the "wedding banquet" (HCSB, NET, CSB, NRSV) or "wedding feast" (ESV, NASB, CJB).
  2. All too often, we try to understand the stories of the Bible by overlaying them with our cultural predispositions.
  3. "We must be careful lest we presuppose that *our cultural instincts* are the same as those represented in the Bible. We must be *culturally aware* of our own place in time—and we must work to comprehend the cultural context of the Scriptures that we wish to understand. Too often interpreters have lacked cultural awareness when reading the Scriptures. We have failed to recognize the gulf that exists between who we are today and the context of the Bible. We have forgotten that we read the Bible as foreigners, as visitors who have traveled not only to a new geography, but to a new century. We are literary tourists who are deeply in need of a guide." (Gary Burge, *The Bible and the Land*, 11)
  4. This royal wedding invitation was not just for a "wedding ceremony" as we might think of it today, but for the wedding *and* the feast after the wedding, which could go on for as long as a week.

5. “In the ancient Near East, a *wedding feast* was inseparable from the wedding itself, which involved a week-long series of meals and festivities and was the highlight of all social life. For a royal *wedding* such as the one Jesus mentions here, the celebration often lasted for several weeks. Guests were invited to stay at the house of the groom’s parents for the entire occasion, and the father would make as elaborate provisions as he could afford. A royal wedding, of course, would be held in the palace, and a king would be able to afford whatever he desired.” (John MacArthur, *Matthew 16–23*, 305)
  6. The king sent out his “servants” or “slaves” (plural) to invite the guests, implying that a great number of people had been invited.
- B. The phrase, “those who were invited” (Matt 22:3), suggests those who not only had been *invited* but had *accepted* the invitation from the king.
1. In the village culture during the days of our Lord, it was customary first to invite the guests, and then at a later date give a second invitation to those who had accepted the first.
  2. One of the oldest books of the *Midrash* (a biblical interpretation by ancient Jewish authorities) is the *Lamentations Rabbah*, which is a commentary on the Old Testament book of Lamentations.
    - a) The comments on Lamentations 4:2 give us a good deal of insight into ancient Jewish wedding customs.
    - b) Concerning a wedding feast, we are told that “When one of them was invited to a banquet, he would not go unless he was invited twice” (Jacob Neusner, *Lamentations Rabbah, An Analytical Translation*, 297).
  3. The king’s servants went out to invite guests who have already agreed to come to the wedding feast.
  4. This is similar to the parable recorded by Luke, where servants were sent “to those who had been invited” (Luke 14:17, ESV).
  5. The invited guests knew the wedding was coming, and they had no excuse for not attending.
- C. The king in this parable is God, the Holy One of Israel.
1. The king’s son is our Lord Jesus Christ.
  2. The king’s servants (slaves) were the Old Testament prophets of God, such as Moses, Isaiah, and Jeremiah.
  3. God had invited the Jews to His banquet when He sent out His prophets, then later John the Baptist (Matt 3:1–3), and finally, this same invitation was given by Jesus Himself (Matt 4:17).
  4. These guests who had been invited first were the Jews.
  5. But sadly, as John would later record, Jesus “came to His own, and His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11).
  6. The second group of guests, those gathered from the highways, represent the Gentiles (including you and me).
  7. It has been observed that not less than fifty times in the four gospels the kingdom of heaven and related themes are referred to as a “feast”—the most joyful of social gatherings.
  8. The eternal Son of God left heaven to pursue His bride and has invited us to share in the hope, glory, and joy of heaven with Him!

### III. The Rebellious Citizens

- A. When the day of the wedding came, servants of the king happily announced that preparations were complete, and the banquet was ready (Matt 22:3).
1. Sadly, those who had already agreed to attend “were not willing to come.”
  2. The king, in his mercy, sent out other servants to invite these ungrateful guests once again.
  3. The king had spared no expense, the oxen and fattened cattle had been slaughtered, and the banquet was ready to begin.
  4. Indeed, “all things are ready” (Matt 22:4).
  5. We hear the urgency of the servant’s message as they said, “Come to the wedding” (Matt 22:4).
  6. The invited guests not only rejected the invitation again, but they showed contempt for their king when they “made light of it” (Matt 22:5).
  7. As Simon J. Kistemaker observed, “Even though they knew that a royal invitation was equivalent to a royal command, they refused to acknowledge the king’s announcement.” (Kistemaker, *The Parables*, 92)
  8. Not content with just rejecting the invitation, they “seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them” (Matt 22:6).
  9. Rejecting the invitation of the king would be seen not only as an insult but as rejecting his authority as well—they had no fear of their king!
  10. This went beyond common discourtesy to the point of rebellion.
  11. The king, who had only intended good with his invitation, has been insulted, ridiculed, and rebelled against!
  12. Not only that, but they have dishonored his son as well.
- B. Unlike the parable of the great supper recorded by Luke (Luke 14:16–24), these people offered no excuse for their actions.
1. They were unfaithful to their commitment to attend and unashamed of their actions.
  2. While the NKJV says the people “made light of” the invitation, other translations say, “they paid no attention” (HCSB), or “were indifferent” (NET Bible).
  3. They were far more concerned with the affairs of this world than the things of God.
  4. This was not a case that the people were on their deathbed and could not attend, for the people “went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business” (Matt 22:5).
  5. At this point, we remember the words of our Lord, Who, with tears in His eyes, told the inhabitants of Jerusalem, “How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!” (Matt 23:37).
- C. The Jews had a long history of rejecting God’s prophets.
1. Jesus would later condemn the Pharisees for adorning the tombs of the prophets while at the same time manifesting the attitude of their fathers who had “murdered the prophets” (Matt 23:29–36).
  2. As Stephen would put it, “Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers...” (Acts 7:52–53).



- D. People today often offer shallow excuses for not accepting the King's invitation.
1. Some are more concerned about what their friends and family might say than they are about the reaction of their King.
  2. Other people are weighed down by the cares of this world.
  3. Sadly, the majority of people in our day are too consumed with material things to have any interest in the kingdom of heaven.
  4. Even those who have been raised in households where God's name is praised, and His written word studied, often see no need of honoring our great King or His Son.

#### IV. The Furious King

- A. Our glorious King, as loving as He is, has a limit to His patience.
1. The rebellious people, having rejected two sets of the king's servants, will now receive a visit from the third group of messengers—the king's army (Matt 22:7).
  2. In this passage, we remember God's words to the generation of Noah, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever" (Gen 6:3).
  3. The king now laments that "those who were invited were not worthy" (Matt 22:8).
  4. Their "unworthiness" was not a comment on their merits but on their rejection of the king's gracious invitation.
  5. After Paul and Barnabas had preached at the synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia, Paul told the Jews who opposed them, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46).
  6. As we see the anger of the king towards his ungrateful guests, we hear the words of Isaiah to the ungrateful people of his day who forsook the Lord and forgot His holy mountain (Isa 65:11-13).
- B. The date of the writing of the gospel of Matthew is not known for sure.
1. If Irenaeus (c. 130–c. 202 A.D.) is correct that Matthew wrote his gospel "while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome" (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.1.1), then the book would have been written shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.
  2. However, any Jew reading this parable after the destruction of the holy city would immediately think of the armies of Titus plundering the temple, burning the city to the ground, and not leaving one stone upon another (Matt 24:2).
  3. Titus, like Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus before him, acted as a servant of God in carrying out His will (cf. Dan 2:37-38; Ezek 26:7; Isa 45:1).
  4. It was God, not Titus, who ultimately destroyed the city of Jerusalem!
  5. It is generally understood that more than one million Jews had been crowded into the holy city before Titus and his legions surrounded it.
  6. As Josephus would later record concerning the burning of the temple, "as for that house, God had for certain long ago doomed it to the fire; and now that fatal day was come, according to the revolution of ages" (Josephus, *Wars* 6:250).
  7. Titus left the Phasaelus, Hippicus, and Mariamne towers of the city walls "in order to demonstrate to posterity what kind of city it was, and how well fortified, which the Roman valor had subdued" (Josephus, *Wars* 7:1-2).

8. Josephus went on to say, “the rest of the wall, it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited” (Josephus, *Wars* 7:3).
9. The final expulsion of the Jews from the land took place after the failure of the Bar Kokhba Revolt in A.D. 135.
10. The destruction of the city that had seized the king’s servants, “treated them spitefully, and killed them” (Matt 22:6) was now complete.

## V. Room To Spare

- A. When the original invitees spurned the invitation of the king, the king did not hide in despair—instead, he invited those assumed to have no social status—the downtrodden and outcasts of society (Matt 22:9–10).
  1. The king’s son was still going to be honored but by a different group of guests.
  2. The king’s servants are sent to the “highways” to “gather all whom they found.”
  3. Or, as the HCSB reads, the servants went “to where the roads exit the city and invite everyone you find to the banquet.”
  4. These guests, marginal people from various walks of life, were not “worthy” of the king’s invitation, and even though they were unaccustomed to such royal banquets, they would appreciate the invitation and gladly accept it.
  5. These new guests had never dreamed that they would have ever been invited to such a feast!
  6. Now, “the wedding hall was filled with guests” (Matt 22:10).
  7. “The Middle Eastern culture highly values food and recognizes the needs of the less fortunate. Food is precious. The invited guests had shamed the nobleman. By inviting the beggars and the homeless to his banquet, he brought honor to himself and put the rest of the people to shame. He absorbed the shame that the invited guests heaped upon him and shared the pain of other suffering human beings.” (Young, *The Parables, Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation*, 184)
  8. The original intent of the king (i.e., honoring his son) was going to be accomplished and his purpose fulfilled.
  9. The king would not be embarrassed to be seen with such people, for his goal from the beginning had been to honor his son.
- B. As we watch the servants of the king invite those from the highway, both good and bad, to the wedding banquet, we recall Isaiah’s prophecy that “a nation you do not know” will glorify “the Holy One of Israel” (Isa 55:5).
  1. In the Law of Moses, eunuchs and foreigners were expressly prohibited from entering “the assembly of the Lord” (Deut 23:1–8).
  2. However, Isaiah looked forward to the day when eunuchs and foreigners would “join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him” and God would give them a name “better than that of sons and daughters” (Isa 56:3–6; cf. 65:1–2).
  3. In Luke’s account of the parable of the great supper, the master of the house told his servant, “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind” (Luke 14:21).

- C. The Dead Sea Scrolls, presumably written by an Essene community at Qumran, contains one scroll titled, *The Messianic Rule* or *The Rule of the Congregation* (dated to 100–75 B.C.).
  - 1. The scroll describes a banquet “when the Messiah has been revealed,” and at that banquet the “men of reputation” would be in attendance (1QSa 2:11–12).
  - 2. These pious guests would “sit before him by rank” at a communal table filled with bread and wine (1QSa 2:15–17).
  - 3. At this banquet, anyone with a “physical handicap,” such as those who were “lame, blind, deaf, dumb” or crippled would be excluded (1QSa 2:5–6).
  - 4. How far removed the pious men of Qumran were from the vision of Isaiah and the sentiment expressed by Jesus in the parable of the great supper!
- D. Jesus violated the cultural standards of His day as He was often seen with “tax collectors and sinners” and other outcasts of society (Matt 9:11; 11:19).
  - 1. Not only was He seen in the presence of such outcasts, but He ate and drank with them as well (Mark 2:15–16; Luke 15:2).
  - 2. Even in our day, we need to be reminded that Jesus “did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (Matt 9:13).
- E. Once the Jews rejected the gospel, and others had been called to take their place, we understand what Jesus meant when He said, “Other sheep I have which are not of this fold” (John 10:16).
  - 1. We now grasp God’s word through the prophet Hosea, “Then I will say to those who were not My people, ‘You are My people!’ And they shall say, ‘You are my God!’” (Hos 2:23).
  - 2. We can properly discern Paul’s plea to his Jewish brethren, when he says, “I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles” (Rom 11:11).
  - 3. On another occasion, Jesus spoke of many coming “from the east and west” and sitting down with the Patriarchs “in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 8:11).
- F. Is God dishonored by having those from the “highways” attend the banquet instead of His original invitees?
  - 1. The simple answer is “no,” for these people ought to be all the more grateful to their King!
  - 2. The poor beggars on the street would certainly appreciate the “oxen and fattened cattle” more than those wealthy merchants and farmers who could have such delicacies whenever they desired.

## VI. The Unprepared Guest

- A. As the king passed through the banquet hall, he would see endless rows of guests reclining upon beautiful couches.
  - 1. This gracious king would rejoice that his son was finally being honored.
  - 2. However, his smile is replaced by a frown as his eyes soon fall upon one particular guest who appears to be insulting both the royal family.
  - 3. Even though all of these guests had been invited, they still had an obligation to wear proper wedding attire (Matt 22:11–13).
  - 4. It is often suggested that in the ancient Near East kings would provide the garments for their guests (cf. Gen 45:22; Judg 14:12; 2 Kgs 25:29; Esth 6:8–9).

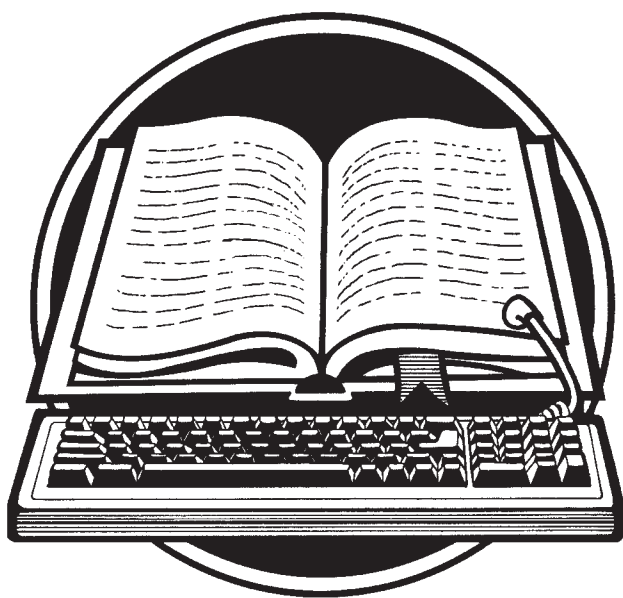
5. By not wearing the proper garments, this guest has insulted the king!
  6. If this passage is not talking about garments supplied by the host, then it must refer to guests wearing the best clothing available to them.
  7. However, since these guests had come “off the streets,” it seems likely that the king would have had to supply wedding garments for this banquet.
  8. Either way, this guest was disrespecting his host by wearing apparel that was less than the best he had available.
  9. The king addressed the man as “Friend,” implying that he was willing to listen to any reasonable cause for the man’s actions.
  10. However, the unprepared guest was “speechless,” indicating that he recognized his fault.
  11. This man had no excuse for his actions and was then bound and taken away to a place of “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (a punishment that could only be handed out by God).
  12. Here we are reminded of Zephaniah’s words, “Be silent in the presence of the Lord God; for the day of the Lord is at hand, for the Lord has prepared a sacrifice; He has invited His guests. And it shall be, in the day of the Lord’s sacrifice, that I will punish the princes and the king’s children, and all such as are clothed with foreign apparel” (Zeph 1:7–8).
- B. There is no indication that the servants of the king passed through the banquet hall to inspect the guests.
1. The job of the servants was merely to invite people to the banquet.
  2. “It was customary for monarchs and others who gave magnificent banquets to come in to see the guests after they were assembled” (Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, 363).
  3. It was the king himself who “saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment.”
  4. Perhaps this inspection by the king of his guests is an allusion to the words of John the Baptist, who told the Pharisees and Sadducees to “bear fruits worthy of repentance” (Matt 3:8).
  5. “As to the *wedding garment*, is it faith, or is it a holy life? This is a useless controversy; for faith cannot be separated from good works, nor do good works proceed from any other source than from faith. But Christ intended only to state, that the Lord calls us on the express condition of our being renewed by the Spirit after his image; and that, in order to our remaining permanently in his house, we must *put off the old man with his pollutions*, (Colossians 3:9; Ephesians 4:22) and lead a new life, that the garment may correspond to so honorable a calling.” (John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries*)
- C. As Isaiah painted the scene of the great invitation of our King, he reminds us that God’s ways and man’s ways are not the same (Isa 55:9).
1. Isaiah then proceeded to tell us that God’s word will accomplish its intended purpose (Isa 55:11–12).
  2. As we share the message of the King, we must be careful to avoid trying to decide who will reject the message before they hear it—for we are often wrong.
  3. Our job is to sow the seed of the kingdom and let God take care of the increase (1 Cor 3:6–7).

## Conclusion

- I. Jesus does not end this parable on a positive note (Matt 22:14).
  - A. He does not say, “And the redeemed lived happily ever after!”
  - B. Instead, He suggests that not all those who received an invitation will enjoy the banquet (the blessings of the kingdom).
  - C. The *Mishnah* claims that “All Israelites have a share in the world to come” (*Sanhedrin* 10:1), but Jesus disagrees!
  - D. It is everlastingly true that our God has “no pleasure in the death of the wicked” (Ezek 33:11; 18:23).
  - E. The invitation of the gospel is extended to all because our benevolent God is “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9).
  - F. However, we must come to God on His terms, not ours.
- II. In our Lord’s parable of the wedding banquet, the king extended a kind and gracious invitation in offering people an opportunity to share in the joy of his son.
  - A. The ungrateful people who had been invited twice dishonored both the king and his son.
  - B. The furious king dispatched those thankless people and invited others to a great banquet so his son would be honored.
  - C. However, all those invited were expected to give the honor that was due to the king and his son.
  - D. In application, the nation of Israel had been invited to a royal banquet with God, but instead, they rejected His prophets and finally killed His Son.
  - E. God destroyed Herod’s temple, leveled the city of Jerusalem, and then the call of the gospel went out “into all the world” (Mark 16:15).
- III. The kingdom of heaven can be despised in two ways.
  - A. First, by those who reject the generous offer of the King.
  - B. And second, by those who tacitly accept His invitation, but then dishonor the king by not showing Him due reverence.
  - C. If the Jews represent the first recipients of the king’s invitation to the wedding banquet, then you and I must be those gathered from the highways.
  - D. We have been given a great privilege of which we are not worthy, but with that privilege comes responsibility.
  - E. While it is true that we “come boldly to the throne of grace” (Heb 4:16), we must never forget that we are still unworthy servants coming before a glorious King!
- IV. Near the end of the New Testament, an angel of God told John, “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev 19:9).
  - A. After hearing these words, John, in his enthusiasm, falls to worship the angel who told him the good news of the marriage feast.
  - B. The angel refuses John’s worship and reminds him that only Deity is worthy of such honor (Rev 19:10).
  - C. This marriage supper of the Lamb had been seen through a mist at Mount Sinai, prophesied by Isaiah, and promised by our Lord Himself.
  - D. This marriage supper of the Lamb is the culmination of human history—and the King of the universe invites you and me to join in that celebration!

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