

The special parable which opens Matthew 22 is a parable of salvation which is commonly called The Parable of the Great Supper or The Parable of the Wedding Banquet. May we rejoice in the Father's determination to fill His wedding hall with guests! How generous a God we have, and what a picture of joy as we see the Son of God celebrate His union with His Bride, the Church purchased by His own blood! How thankful we should be that this church "shall never perish, her dear Lord to defend, to guide, sustain and cherish is with her to the end" (hymn 347). Even so, Lord, sustain and encourage us. In this world, which could not care less about your loving redemption of your people; though many are called, few indeed respond. But give us responsive hearts as we study this parable. Amen.

Mon/Tues: Read Matthew 21:45-22:4; Isaiah 50:7 & Luke 9:51

Determined Hospitality

We often observe family traits passed on from generation to the next and conclude, "Like father, like son." No father-son duo more exemplifies this saying than God the Father and His Son. They share the trait of determination and perseverance in the work of redeeming sinners.

For example, see how long Christ has been preparing for the day of publicly entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. He sets His face to go to His death in the holy city more than a year and a half earlier in Luke 9:51. Such determination, indeed, was prophesied in Isaiah's description of Jesus as the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 50:7. He "sets His face like flint," determined to find His bride and die for her. In the same way, once that Bride is found and the Wedding Supper made ready – look at how determined the Father is to invite guests to join Him! He wants them to rejoice with Him at the ingathering of His people from every tribe, tongue and nation. Here Jesus is especially pointing out the religious leaders of His day, who should have rejoiced in the Wedding Supper of the Lamb!

Notice in Jesus' parable that when the guests don't come, the Father humbly sends *yet more messengers* with an *even more generous offer* in Matthew 22:4: "Everything is ready – look at the meal! The fatted calves and oxen have been slaughtered! The table is set!" Who would not come to rejoice with the Son at such a glorious marriage? The day of rejoicing has come! The Bride has made herself ready!

Meditate and Pray: Sing about what our response should be to such a glorious invitation to dine with our Savior, and to taste of the good things of His table. Use hymn # 427:

*Amidst us our Belovèd stands,
And bids us view His piercèd hands;
Points to the wounded feet and side,
Blest emblems of the Crucified.*

*What food luxurious loads the board,
When at His table sits the Lord!
The wine how rich, the bread how sweet,
When Jesus deigns the guests to meet!*

*If now, with eyes defiled and dim,
We see the signs, but see not Him;
O may His love the scales displace,
And bid us see Him face to face!*

*Thou glorious Bridegroom of our hearts,
Thy present smile a heav'n imparts!
Oh lift the veil, if veil there be,
Let every saint Thy beauties see!*

Weds/Thurs: read Matthew 22:1-10 & Luke 14:15-24**Overcoming Cold Commitment**

The Parable of the Wedding Supper occurs in a different setting in Luke 14. There Jesus responds to one of the guests at the meal He is sharing, who exclaims rightly about what a blessing it will be to eat bread together with the Lord in the Kingdom of God (Luke 14:15). In response, Jesus speaks this parable about the meal that God will share with His redeemed people on the day of His return. As in Matthew 22, the response of the first ones invited, God's people of the Old Testament, the Jews, is very disappointing.

Note that the wedding guests are actually invited twice! It was commonplace in Jewish culture to get an initial invitation and then, as those already invited, to receive a second invitation at which time the servants of the host would come to escort them to the banquet, on the day of the event. For example, Haman is initially invited to dine with Queen Esther (Esther 5:8). Then, after receiving the terrifying news that the Queen's uncle has been favored instead of him, he must still go to the banquet when the servants arrive to escort him (Esther 6:14). Even though the banquet would seal his doom, Haman was obligated to go, since he had already said yes when first invited!

How terrible, then, that those who initially said yes to the king in our parable go back on their word and refuse God's second and third invitations! Their end *will be worse than that of Haman!* It would have been better for them to say no right off the bat, than to hypocritically agree to God's invite, and then to go back on their word!

Meditate and Pray: Lord, please intervene to cure what is a disease in our day as it was in the day of Jesus: the disease of wavering in commitment to the Lord. Our nation is full of those who at one time had a superficial zeal for religion but now appear distrustful and cold to God's ways. How many in our own families and neighborhoods have now turned away, making excuses for their lack of commitment. Have mercy upon us and our nation, we pray in Jesus' Name. Thank you Jesus that you knew it would be this way in Matthew 24:12: "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of many will grow cold." Most of all, thank you that you can restore the joy of our salvation, since you know our hearts. Please do so in our day. Amen.

Fri/Sat/Sun: Read Matthew 22:1-3; 22:11-14 and Luke 14:15-17**How can we dare refuse?**

Let's conclude this week's notes by reminding ourselves of the importance of festal or wedding invitations in the Old Testament. These invitations were a coveted sign of privilege - especially when it is the king who invites!

But let's begin at the beginning. How did the invitations go out to prospective guests? As Pastor Eric Alexander points out, there was no such thing as invitations by mail, e-mail or even an RSVP system. To be invited was simply a huge compliment, the implication being that *you would not be invited unless you had a special relationship to the family doing the inviting*. If you were among those friends and relatives honored by an invitation, the way the news would get to you would be through a courier, who would search you out to give you the invite. There was usually no such thing as a specific date for the celebration - unless it was the very next day, as in Esther 5:8 & 5:12. Why not a specific date? Because the very same courier who received your first thankful acceptance of the invitation *would return to bring you* when the date for the banquet actually came - remember Esther 6:14!

But, with our self-absorbed lives, one may ask: “What if there is a conflict in *my* schedule with the date of the proposed wedding?” Well, if the King invites you to the wedding feast for his son (Matthew 22:2), how could you dare refuse? His joyful invitation is all that matters!

Meditate and Pray: Father, make my heart a welcoming place for all the works of your Spirit so that, in the final day, it may welcome the return of the Lord Jesus and the Great Wedding Feast of the Lamb. Even so, Come, Lord Jesus!