

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

22 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. ³He 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. ⁶The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. ⁷The 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. ⁹So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ ¹⁰So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, 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. ¹²He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless.

¹³“Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie his 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.”

QUESTIONS

1. To whom and why is Jesus offering this parable?

When Matthew says “to them again” he is connecting this to the preceding verses in which Jesus is addressing the religious leaders, specifically the Pharisees. He is addressing their rejection of him as Messiah and God’s offering to others what should have been their invitation, (similarly to the Vineyard as in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants.)

2. The Parable is again told as an allegory (a story, poem or picture that can be interpreted to reveal hidden meanings, typically a moral or political one.) Identify the characters and things in the story.

- a. **Who is the king?** *God*
- b. **Who is the king’s son?** *Jesus*
- c. **Who is the bride?** *God’s people, Israel, later the Church*
- d. **Who are the servants sent out to invite the chosen guests?** *Prophets*
- e. **What does the wedding banquet represent?** *The covenant between God and God’s people*

3. How did the invited guests respond to the invitation? *They refused to come.*

4. **What did the king do next?** *He sent out more servants with a more urgent message that everything was ready, the guests needed to come to the wedding banquet.*
5. **What was the response of the invited guests to this second round of invitation?** *They paid no attention and went off - one to his field, another to his business. The rest of them seized his servants, mistreated them, and killed them.*
6. **How did the king react to the invited guest's treatment of his servants? What does this represent?** *The king was enraged and sent his army to destroy them and burned their cities. By the time that Matthew's readers received this gospel, Jesus' prophesy in this parable had come true, Jerusalem had been destroyed and the Temple rulers were out of power.*
7. **What did the king tell his servants to do? Who were they to invite now? What does that represent?** *The king sent them out to street corners to invite anyone they could find to fill the banquet, both good and bad. The kingdom of heaven was opened up to the Gentiles.*
8. **What does the king see when he enters the banquet hall? What does this represent?** *The king sees that one of the guests is not wearing a wedding garment. The meaning of this is that the guest, invited by the king to attend the banquet, did not bother to dress properly. In the early church, donning a new set of clothes after baptism was a sign of leaving behind one's old way of life and taking on the life of the Christian. This represents one who was feigning membership in the Church but had no intention of living for Christ.*
9. **What happens to the person who is not wearing a wedding robe? What does this represent?** *He is confronted by the king, and without any excuse, he was cast out of the wedding banquet. This represents how God will judge those who answer the invitation to follow Christ, but make no effort to live as a Christian,*
10. **What is Jesus' summary of this parable? What does he mean?** *Many are called, but few are chosen. Jesus is saying that the invitation is to all, but to really answer the call to discipleship means living as Jesus has taught us to live.*

DISCUSSION

This parable is intended for those who are in the kingdom of heaven. What lessons or warnings can we take from it?

It warns us against forgetting whose we are and that we are called by God to service. If we ignore what God calls for us to do, if we put our own interests ahead of God's then we are rejecting his invitation. If we fail to live as we are taught by Jesus to live, then we are not dressing for the part we are called to play in Jesus' kingdom.