

Marriage Feast

Matthew 22

Jesus entered Jerusalem with shouts of “Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord”. For the second time He cleansed the temple, this time Jesus says, “My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers”. In the earlier account of Jesus cleansing the temple in John 2:14-16, Jesus made a scourge of cords, drove them all out, turned over tables and said, “Take these things away, stop making “My Father’s house a house of merchandise”. It is interesting in John’s earlier account Jesus says, “My Father’s house” and now nearing the completion of His mission He says, “My house”. The chief priests and elders challenged Jesus’ authority and at the end of chapter 21, Jesus tells two parables. The parable of the two sons and the parable of the landowner.

The parable of the tenants (or landowner) and the parable of the marriage feast are closely connected, similar in structure and repeat the same themes. The landowner plants a vineyard, constructs a wall, digs a wine press and builds a tower and rents to it out to vine growers. At harvest, the landowner sends his slaves to receive his produce. The renters deal treacherously with the slaves beating one, killing another and stoning the third. The landowner then sends a larger group of slaves and the renters do the same thing to them. The landowner then sends his son thinking, “they will respect my son”. But the renters conspire to kill the son. They throw him out of the vineyard and kill him. The vineyard is God’s nation Israel. The slaves were the Old Testament prophets that were rarely welcomed, frequently mistreated put into stocks and murdered. The Son is a clear reference to Jesus Christ, sent by the Father but rejected and eventually killed by those who should have honored Him. Jesus says, “Therefore I say to you the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and be given to a nation producing fruit of it”. The religious leaders clearly understood Jesus message but instead of repenting they sought to silence Him.

In today’s chapter, Jesus tells another parable, the parable of the wedding feast. Again, He prefaces the parable with, “the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king, who gave a wedding feast for his son. He sends out his slaves to call those who had been invited but they were unwilling to come. He sends other slaves who told those invited, the dinner is prepared, the fattened livestock are butchered, all is ready, come to the wedding feast. But they payed no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business and the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them and killed them. The enraged king sends his army, destroys “those murders” and sets their city on fire. The king then tells his slaves, “those who were invited were not worthy” so he invites as many as the slaves can find and invites them. What a motley group of characters come, some good others evil and “the wedding hall is filled with guests”. Those who came prepared for the feast but there was one man, identified by the king “without wedding clothes.” The king gives him an opportunity to explain himself. He doesn’t say, “I’m sorry, your highness I didn’t have time to go home and prepare”, he is speechless. Without the proper attire he could not remain at the feast. The king has him bound “hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Those were invited would not come. When invited a second time, they joked about it, did not take it seriously, went about their business with the exception of those hated the king. They were the ones who mistreated and killed his servants.

This parable, spoken during the week when Jesus would pay the penalty for sin thereby providing a pathway to reconciliation begs the question, which group are you in. Are you in the “Yes! I am coming” group or in the “No I can not make it” group. Are you in the excited group who received the unexpected invitation, goes home, prepares and comes to the wedding feast or are you in the group that comes unprepared and is cast out? The Lord will judge those who are worthy of attendance and judge each as He did the man who was not dressed in wedding attire. There is only one garment acceptable for this wedding, it is the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, genuine sanctification, “without which no one will see the Lord”. (Mat 5:20) The wedding feast has been prepared; the wedding hall is filled but the feast has not begun. One day, the ever present, persistent and abiding presence of sin will be dealt with, once and for all. After the day of judgment, when God judges the living and the dead, those who are His will enjoy unbroken fellowship with Him forever. Jesus closes this parable with a sobering thought, “For many are called, but few are chosen”. Here we see a balance between God’s sovereignty and man’s free will. there will be a day when we will dine at the marriage supper of the lamb and see the Lord face to face. Will you be there?

1. What is the kingdom of heaven like according to verses 1-10? How did those who were invited react? What did the king do and how did the invited react the second time? How did the king respond this time? Explain verse 8, why were they unworthy? Who then was invited?

2. Outline and explain verses 11-14. What was the problem the king identified? What did the king ask of the man and what was his answer? What did the king do to the man? Why? Explain verse 14. What was the king looking for and what does the parable mean?

3. Read Matthew 22:15-22. Who came to trap Jesus? Who were the Herodians? What was their approach and what was their goal? How did Jesus respond and why did they “marvel” at His response?

4. Read verses 23-33. Who came to test Jesus? What was their presupposition and their question? What was Jesus answer, how did the multitude react? Why?

5. Read verses 34-40. What happened after Jesus answered the Sadducees? Who asked the next question? What was the question, why was it considered a difficult question? What did Jesus ask the Pharisees, what was their response and what was Jesus follow-up question? How did they answer?