

“The Parable of the Wedding Garment”

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I want to explain a parable that has left people scratching their heads saying, “I don’t get it!” It’s the parable of the wedding garment but I like to call it, “The guy who was thrown into hell for wearing the wrong clothes.”

Read Matthew 22:1-14 It doesn’t seem to make sense. Why would the king throw someone into hell for not wearing the right clothes?

Lyn Cryderman was a businessman who was tired of wearing the same old dark business suit to work every day. He asked wife to buy him some new clothes that were more in style. She loved buying clothes, so she was more than happy to go shopping for him.

A few days later Lyn noticed a stack of unfamiliar clothes on his side of the closet. He pulled out a sweater and held it up in front of the mirror. It wasn’t exactly his style, but he knew his wife knew more about what was in style than he did. So he put it on and went off to work to make a major business presentation that day.

That evening he came home and walked in the door wearing the sweater he wore at his business presentation. She looked at him with horror. She said, “You didn’t wear THAT to the meeting did you?” He said, “Yes, I did. Isn’t this what you bought me?”

She said, “No, those clothes you found are clothes that are donated to the mission. Didn’t the rolled up collar and the frilly cuffs give you a hint that you were wearing a woman’s sweater??!”

It can be really embarrassing if we’re not dressed properly for an important event, can’t it? In this parable we find that a man isn’t wearing the right clothes at a wedding feast, so as a punishment the king has him thrown into hell! Doesn’t that seem like an unjust penalty for wearing the wrong clothes?

He wasn’t a murderer. He was just wearing the wrong clothes. Is that so bad? Of course, there’s more to this parable than it appears. Parables always have a deeper meaning. Let’s read it again.

Matthew 22:2 “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king, who gave a wedding feast for his son.” Notice that Jesus is teaching us something about heaven by comparing it to a wedding feast. The king in this parable represents God the Father and his son is obviously Jesus. Now remember when you study parables that a parable is an earthly story to convey a heavenly truth. The wedding feast represents the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 22:3 “And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come.”

In those days, the host would send out a first invitation to a wedding feast to let them know they were invited and then a second invitation when everything was ready.

So here the king sends out his second invitation saying the dinner has been prepared and come to the feast. But instead of accepting the invitation, the invited guests ignored it and went their way, doing business as usual. Now this is important. Even though these people were invited by the king, they ignored the invitation.

Many people today ignore the invitation to be saved and go to heaven.

Matthew 22:8 Then he said to his slaves, “The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy.” Why weren’t they worthy? Because they rejected the king’s invitation! **Matthew. 22:9** “Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.” The king had prepared a feast to honor his son and he wanted lots of people there. So instead of just inviting a select few, the king now opens up the invitation to everyone. He says, “As many as you can find, invite them to the wedding feast.”

So the slaves go out and main highways and every person they saw, they would say, “The King would like to invite you to a wedding feast given in honor of his son.”

Matthew 22:10 “And the 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.”

It was unheard of...that a king would invite a common person or a stranger to such a special event. But because the first group of guests rejected the invitation, he opened it up, not to just good people, but evil people as well. The king was invited EVIL people to the feast given for his son! Doesn’t that seem odd? They are inviting prostitutes, and thieves, and murderers, and drug addicts to sit down at his table.

This proves that God loves everyone, no matter how evil they may be. God wants everyone to be saved, no matter what they’ve done. None of us are worthy to attend the wedding feast but we go because the King has invited to us. We are all sinners.

So many people came that the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests. Lots of people off the streets accepted the king’s invitation.

Matthew 22:11-12 “But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw there a man not dressed in wedding clothes, and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?’”

Now we come to the really weird part. When the king looks over the dinner guests, he sees a man who isn’t dressed in wedding clothes. So he asks him how he got in without wedding clothes. The guy is speechless and doesn’t know how to answer.

Everyone else at the feast was wearing wedding clothes, so this man stuck out because of the way he was dressed. Now to understand this, we need to know some background information about the customs of that day.

In those days, **everyone attending a wedding feast was given a robe by the host**. So when the king invited everyone on the highways and byways to the wedding feast, he had to pay for enough robes for every invited guest to have one. Beggars would be clothes with robes of royalty. The robes were given to the guests but they had to be willing to change clothes. They had to take off their old clothes and put on the new clothes. So even a beggar could wear a new robe to the wedding feast.

Remember, the whole purpose for this feast was to honor the son. They honored the son by wearing the robe. The only thing the king asked of his invited guests was to **accept the free gift and put it on the robe**. Obviously, the robe in this parable represents something important—the robe of righteousness. Unless we are wearing the king’s robe of righteousness we are unworthy to stand in His presence.



Isaiah 61:10 says, “For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness.”

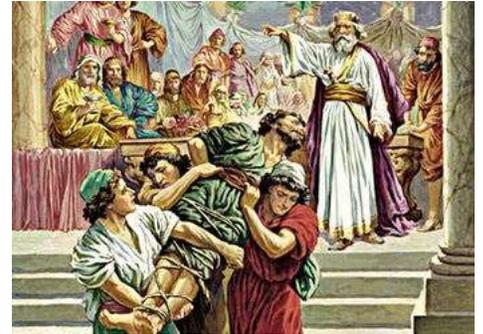
Revelation 7:9 John sees a vision of heaven and says, “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes.”

What does this tell us? It’s God’s righteousness, not ours, that gets us into heaven. And the way we become righteous is by accepting His free gift—His robe of righteousness.

So the king asks him why he isn’t wearing the robe that he had freely provided. The guy can’t come up with a good excuse. He can’t say, “I couldn’t afford it” because the king had already paid for it. He had no excuse. He rejected the gift and dishonored his son.

Matthew 22:13 The king calls the servants and says, “Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

So now we understand what the parable means. He was thrown into hell because he rejected the king’s free gift of righteousness.



There are 3 groups of people mentioned in this parable.

Everyone is in one of these 3 groups. Which group are you in?

1. Those who are invited, but aren’t willing to come.

God wants everyone to be saved so He invites everyone to come to Him. But the sad fact is that many people aren’t willing to come. They won’t make it into heaven—not because God didn’t invite them—but because they refused His invitation.

2. Those who want to come, but don’t want to change

The man in this parable represents people who want to go to heaven but they don’t want to change. The purpose of the wedding feast was to honor the King’s Son not to just feed people. Many people want to go to the wedding feast just to eat the food. They want to go to heaven but they don’t care anything about Jesus.

When I was a kid growing up in New Orleans, my friends and I were playing barefooted outside of a Catholic church where they just had a wedding. Someone at the reception asked us if we wanted some cake. We said, “Sure.” So we walked into the church, dirty and barefooted, and ate the wedding cake of people we didn’t even know.

I can still remember how out of place we felt. The reason we attended the wedding reception was to eat cake—not because we wanted to honor the wedding party.

The man in the parable wanted to eat the king’s food but he didn’t want to change clothes. Many people want to go to heaven but they don’t want to change their hearts. They want to keep living the way they want and don’t want honor the Son of God by living to please Him. They don’t want to wear the robe of righteousness.

3. Those who are willing to come and are willing to change.

Two things were required to participate in the wedding feast. First, they had to accept to the invitation. Second, they had to accept and to put on the king’s robe. The robe is the

righteousness that only Jesus Christ can provide. **To put on the new clothes, you have to be willing to get rid of our old clothes—your own righteousness.** The willingness to change clothes is called “repentance.”

A friend of mine lives in New Mexico. One day he ate a meal in a restaurant in Santa Fe. He said the tablecloth was dirty, the waitress’ uniform was dirty, she was rude, and the food was terrible. He said he would never go back that restaurant again.

A few months later he drove by the restaurant and it had a sign out front that said, “Under New Management.” He decided to give it one more chance. When he walked into the restaurant, a hostess greeted him. His tablecloth was clean, the waitress was neat and friendly, and the food was excellent. It was the same restaurant, but the new manager had cleaned it up. When we repent, we say, “Lord, I want you to be the new manager of my life. I’m asking you to come in and clean me up.”

Matthew 22:14 “For many are called but few are chosen.”

Although many were invited to the wedding feast, only those who wore the robe were chosen by the king. For those of you study theology, you know there are two different views about atonement.

Limited Atonement says that Jesus died on the Cross, He died only for “the elect” or those who have been chosen by God to be saved. In other words, you have been predestined by God to be saved and you have no choice in the matter. According to this view, when Jesus died on the cross He shed His blood only for those people who have been predestined and not for the whole world. The other view is called **Unlimited** Atonement. It says when Jesus died on the cross He paid for the sins of the entire world, and that anyone can choose to accept Christ and be saved.

So which view is correct? The answer is found in this parable. Notice that the king invited everyone the wedding feast—even those who didn’t want to come. The king “called” them to come to his banquet. They had a free will to say no to the invitation, and many of them rejected the invitation. The king didn’t reject them—they rejected the king. Because of their own refusal they were not chosen. The king accepted everyone who accepted the invitation and put on the robe. So the answer is, Jesus died for the entire world and not just a few. **1 John 2:2** says, “He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.”

So Jesus died for the entire world (that’s “many are called”) but He chooses those who want to be saved (that’s “few are chosen.”)

An army general asked his soldiers, “Whoever wants to volunteer to go on the mission with me, step forward.” A third of the soldiers stepped forward and separating themselves from the other soldiers. The general went up to each soldier who stepped forward, “I choose you and you and you....” He chose everyone who wanted to be chosen, but he didn’t choose anyone who didn’t volunteer. He gave them their free will, but he did the choosing. [Click here to find out how to be chosen.](#)

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