

MATTHEW 22:1-14

THE INVITATION TO LIFE

Introduction:

God really knows how to give a party! His saving work in Christ has a lot in common with a party or banquet. Both are happy occasions and celebrations. Jesus used party language in describing the saving realities of the kingdom of heaven. It is an occasion put together by the Father, the King of eternity, to honor His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

This helpful story came during the last weeks of our Lord's ministry. He gave it in response to the rejection He had experienced from Israel. He wanted them to understand just how serious their rejection was. But it is not just a story about the Jews and the Gospel: it also a story for us. It is in your best interest to understand this parable and its application to your life. You need to understand how serious the King is about honoring His Son.

The emphasis in this story is upon the invitation to the banquet and what you do with it. Let's just look at the more obvious lessons that Jesus sets forth.

I. GOD SENDS THE INVITATION TO EVERYONE.

The invitation is to a marriage banquet for the King's Son. Obviously in the parable, God is the King, and Jesus is the Son. It is no small claim that Jesus makes for Himself. He is claiming to be the royal son of the eternal King.

The King has planned a banquet to celebrate the marriage of His Son. The saving work of the Son is so joyous and wonderful that it is like participating in a wonderful banquet of love. In this banquet the King is honoring His Son, so He invites people to join Him in honoring His Son.

1. He sent it to the Jews first.

This is the first part of the parable. The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son,³ and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come.⁴ Again, he sent out other servants, saying, "Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; ^bmy oxen and fatted cattle *are* killed, and all things *are* ready. Come to the wedding."¹

This is the invitation that went to the nation of Israel, but they rejected it.

The invitation makes clear just how far the King has gone in preparation. He has spared no cost—He is honoring His Son.

The King is determined that there will be guests to honor His Son, so He extends the invitation to others.

This is all a matter of history. It is a tragic story of a missed opportunity.

Jewish history has never been the same—they refused the King’s party and refused to honor His Son, and have been paying the price ever since.

2. He sends it to everyone now.

‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not ^dworthy. ⁹ Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.’ ¹⁰ So those servants went out into the highways and ^egathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding *hall* was filled with guests.²

We are to understand from this that the invitation is now extended to the

whole human family. Race, moral background, gender, religious

background—none of these are to make any difference. Everyone is invited.

Jesus summarized this in the statement, “Many are called, but few

are chosen.” The many “called” are the invited. “Called” is used here

in the sense of an invitation.

So this is first lesson that we learn—the invitation to enjoy God’s salvation

has gone out to everyone. Are you aware that you have been invited by the

King of history and heaven to join Him in honoring His Beloved Son? What

has your response been? Do you realize that your eternal destiny depends

upon what you do with this invitation? It does! O it does!

II. SOME REJECT THE INVITATION.

This is central in the first part of the parable. The initial response to the wonderful invitation as it went out to the Jews was rejection.

1. Some reject it indifferently.

But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, and another to his business.³

This was the response of much of Israel. They were so busy doing their thing that they just threw the invitation into a waste can and went on about their business. Tragically this is still the response of many in our community.

They do not take the invitation seriously. They ignore the eternal implications. They are so busy pursuing their career, raising their family, buying a home, and enjoying the pleasures of life that they have no time to give consideration to the invitation. They may not realize what they are saying to the King of the universe when they reject an opportunity to honor His Son.

2. Some reject it violently.

And the rest seized his servants, treated *them*¹ spitefully, and killed *them*.⁴

This describes the response of the core leadership of Israel, the official class.

They not only rejected the invitation, they greeted the messengers who brought the invitation with violence. This began in the Gospels, but really

³*The New King James Version*. 1996, c1982 (Mt 22:5-6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴*The New King James Version*. 1996, c1982 (Mt 22:6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

picked up speed in the Acts of the Apostles. They zealously pursued to death those who were delivering the message.

There are some in every generation like this. This was the response of the Communist world. It is still the response of the Communist dominated nations, and of the Muslim world. They not only reject the invitation, they kill everyone who delivers the invitation if they can.

But the rejection of the invitation is not without consequences—temporally and eternally. All you have to do is consider the judgment that fell upon the nation of Israel when they rejected the Gospel.

Did you understand what Jesus was saying about the consequence of their actions? “The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.” His Son had been spurned and dishonored!

His generosity has been despised! What do you expect?

III. SOME ABUSE THE INVITATION.

This is the part of the parable that concerns me the most. When a person rejects the gospel, it is rather obvious. But who is this man that shows up at the banquet without the wedding garment? What message does he suggest to us? “But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there ^fwho did not have on a wedding garment. ¹² So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was ^gspeechless. ¹³⁵

⁵*The New King James Version*. 1996, c1982 (Mt 22:11-13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

1. They appear to have accepted the invitation.

It would appear that the man had accepted the invitation. At least he shows up at the banquet. But when the King comes to inspect the guests, this man is singled out. He obviously is not dressed like the others. Everyone else is dressed in a beautiful white garment that the King has provided, but this man is dressed in his street clothes. He probably came directly from the market place, so he has on the clothes of the market place.

The King asks him, “Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?” That He addresses him as “Friend” probably indicates that he does not know him.

Evidently the man thought in his own mind that he was ready to participate in the banquet. But when confronted by the King, he is speechless. He was utterly without excuse. He was muzzled—there was nothing for him to say. What are to learn from this?

2. They want to come on their terms.

This is evidently the lesson we are to learn; the warning we are to receive. This man thought that his garments were adequate. Why go to the trouble of changing clothes. This meant that he was not taking the banquet as seriously as he should have. This is the marriage banquet of the King’s Son. This is

not your ordinary, every day party. And the king provided what was required—you did not have to bring your own. Mistakenly the poor fellow thought it was enough to have an invitation.

Are you sure that you have the garment that is required to participate in

God's great banquet for His Son? He has provided the garment of salvation for everyone. Jesus may have been interpreting a statement by the prophet Zephaniah,

^hBe silent in the presence of the Lord GOD;

ⁱFor the day of the LORD *is* at hand,

For ^jthe LORD has prepared a sacrifice;

He has ⁷invited His guests.

⁸ “And it shall be,

In the day of the LORD's sacrifice,

That I will punish ^kthe princes and the king's children,

And all such as are clothed with foreign apparel.

The man in the parable was there in foreign apparel.

The prophets made it clear that God does provide the garments of salvation for His people. “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness.” (Isaiah 61:10)

Do you feel the force of Jesus is teaching? The man thought all he needed was an invitation. But there is more to it than just having a invitation.

IV. A FEW ACCEPT THE INVITATION.

“Few” is the word that Jesus used. “Few are chosen.” The few is in contrast to the many that are invited. What can we say about the few?

1. They come to the party.

This is significant. They indicate their desire to be a part of God’s kingdom by coming to the party. Have you accepted the invitation?

2. They accept the garment.

They do what the man in the parable did not do—what those who enjoyed the banquet did. They acknowledge that they are not ready to enter the banquet dressed in their street clothes, and accept the garment that is so freely offered.

Your reputation and good character may be enough to get you into the best places in this town. It may get you elected man of the year. It might even get you elected to public office. But if you are going to get into heaven, you will have to accept the garments of salvation that God provides. You will have to acknowledge that you are a sinner like the rest of us, and accept God’s wonderful saving grace. This is what the “few” have done.

3. They honor the Son.

This is what the banquet is all about it! It is about honoring the Son. This is why the garment is provided.

This was the problem with the Jews—they wanted the salvation, but they did not want to honor Jesus as the Son of God. They were offended by Him and His claims. This was a part of the problem of the man who abused the invitation. He wanted to treat it as though it were just another party—not so!

The Father is honoring the Son.

Let's review.

You have received the invitation.

You have probably responded to the invitation in one way or another.

Have you responded to the invitation in a way that will give your privilege of entrance into the eternal celebration of the Sonship of Jesus?

Are you dressed in the garments of salvation that the Sovereign King provides? Are you prepared to give the proper honor to the Son that He deserves?

Yes, you are among the invited, but will you be among the few that are chosen.