

# The Wedding Feast

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[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

In Matthew 22:1-14, Jesus gave the parable of the wedding feast. He began by saying that the kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding feast for his son. The king in this parable symbolized God the Father, and the king's son symbolized Jesus Himself.

The king sent his servants to those who had been invited to the wedding feast, telling them to come, but they refused. Those who had been invited symbolized the Jews, at this point in the parable. Then the king sent other servants to those who had been invited, telling them that everything was ready and bidding them again to come to the wedding feast. However, they disregarded the invitation and went off to tend to their own personal pursuits. Others who were invited seized his servants, mistreated them, and killed them.

When the king heard about this, he was enraged. He sent out his armies, destroyed those who murdered his servants and set their city on fire, as we see in verse 7. The king's wrath here could be an allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army, which occurred in A.D. 70. (Consider Matthew 24:1-2).

As the parable continued, we see that the king told his servants that those who were invited did not deserve to come. He then commanded them to go out on the highways and invite as many as they found there to the wedding feast. The servants did as they were told and gathered everyone they could find, and the wedding hall was filled with guests, “both evil and good” (verse 10). So now we

see in verses 9-10 that the invitation to the wedding feast includes others besides those who were first invited (the Jews), which is to say that the invitation is also extended to the Gentile races as well. (Consider Isaiah 49:6, Acts 13:47, 26:23 Revelation 5:9, and others).

In verse 11 we see that the king, who had prepared the wedding feast for his son, noticed that there was a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. The wedding clothes in the parable symbolize the righteousness of Christ, without which no one will enter the kingdom of Heaven. The king told his servants to tie the man up and throw him outside into the darkness, where there would be “weeping and gnashing of teeth”, which signifies eternal separation from God.

Within this parable, we see three different responses to the invitation to the wedding feast that are manifested by those who will ultimately be excluded from the feast. The first reaction is one of indifference, as illustrated in verses 3-5. The second reaction is one of hostility, as we see from verse 6. The third reaction is illustrated by the man who did in fact accept the invitation, and he came to the feast, but he was found by the king not to be wearing wedding clothes.

The man who was not wearing wedding clothes heard the invitation to come to the wedding feast, which signifies the Gospel message, and he accepted the invitation, symbolizing an apparent conversion. He was found by the king among other guests at the feast who were attired in wedding clothes, and these other guests symbolize genuine believers. However, because he was found to be not wearing wedding clothes, and again the wedding clothes signify the righteousness of Christ, “the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’” (Matthew 22:13).

The man who was not wearing wedding clothes is symbolic of those who will identify themselves as being a believer, but they are in fact they are unregenerate. They are the false prophets that Jesus warned us about in Matthew 7:15-23. Although they profess to be Christians, they are in fact ravenous wolves in sheep’s clothing. Jesus said that we would recognize them by their fruits (Matthew 7:15-16). They are bad trees that cannot bear good fruit (Matthew 7:17-20). Even though they will acknowledge Jesus as Lord, and they will claim to have done many good works in His name, they will ultimately hear from Him the words: “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.” (Matthew 7:21-23).

The man at the wedding feast who was not wearing clothes is like the tares mixed in among the wheat in Jesus' parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24-30). The wheat, symbolizing genuine believers, bears a harvest of good fruit, but the tares, symbolizing the unregenerate, cannot bear fruit. Jesus taught that the wheat will be gathered into the landowner's barn, but the tares will be gathered into bundles to be burned.

The man who was not wearing wedding clothes is also like a branch that bears no fruit in Jesus' parable of the vine and its branches (John 15:1-8). Jesus said that such branches will be cut off and thrown into the fire.

The man who was not wearing wedding clothes is also like the foolish virgins in Jesus' parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). The foolish virgins took their lamps to meet the bridegroom at the wedding feast, but they took no oil for their lamps. The lamps in this parable symbolize a profession of faith in Christ, and the oil symbolizes the righteousness of Christ, which is possessed only by genuine believers. Just as the foolish virgins were excluded from the wedding feast because they had no oil for their lamps, so also the man without wedding clothes was excluded, because neither the foolish virgins nor the man without wedding clothes possessed the righteousness of Christ.

Jesus concluded the parable of the wedding feast with a summary of the lesson to be drawn from this parable, when He said: ***“For many are called, but few are chosen.”*** (Matthew 22:14, emphasis added).

When Jesus said that many are called, He was teaching that many are called outwardly, or invited to the wedding feast, when they hear or read the proclamation of the Gospel message. Many are called outwardly to repent of their sins and come to Him, but even though “many” are called in this way, only “few” are chosen. These few who are chosen are God's elect, who hear not only the outward call for men to repent of their sins and believe in Christ, but through the hearing of the word of God they are also called with the inward, effectual calling of God which always results in the regeneration of those who receive it. (Consider John 6:44, 6:65, 10:3, 10:27, Romans 8:29-30).

Many may hear the outward call of the proclamation of the Gospel message, but as Paul wrote to Thessalonian believers, he knew that God had chosen them because “our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1 Thessalonians 1:5). Those who receive God's calling hear the outward proclamation of the Gospel, and it comes to them

not in word only, “but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.” Here is the evidence manifested by those whom God has chosen, those who have received God’s calling to faith in His Son Jesus Christ.

Even though many are called outwardly, as Jesus taught in Matthew 22:14, only few are chosen by God to come to faith in Christ. All of these chosen, or God’s elect, will, through the hearing of the Gospel message, be called with His effectual calling to faith in His Son Jesus Christ, and they will all indeed come to faith in Him. This effectual calling of God’s elect is what Jesus spoke about when He said: “All that the Father gives Me *will* come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.” (John 6:37, emphasis added). This effectual calling is the “drawing” of an individual by God the Father to faith in His Son, as Jesus taught in John 6:44.