

Studies in the Gospel of Matthew # 62

Responding to a Royal Invitation

Matt 22:1-14

Introduction:

1. This parable is the third in Jesus' trilogy of judgment parables given in response to the Jewish religious leaders who maliciously challenged His authority ([21:23](#), [28-30](#), [33-39](#)).
2. It is among the most dramatic and powerful of all His parables, which, though directed specifically at those leaders and all unbelieving Israel whom they represented, also has far-reaching significance and application for subsequent times, certainly including our own.
3. For three years Jesus had been preaching and teaching the gospel of the kingdom, which included proclaiming Himself as the Messiah, the Son of God and Savior of the world.
4. He had been offering Himself and His kingdom to the people of Israel, His own people, the chosen people of God.
 - a. But at the end of those three years, all but a handful of Jews had rejected Him.
 - b. Jesus had always been popular with the masses but their acceptance of Him was for the most part superficial and selfish.
 - c. The multitudes were awed by Jesus' straightforward, authoritative teaching, which was in refreshing contrast to the confusing, legalistic, and complicated tradition taught by their scribes and Pharisees.
 - d. They were even more awed by His healing miracles, which had brought restored health, sanity, and even life to so many countless thousands of their friends and loved ones.
5. They doubtlessly appreciated the fact that Jesus never took financial advantage of them, never taking payment for any supernatural good work He did.
6. On the contrary, He was always giving to them freely and had on several occasions miraculously fed thousands.
7. They deeply admired Jesus for His humble, self-giving love and compassion, and they must have rejoiced when He rebuked and embarrassed their hypocritical, self-righteous leaders, who looked down on them in contemptuous superiority.
8. How wonderful, they must have thought, that the Messiah not only is so powerful but also so compassionate.
9. But when the people finally realized the kind of Messiah Jesus was, and especially that He had no plans to deliver them from the Roman oppressors, their acclamation quickly turned to rejection—as is evident in their change of mood from Sunday to Thursday of this last Passover week of Jesus' ministry.
10. Therefore, as He continued to respond to the Jewish leaders in the Temple, where He was teaching on Wednesday morning ([21:23](#)), it was also to the multitudes that the third judgment parable was directed.
11. Jesus here continues to respond to the bitter challenge of the chief priests and scribes ([21:23](#))
12. They probably heard little of what Jesus said because they were unalterably bent on his arrest and execution

I. The Cause for the Invitation – vs 2-3

2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, **3** And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

1. Jesus mentioned the kingdom of heaven again
 - a) *The Jews believed that the kingdom of heaven was reserved exclusively for them and maybe a few Gentile proselytes*
 - b) *Those who were listening knew that Jesus was talking about them*

BYZ **Matthew 22:1** Καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς πάλιν εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ἐν παραβολαῖς, λέγων,

Again in parables (palin en parabolais). Matthew has already given two on this occasion (The Two Sons, The Wicked Husbandmen). He alone gives this Parable of the Marriage Feast of the King's Son. It is somewhat similar to that of

BYZ **Matthew 22:2** Ὁμοιώθη ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀνθρώπῳ βασιλεῖ, ὅστις ἐποίησεν γάμους τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ·

A marriage feast (gamous). The plural, as here (Matthew 22:2-4, 9), is very common in the papyri for the wedding festivities (the several acts of feasting) which lasted for days, seven in Judges 14:17. The very phrase here, gamous poiein, occurs in the Doric of Thera about B.C. 200. The singular gamos is common in the papyri for the wedding contract, but Field (Notes, p. 16) sees no difference between the singular here in Matthew 22:8 and the plural (see also Genesis 29:22; Esther 9:22; 1 Macc. 10:58).

BYZ **Matthew 22:3** καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ καλέσαι τοὺς κεκλημένους εἰς τοὺς γάμους, καὶ οὐκ ἤθελον ἐλθεῖν.

To call them that were bidden (kalesai tous keklēmenous). "Perhaps an unconscious play on the words, lost in both A.V. and Rev., to call the called" (Vincent). It was a Jewish custom to invite a second time the already invited (Esther 5:8; Esther 6:14). The prophets of old had given God's invitation to the Jewish people. Now the Baptist and Jesus had given the second invitation that the feast was ready.

And they would not come (kai ouk ēthelon elthein). This negative imperfect characterizes the stubborn refusal of the Jewish leaders to accept Jesus as God's Son (John 1:11). This is "The Hebrew Tragedy" (Conder).

II. The Character of the Invitation – vs 3

3 And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

1. The word "bidden" is translated from the same word as "call."
2. A wedding invitation was 2fold in character in the East in those days.
3. The first call told the invited people to get ready for the wedding
4. Then a second call came when the wedding was actually ready to be performed and the feast was ready for the guests.
5. Thus the excuses for rejecting the invitation, which we shall see next, were increased in condemnation because the rejecters had been forewarned by a previous invitation to get ready.
6. They had no excuse, for they knew the wedding was about to occur.

III. The Contempt for the Invitation – vs 3-6

- The wedding invitation did not fall on receptive ears, but was met with contempt and rejection.

A. The Refusal in the Contempt – vs 3

3 And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

- Contempt for the invitation was first shown in the refusal to accept it.
- This was a shocking situation and the hearers were probably thinking – “Who would do such a thing?”
- We note the character of the refusal.
 1. It was Unkind.
 - a) *The rejecters should have refused when the invitation was 1st given*
 - b) *Waiting until the second invitation was most unkind.*
 2. It was Unfaithful.
 - a) *Accepting the first invitation meant that to reject the second invitation was going back on your word.*
 3. It was Unashamed.
 - a) *The refusal offered no excuses, which showed they were unashamed to be so rude as to reject the invitation.*
 4. It was Unremitting.
 - a) *The words "would not" are in the imperfect tense meaning the refusal was repeated, persistent, unremitting.*

B. The Remonstrance for the Contempt – vs 4

4 Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.

- When the invitation was turned down, other servants were sent to remonstrate with the rejecters to try to convince them to accept the invitation.
 1. Grace in the Remonstrance.
 - a) *The king could have send armies and destroyed those who refused the invitation, but he gives them another chance to accept*
 - b) *The response of the king here is as amazing as the responses of the guests*
 - c) *Kings are not known for their humility and patience*
 2. Generosity in the Remonstrance.
 - a) *"I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed."*
 - b) *The description of the feast is given, which emphasizes the generosity of the king and which should encourage the acceptance of the invitation.*
 3. Goading in the Remonstrating.
 - a) *"Come unto the marriage."*
 - b) *The remonstrating ends with an exhortation to accept the invitation.*
 - c) *There is urgency in this exhortation/goading.*
 - d) *When a meal is ready, we must not delay to come to the table; or we can miss the meal.*

BYZ **Matthew 22:4** Πάλιν ἀπέστειλεν ἄλλους δούλους, λέγων, Εἶπατε τοῖς κεκλημένοις. Ἴδού, τὸ ἀριστόν μου ἡτοίμασα, οἱ ταῦροί μου καὶ τὰ σιτιστὰ τεθυμένα, καὶ πάντα ἔτοιμα· δεῦτε εἰς τοὺς γάμους.
My dinner (to ariston mou). It is breakfast, not dinner. In Luke 14:12 both ariston (breakfast) and deipnon (dinner) are used. This noon or midday meal, like the French breakfast at noon, was sometimes called deipnon mesēbrinon (midday dinner or luncheon). The regular dinner (deipnon) came in the evening. The confusion arose from applying ariston to the early morning meal and then to the noon meal (some not eating an earlier meal). In John 21:12, 15 aristaō is used of the early morning meal, "Break your fast" (aristēsate). When ariston was applied to luncheon, like the Latin prandium, akratisma was the term for the early breakfast.
My fatlings (ta sitista). Verbal from sitizō, to feed with wheat or other grain, to fatten. Fed-up or fatted animals.

C. The Reproach in the Contempt – vs 5

5 But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:

1. The remonstrating failed and further contempt was heaped on the invitation in the form of reproach.
2. The words translated "made light of it" mean to neglect something.
3. This shows contempt in that it says the invitation is not important.
4. They had other things they would rather do.
5. This represents Israel
 - a) *The king is God*
 - b) *The invited guests were His chosen people – Israel*
 - c) *The wedding feast represented God's promised blessing to Israel*
 - d) *These indifferent guests represent people who were preoccupied with daily living and personal pursuits*

D. The Rancor in the Contempt – vs 6

6 And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

1. The "remnant" (the rejecters who were not involved in going to their farms or places of business), treated the servants cruelly shaming them ("spitefully") and killing ("slew") the servants.
2. Servants of the Lord may meet up with cruel treatment when they declare God's message.

E. The Retribution for the Contempt – vs 7

7 But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

- The contemptuous reception of the invitation resulted in retribution upon those who rejected the invitation.
 1. Awareness for the Retribution – "king heard thereof"
 - a) *The king's awareness reminds us of God's omniscience.*
 - b) *Men cannot sin and conceal it from God.*
 - c) *He knows all and that means judgment for the sinner.*
 2. Anger for the Retribution – "he was wroth"
 - a) *And the anger was justified, for the contempt was unwarranted.*
 - b) *And when God gets angry, there will be retribution on evil men.*
 - c) *And "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Ps 7:11).*
 - d) *God's patience does have a limit*
 - e) *Ge 6:3 And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man...*
 3. Afflicting in the Retribution – "destroyed those murderers"
 - a) *The judgment for the contempt was severe, but the severity fit the crime, for the contempt included murder as well as mocking.*
 - b) *Sinners will be judged according to their sin.*

IV. The Change in the Invitation – vs 8-10

- The rejection of the invitation, in spite of the remonstrating, resulted in a change being made in the invitation by the king.
- This change speaks of the change in which the Gospel was offered to the Gentiles after the Jews rejected Christ.

A. The Counsel for the Change – vs 8

8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

- The counsel for the change involved the wedding and the wicked.
 1. The Wedding. – "the wedding is ready"
 - a) *There is a note of urgency here.*
 - b) *The readiness of the wedding emphasizes the urgency of getting a crowd quickly for the wedding.*
 2. The Wicked. – "were not worthy"
 - a) *None of us are worthy of the Gospel, but "not worthy" here speaks of disregard of opportunity.*

BYZ **Matthew 22:5** Οἱ δὲ ἀμελήσαντες ἀπῆλθον, ὁ μὲν εἰς τὸν ἴδιον ἀγρὸν, ὁ δὲ εἰς τὴν ἐμπορίαν αὐτοῦ·

Made light of it (amelēsantes). Literally, neglecting, not caring for. They may even have ridiculed the invitation, but the verb does not say so. However, to neglect an invitation to a wedding feast is a gross discourtesy.

One to his own farm (hos men eis ton idion agron) or field, another to his merchandise (hos de epi tēn emporian autou) only example in the N.T., from emporos, merchant, one who travels for traffic (emporeuomai), a drummer.

BYZ **Matthew 22:6** οἱ δὲ λοιποὶ κρατήσαντες τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ ὕβρισαν καὶ ἀπέκτειναν.

BYZ **Matthew 22:7** Καὶ ἀκούσας ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐκεῖνος ὠργίσθη, καὶ πέμψας τὰ στρατεύματα αὐτοῦ ἀπώλεσεν τοὺς φονεῖς ἐκείνους, καὶ τὴν πόλιν αὐτῶν ἐνέπρησεν.

BYZ **Matthew 22:8** Τότε λέγει τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ, Ὁ μὲν γάμος ἐτοιμὸς ἐστίν, οἱ δὲ κεκλημένοι οὐκ ἦσαν ἄξιοι.

B. The Commission for the Change – vs 9

9 Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

- The commission sounds much like the Gospel commission.
 1. The Prompting - "Go ye."
 - a) This means to go now.
 - b) This is like the Great Commission
 2. The Place - "Into the highways."
 - a) This opens the proclaiming of the Gospel to all peoples.
 3. The People - "As many as ye shall find."
 - a) Reach as many as possible with the Gospel.
 - b) This was predicted in Hosea 2:23
23 ...I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.
 4. The Portrayal - "Bid to the marriage."
 - a) The Gospel is portrayed in figurative language as that of a wedding and its feast—which means uniting with Christ (wedding) and happiness (feast).

C. The Communicating for the Change – vs 10

10 So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

1. There was both steadfastness (obedience) and success ("many") in communicating the change in the invitation.

V. The Clothing in the Invitation – vs 11-13

- The scene shifts from the giving of the invitation to those who accepted the invitation and came to the wedding.

A. The Problem of the Clothing

- A problem is reported that was present at the wedding.
 1. The Subject of the Problem
11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:
 - a) The problem had to do with improper apparel for the wedding.
 - b) He was not a wedding crasher who had not been invited
 2. The Seeing of the Problem
11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:
 - a) The king not only knew about the rejection of the invitation, but he also knew about the man with the improper garment.
 - b) The man evidently was not detected by the crowd—folk can fool the crowd—but you will not fool the Lord.
 - c) The king had provided the proper garments, but this guest did not accept the garment
 3. The Soliciting about the Problem – vs 12
12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.
 - a) Garments were furnished the guests of the wedding.
 - b) To not wear a garment evidenced contempt for the king's garments.
 - c) In Gospel application, it is the attitude of some who think they can get to heaven on their own without the "garments of salvation" ([Isaiah 61:10](#)) furnished by God.
 4. The Silence in the Problem - "He was speechless" – vs 12
 - a) Every sinner at judgment will stand silenced before God without any excuse whatsoever.
 - b) In this life sinners may have a host of excuses, but no excuse will survive before Divine judgment.
 - c) Hence, the sinner will be speechless before God.

BYZ **Matthew 22:9** Πορεύεσθε οὖν ἐπὶ τὰς διεξόδους τῶν ὁδῶν, καὶ ὅσους ἂν εὔρητε, καλέσατε εἰς τοὺς γάμους.

The partings of the highways (tas diexodous tōn hodōn). Vulgate, exitus viarum. Diodoi are cross-streets, while diexodoi (double compound) seem to be main streets leading out of the city where also side-streets may branch off, "by-ways."

BYZ **Matthew 22:10** Καὶ ἐξελθόντες οἱ δοῦλοι ἐκεῖνοι εἰς τὰς ὁδοὺς συνήγαγον πάντας ὅσους εὔρον, πονηροὺς τε καὶ ἀγαθοὺς· καὶ ἐπλήσθη ὁ γάμος ἀνακειμένων.

BYZ **Matthew 22:11** Εἰσελθὼν δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς θεάσασθαι τοὺς ἀνακειμένους εἶδεν ἐκεῖ ἄνθρωπον οὐκ ἐνδεδυμένον ἔνδυμα γάμου·

BYZ **Matthew 22:12** καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Ἐταῖρε, πῶς εἰσήλθες ὧδε μὴ ἔχων ἔνδυμα γάμου; Ὁ δὲ ἐφίμωθη.

Not having a wedding-garment (mē echōn enduma gamou). Mē is in the Koiné the usual negative with participles unless special emphasis on the negative is desired as in ouk endedumenon. There is a subtle distinction between mē and ou like our subjective and objective notions. Some hold that the wedding-garment here is a portion of a lost parable separate from that of the Wedding Feast, but there is no evidence for that idea. Wunsche does report a parable by a rabbi of a king who set no time for his feast and the guests arrived, some properly dressed waiting at the door; others in their working clothes did not wait, but went off to work and, when the summons suddenly came, they had no time to dress properly and were made to stand and watch while the others partook of the feast.

B. The Punishment for the Clothing

13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- Not having the right garment was a serious offense and so the man received serious punishment. If you do not have the Divine garment of salvation, you will experience severe punishment.
 1. The Securing for the Punishing – “Bind him hand and foot”
 - a) *Sin does not bring freedom.*
 - b) *Sooner or later you will lose your freedom to Divine judgment.*
 2. The Sending in the Punishment - “Cast him ..outer darkness”
 - a) *The man without the proper garment was cast out of the wedding banquet into the darkness outside the banquet hall.*
 - b) *This speaks of the darkness of eternal damnation—“the blackness of darkness” spoken of in [Jude 1:13](#).*
 3. The Suffering in the Punishment - “weeping and gnashing”
 - a) *The suffering was very great.*
 - b) *It is expressed in tears and teeth.*
 - c) *The tears speak of the inward pain, the teeth of the outward pain.*
 - d) *The tears speak of the suffering of the heart and mind, while the teeth speak of the suffering of the body.*
 - e) *All of this describes some of the suffering that will occur in hell for Christ-rejecters.*

VI. The Comment About the Invitation – vs 14

14 For many are called, but few are chosen.

- Christ sums up the teaching of the parable with a statement that Matthew has recorded previously ([Matthew 20:16](#)).

A. The Explanation of the Comment

1. This sums up the parable warning.
2. The Jews were called but were not chosen for salvation because they rejected the invitation (Gospel) as the parable illustrated.
3. This shows the balance between God’s sovereignty and man’s will
4. The wedding invitations go out to many, but few heard the call and were willing to accept it showing that they were among the chosen

B. The Exhortation in the Comment

1. The universal application is that choosing only comes to those who receive the call and act upon it.
2. The call represents privilege, but privilege brings responsibility; and if we do not do our responsibilities, we will lose our privilege and the blessing it can give us.
3. Many have been given the privilege of hearing the Gospel, but few are in the chosen category because few accept the Gospel.

Conclusion:

1. The proper garment for a true believer is the God-imputed righteousness of Christ
2. Without that no one can enter the kingdom of heaven
3. **Isa 61:10** I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

BYZ **Matthew 22:13** Τότε εἶπεν ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῖς διακόνοις, Δῆσαντες αὐτοῦ πόδας καὶ χεῖρας, ἄρατε αὐτὸν καὶ ἐκβάλετε εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον· ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων.

Was speechless (epsimōthē). Was muzzled, dumb from confusion and embarrassment. It is used of the ox (1 Tim. 5:18).

The outer darkness (to skotos to exōteron). See Matthew 8:12. All the blacker from the standpoint of the brilliantly lighted banquet hall.

There shall be (ekei estai). Out there in the outer darkness.

BYZ **Matthew 22:14** Πολλοὶ γὰρ εἰσιν κλητοί, ὀλίγοι δὲ ἐκλεκτοί.

For many are called, but few chosen (polloi gar eisin klētoi oligoi de eklektoi). This crisp saying of Christ occurs in various connections. He evidently repeated many of his sayings many times as every teacher does. There is a distinction between the called (klētoi) and the chosen (eklektoi) called out from the called.