



# THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET

MARCH 29 - APRIL 4

## SUNDAY: SCRIPTURE

### MATTHEW 22:1-14

<sup>1</sup> Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: <sup>2</sup> “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. <sup>3</sup> He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

<sup>4</sup> “Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’

<sup>5</sup> “But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. <sup>6</sup> The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. <sup>7</sup> The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

<sup>8</sup> “Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. <sup>9</sup> So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ <sup>10</sup> So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

<sup>11</sup> “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. <sup>12</sup> He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless.

<sup>13</sup> “Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie his hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

<sup>14</sup> “For many are invited, but few are chosen.”



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## MONDAY: OBSERVATION

Weddings in our culture are a big deal, as they should be. When a man and a woman covenant together as husband and wife, a ceremony and reception are a wonderful way to celebrate with them. In Jesus' time, weddings were a big deal too. The couple to be married were first betrothed to each other, like present-day engagements. To begin this process, the groom's father would pay the bride's father for his daughter's hand in marriage and send invitations for the upcoming celebration to the guests. Then the groom would go back to his father's house and build a place to live with his bride near his father's house. Meanwhile, the bride was to prepare herself for the wedding, not knowing exactly when her groom would come for her. Her attendants would stay with her each night, for weeks or even months. When the groom came with his own attendants to "kidnap" the bride and her attendants and take them from her home to his, he would arrive around midnight, with no advance warning. The groom's father would then send a servant to each guest to announce that the time had come to join in the wedding feast. The wedding feast could last up to 7 days, and all the people who attended extended kind wishes to the couple.

The Parable of the Banquet in Matthew 22 begins once the preparations were completed and the guests were told to come. However, all the guests refused the invitation. They were too busy, too tired, or too distracted to celebrate with the new couple. This was a very rude thing to do in Jesus' time, just as it would be today. So instead of having the preparations wasted, the groom's father goes out into the streets and gathers everyone who would like to join the feast. These people were outside the groom's father's property...probably bystanders who were watching the festivities. Suddenly, they were invited into the festivities. What a joyous occasion for them! It was also customary for the invitees to be dressed for the feast. In the parable, the man choosing not to dress for the celebration was cast out into the darkness. To



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understand why this was terrible, we need to understand that to the Jewish people, darkness was dreaded. Lamps remained lit all night long in Jewish homes. To be cast out to “outer darkness” would cause a Jew to tremble.

## TUESDAY: APPLICATION

Understanding the wedding customs of the Jewish people of Jesus’ time gives us a deeper understanding of why Jesus chose to tell this parable and why it was easily understood by His audience. Also, understanding that this parable was given when Jesus was in the temple during His last week on earth gives us an example of God’s grace. Jesus was giving the Jewish rulers every opportunity to believe in Him before it was too late, yet they still rejected Him.

In this parable, Jesus is the king who had prepared a wedding feast. The invited guests were the Jewish people, in particular the Jewish religious leaders. They knew the scriptures and had had every opportunity to understand who Jesus was...the promised Messiah. Yet, they had chosen not to believe this truth. Instead of attending the feast Jesus had prepared, they were too busy, too stubborn, too proud, too independent to attend. They refused Jesus’ invitation to believe in Him. So, Jesus went out to ask those bystanders, people who believed in Him and followed Him, and invited them into His feast. Because they believed He was the Messiah, He clothed them in His righteousness, so they were dressed properly to celebrate with Him. The guest who was not clothed properly had followed Jesus, but had never really believed in who He was. He was a religious person, but not a true believer, so he didn’t receive Jesus’ righteousness as his wedding garment. This person was cast from Jesus’ sight into total darkness, as He promised in Matthew 25:13.

This parable brings to mind an important question: Who am I



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in this parable? Am I one of the religious leaders who knew all about Jesus but don't believe in Him? Am I the bride, preparing myself for the great feast Jesus has prepared for me, ready at any time to joyfully respond to His invitation? Am I a true believer in Jesus as the Messiah so He will clothe me in His righteousness and invite me into His feast?

Or am I a believer in deeds and head knowledge only, without a heart relationship with Jesus? Am I too busy, too stubborn, too proud, or too independent to be invited to Jesus' wedding feast? Matthew 22:14 reminds us, "For many are called, but few are chosen." Are you one of the chosen?

## WEDNESDAY: PRAYER

Father and God, you have prepared us a feast. Through Jesus, You have sent us an invitation to the banquet. But because we think we have more important priorities, or think we can get to it later, we don't take Your invitation seriously and walk away from You. Lord, You are so generous, but we need to accept the invitation, repent, turn towards You, and live a life that has You at the center not just for a day or a week, but for a lifetime. God, help us to live a life that is deserving to be at the banquet each and every day. Only with Your help, in Jesus name we pray. Amen

## THURSDAY: OBSERVATION

How do you determine your priorities? What is most important to you and your life?

Something that we don't consider a priority for us, we won't make time for or invest in. And even if we don't prioritize something, we may still feel entitled to the rewards associated with that thing.

Sometimes we don't prioritize taking care of our health, but we



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want the rewards of choosing that. We don't prioritize continuing to exercise our minds, but we want the sharpness that comes from continuing to learn.

Sometimes, when we feel entitled, we take for granted the gifts we have been given. In this parable Jesus is being critical of those who aren't prioritizing the Kingdom He has presented. The people He initially came to want the reward of the celebration but they don't want to prioritize Jesus to get it.

The last line of the text says, many are invited but few are chosen. Everyone has access to the Kingdom of God but who is going all in to surrender everything to the Lord? Few.

## FRIDAY: APPLICATION

Jesus makes it clear in this parable that there are consequences for rejecting the King. There are consequences for not prioritizing God over the everyday things in life. We don't want this to be true. We want to have our cake and eat it too. We want to prioritize the things of the world and still be able to access the reward that Jesus offers. Jesus makes it clear that isn't how it works.

He wants us to let go of the world and grab a hold of what He offers us with both hands. What does that look like for you? What do you need to let go of in order to take hold of all that Jesus offers us?

What process do you need to go through to figure out what you need to let go of in your life? Are you willing to start it today? We don't know when the Kingdom of God will take over. It's totally up to God. We may believe we have time, but the time is now. The urgency is real.

Will you do whatever it takes to be present at the ultimate banquet God is preparing for you? All it takes is surrender, total surrender.



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## SATURDAY: PRAYER

Father God, thank you for the grace and mercy you heap upon us. You want what's best for us even when we don't want it for ourselves. Make clear for us what is best. Help us to hear directly from you what you require of us. Keep us tuned into your voice, your love, and your rest. Amen.

