

The Parable of the Wedding Feast

Matthew 22:1-14

October 21st, 2018

Big idea: Israel's persistent rejection of the Messiah and His kingdom brought their destruction. Yet God will find others to fill His kingdom and clothe with righteousness.

Intro

One of the tests of a truth claim is does it correspond to reality? Does it fit reality? When it doesn't we experience doubt and uncertainty.

Of course the problem might be our perception of reality and not the truth claim.

A great evidence for the Christian faith is that it fits reality. It describes the world as it is. People have dignity as image bearers of God and do remarkable things. But people also have fallen, broken natures and do remarkably bad things. That's how the Bible describes it and that's what we see. The truth claim corresponds to reality.

Another area that the truth claim corresponds to reality has to do with the nation of Israel and all the other people groups in the world.

We'll see in our passage today and in other passages that Jesus predicted the nation of Israel would largely reject Him and Jerusalem would be destroyed, which is just what happened in history. But the Bible also teaches that the Israelites would be preserved as a people and one day respond to the Messiah. We have seen their preservation in history as well against amazing odds as wicked people have attempted to wipe them out and oppress them. I don't know any Canaanites or Moabites, but I do know some Israelites.

We also see that Jesus said the offer would expand out beyond Israel to all people groups. We see that as well.

This week I've read some horrific accounts of the atrocities 20 years ago in Rwanda as a mass genocide occurred. But these accounts highlight those who helped preserve life even at great risk to themselves. They describe hiding starving, fleeing people in every nook and cranny of their homes to protect their lives from their neighbors. And many of these who are risking their lives to save the lives of others did so because of their commitment to Christ. Almost 2,000 years after Jesus gave the parable we are about to read, in a part of the world His disciples probably wouldn't have even known existed, His followers can be found living out obedience to Christ in a horrible situation.

Our passage today predicts Israel's rejection of Jesus, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the gentiles (non-Jewish people) who would be brought to God.

1. The rejected *invitation* (22:1-7)

a. Parable (v. 1)

- i. "again" add this to the previous two parables to complete a trilogy
- ii. Since it is a parable, look for the main idea without reading into every detail, expect there to be some unrealistic and surprising elements (like a king burning a city on his son's wedding day)
- iii. Similar to an earlier parable of Jesus from Luke 14 but different. Jesus likely modified different parables to communicate common ideas in different settings.
 1. In Luke 14 the parable is told while on the way to Jerusalem, in Matt they are in Jerusalem.
 2. In Luke, it's just a man, in Matthew, a king

3. Luke, more details for the excuses, Matthew, more general
 4. Luke, the invitation was declined, Matthew, they insulted and killed the servants
 5. In Luke, no mention of the man without wedding clothes
- iv. Not telling everything about the kingdom – God’s people in God’s place under God’s rule – but some details as it relates to the nation of Israel, non-Jewish people, and entrance into the kingdom (a way in this context of referring to life with God after death)
- b. The king gave a wedding feast for his son (v. 2)
 - i. “Son” is mentioned in v 2 but then never again, shows that this is an important feast – it’s a royal wedding!
 1. We’re not even a part of England and yet this wedding dominated the American news outlets for weeks. You couldn’t get away from it. It was live streamed on various tv channels and I know of at least a few people who woke up in the middle of the night to watch it.
 - ii. The wedding celebration would have lasted many days, even several weeks for a royal wedding, they were large occasions and would be as elaborate as the parents of the groom could afford.
 - iii. Invitations would have been sent out well in advance and then servants would be sent out on the day of the event to let guests know it was time.
 1. Allowed them to prepare ahead, informed them of the exact time in an age where there weren’t clocks
 2. Today – common to get a “save the date” notice in the mail, followed by a formal invitation asking for an RSVP, and then if you fail to RSVP a nervous bride planning the largest gathering she’s ever been involved with might email you to ask if you could kindly indicate whether you are attending or not
 - c. The servants went out to summon those who had been invited by the guests were unwilling. (v. 3)
 - i. Not realistic! It would have been an honor and a command to come. It would only be natural that they came, especially after already receiving a first invitation.
 - ii. Shocking, just as in the parable of the tenants in the vineyard, his hearer would have thought, “who would do such a thing?”
 - d. The king patiently persisted in calling them (v. 4)
 - i. He sent others, explained that the meal is ready, significant investment in preparation, this would be wasted if not used for the dinner – no refrigeration; oxen and livestock are both plural, so anticipating a large crowd
 - ii. Another clear invite. This would make it the 3rd invitation if there was a first invitation that the slaves initially followed up on.
 - iii. Like with the parable of the tenants, the Sender is persistent and remarkably patient
 - e. Two responses: indifference and hostility (vv. 5-6)
 - i. Some paid no attention.
 1. Luke 14 has some more details in a similar parable – I bought a field (14:18) but you would have inspected it before you bought it and if you did buy it it will wait for you. – I

bought 5 yoke of oxen and must try them out but the oxen can wait– I married a wife, would be excused from military service for a year but not the same as excused from a kingly wedding and you should have known that when you accepted the first invitation

- ii. Others acted with hostility – seizing, mistreating, and killing the slaves
 - 1. Strange things happen in parables
 - a. You may have received a wedding invite that you didn't plan to attend, but I doubt you beat up the mailman who delivered it.
 - 2. This was rebellion not just rudeness. Their assumption appears to be that they were in no danger. They could do what they wanted and consequences would never come. They had no respect for the king and no fear of him.
 - 3. But they were wrong
- f. The king's judgment
 - i. The king's emotional response: He was enraged
 - ii. The king's judicial response: He sent an army to bring justice to the violent rebels.
- g. What is the point Jesus is making?
 - i. King: God, Son: Jesus, feast: eternal life in His kingdom, messengers: John, Jesus, apostles, the initially invited guests: the nation of Israel
 - ii. God is **patient** and **persistent**
 - 1. He extended 3 invitations, even pleading with the people to come.
 - 2. The initial preparation or the first invite was the OT predictions of the Messiah – He's coming! Be ready! But then when He came the people were indifferent or openly hostile.
 - 3. John, Jesus, the apostles all initially went almost exclusively to the Jewish people.
 - iii. God's invitation of reconciliation would be met with **indifference** and **hostility**.
 - 1. **Matthew 14:1-12** – *Herod had John the Baptist killed*
 - 2. **Matthew 16:21** From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.
 - 3. **John 6:66** As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.
 - 4. **Matthew 10:22** "You will be hated by all because of My name,
 - 5. **Acts 8:1** Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.
 - 6. Even predictive of today as well – a range of responses from positive, to indifferent, to hostile. Don't be surprised.
 - iv. God's patience has a **limit**. Jerusalem would be **destroyed**.
 - 1. We saw this in the parable of the tenants as well.
 - 2. Likely a predictive reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in ad 70. Estimated that one million Jewish people were killed when Titus, the son of the Roman emperor

destroyed the city. Israel ceased to exist as a political unit at that point until 1947. Of course the people continued as a distinct people group while dispersed internationally for 20 centuries. Remarkable. (adapted from Hendriksen)

3. **Luke 19:41-44** When He approached *Jerusalem*, He saw the city and wept over it, ⁴² saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ "For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, ⁴⁴ and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."
4. You see the emotional life of Jesus living as a human experiencing real emotions. He wept over the city. He would have felt sadness over their rejection of him.
 - a. **John 1:11** He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

2. The new dinner guests (22:8-10)

- a. This event is too important to be canceled because of rude dinner guests. New guests must be found.
 - i. Those who were invited were "unworthy" – not that they were any morally worse than the others, the "good and evil" were summoned – they were unworthy because they didn't come. They excluded themselves from the offer.
 - b. Sent to the streets and highways where the poor gathered to call them in.
 - i. Those called were both the good and evil
 - ii. **Luke 14:23** "And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled.
 - iii. (Dorani adapted) – the phrase "compel them to come in" was used to justify the Inquisition, which sometimes used physical force, even torture, to compel "heretics" to repent. But in the culture of Jesus' day, to compel simply meant to insist that the offer is sincere.
 - iv. The wedding hall was filled with guests. The king was not thwarted. His feast goes on.
- c. What is the point Jesus is making?
 - i. After Israel's rejection, the offer would turn to the gentiles as well.
 1. **Acts 11:18-21** When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance *that leads* to life." ¹⁹ So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. ²⁰ But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and *began* speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.
 2. **Romans 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
 3. **Romans 11:1-2a** say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew.

4. **Romans 11:25** For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery-- so that you will not be wise in your own estimation-- that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;
 5. No place for anti-Semitism
- ii. God brings in those who appear to us **good** and **evil**.
 1. Those who appear to have everything together and live relatively good lives, He calls to turn from their indifference toward Him and recognize the standard is not the relative morality around them but His perfect morality.
 2. Those whose lives appear to be in wreckage from a series of bad choices, He invites to come to Him. He'll forgive, welcome, and work in their lives.
 - iii. God will **fill up** His kingdom.
 1. Those whom He draws will come.
3. The **missing** wedding clothes (22:11-14)
 - a. As the king surveyed the guest he saw one guest was not wearing appropriate wedding clothes.
 - i. He kindly addressed him as "friend" and asked about the clothes.
 - ii. Just like today, there are appropriate things to wear to a wedding. You would feel out of place if you showed up in your muddy jeans after changing the oil in your Chevy.
 - iii. But these people were poor and invited in off the street. Likely only had one set of clothing, and they certainly wouldn't have been wedding clothes.
 - iv. The parable doesn't say but a reasonable conclusion is that the king provided the clothes and for some reason this man refused.
 1. in all probability guests such as these did not have a robe and could not have obtained it any other way
 2. king expected each guest to be decked in a robe fit to be worn to a royal wedding
 3. man who lacked this robe was not able to offer any excuse for not having one
 4. additionally, that fits best with the interpretation of this part of the parable
 - v. He was removed to the outside where it was now dark and excluded from the wedding feast.
 - b. What is the point?
 - i. The one who comes to God needs **righteousness** from God.
 1. Already said both evil and good were invited, so not talking about our own innate goodness.
 2. Jesus' righteousness imputed (credited) to us so when God see us, He sees Jesus not our failures
 - a. **Isaiah 61:10** I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, My soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
 - b. **Galatians 3:27** For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

3. Righteousness imparted to us as we live out of a new heart
 - a. **Colossians 3:12-14** So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.¹⁴ Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity.
 - b. **Revelation 19:7-8** "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready."⁸ It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.
- ii. Many are ***called***, but few are ***chosen***.
 1. Succinct statement of His point.
 2. The many called are the initial guests who refused and the guest without the proper clothing. The invitation was sincerely and repeatedly given to them.
 - a. Likewise the gospel is spread far and wide and with sincerity God says that anyone can come. Respond to His offer. Call sin sin.
 3. The chosen reflects another biblical truth that those who respond are ultimately those who in God's sovereign grace He has elected and drawn to Himself.
 - a. Offer of salvation is broad but declined. God takes initiative to summon some to Himself.
 - b. **John 6:37a** the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.
 - c. **John 6:40a** "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life,
 - d. **John 6:44a** "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him;
 - e. **Ephesians 1:4-5** just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,



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