

**Introduction:** A few days after His triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, Jesus was in the Temple teaching. Jewish religious leaders had decided Jesus must be stopped even if it meant killing Him. Perhaps disturbed by the good receptions Jesus received on entering the city and hoping to get Him to say something they can use against Him, the chief priests and other religious leaders questioned Jesus about His authority to teach. Jesus agreed to answer their question if they would answer His question. *“The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?”* The Jewish leaders were afraid the either answer to that question would get them in trouble, so they said, *“we do not know.”*

Jesus used the occasion to tell three parables, each one directed at the the behavior of the Jewish religious leaders. The overall perspective was that while they truly didn't understand John and his teaching, there were also other things they needed to think about. The 3 parables are: “Two Sons and the Vineyard,” “Wicked Tenants,” and “Wedding Feast.”

We have studied “The Two Sons and the Vineyard” and the “Wicked Tenants.” In the “Two Sons,” the message to the Jewish religious leaders was, they need to stop merely talking about doing God's will, which is of no value, and actually do God's will, which is vitally important, even when done reluctantly.

In the “Wicked Tenants,” the message was threefold. (1.) Wickedness unopposed expands and leads to greater wickedness. (2.) God's servants, particularly the prophets, have been mistreated and often killed. Wickedness abounds and is so great that even the Son will be killed. (3.) God's vineyard will not be left in wicked hands. It will be transferred to others who will produce fruit and honor promises.

**The “Wedding Feast”:** This is the last of the three parables spoken by Jesus on the Tuesday after His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The symbology Jesus uses is of a king who gives a wedding feast for his son. It was customary among the Jews for the parents of the betrothed couple to draw up a marriage contract. Bride and groom would meet (often for the first time) when the marriage contract was signed. With the marriage contract signed, the couple were considered legally married but would not yet live together. The bride would remain with her parents. The groom would go to prepare their home, including building a house if necessary. That preparation could take a long time. When everything was prepared, without further

notice, the groom would go to claim his bride. The marriage ceremony would be performed, and the marriage feast would follow.

**Matthew 22:1-14**: *“And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying,<sup>2</sup> “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son,<sup>3</sup> and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come.<sup>4</sup> Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.”’<sup>5</sup> But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business,<sup>6</sup> while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them.<sup>7</sup> The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.<sup>8</sup> Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy.<sup>9</sup> Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’<sup>10</sup> And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.<sup>11</sup> “But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment.<sup>12</sup> And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless.<sup>13</sup> Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’<sup>14</sup> For many are called, but few are chosen.”*

**Comments**: Jewish wedding feasts were joyous occasions which could last as long as a week. In this parable, Jesus uses the metaphor of a wedding feast, prepared by a king for his son and his bride, to represent an event in heaven. Many people were invited to attend the feast. When the time for the feast came, everything was prepared, including the table being set, but most of the people invited refused to come. It was not that they “could not” come, they simply “refused” to come. Even worse, those who refused to come mistreated the king’s servants and even killed some of them.

The king was extremely unhappy with the mistreatment and killing of his servants. He sent his troops to avenge the death of his servants. Yet even after that tragic result, the king graciously extended a broader third invitation which included everyone his servants encountered. The wedding hall was filled.

The king came in to be with his guests. Wedding garments, which all were required to wear, had been furnished for all attendees. The king noticed a man with no wedding garment. He asked the man how he happened to be there without the

proper garment. The man, having no appropriate answer, was speechless. That man was thrown out of the feast into the “outer darkness.” Jesus ends the parable saying, ***“For many are called, but few are chosen.”***

**Interpretation:** The king is God the Father. The son being honored with the feast is God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The feast is the spiritual feast set before people through the blessings of the gospel. Prophets and early preachers of the gospel are the servants sent out to invite people to the feast. The first people to receive the invitation were the upright Jews. Most of them refused to come. Those who eventually came to the feast were the outcast, the poor, and the Gentiles. John 1:11-12 says, ***“He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”***

Over a long period of time, Israel had received the invitation to the kingdom. But when the time came for the kingdom to appear (Matthew 3:1), most of Israel refused to believe. John the Baptist and other prophets had been killed.

God’s actions against the murderers of His servants and those who refused His gracious invitation is often interpreted to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. In a broader sense, the king’s acts of vengeance may refer to the desolation mentioned in Revelation. God is full of grace and mercy. He is patient, but He will not tolerate wickedness forever. His judgment will come on those who reject His offer of salvation.

**“Could Not” or “Would Not”:** Why did those invited fail to come to the wedding feast? Not because they **“could not,”** but because they **“would not.”** They had the mental capability to make the decision to go to the feast and stick to it, but they lacked moral capability. Many excuses were offered, but they were just excuses not reasons. Fallen human nature tends to respond to God’s offer of His blessings with excuses and to end up refusing the blessings. Earthly attractions seem more important, don’t require much discipline, and everyone does it, so why not me?

**God’s Invitation Extended to Everyone:** God broadens the invitation to attend the heavenly feast to everyone, first to Jews and then to Gentiles. In this portion of the parable we see the foreshadowing of the Jew’s rejection of the gospel and the offer extended to everyone including Gentiles. A little later in Pisidian Antioch we see the Jews strongly opposing Paul and Barnabas. Their response was an echo of the

king's comment on the unworthiness of those who refused to come when invited. Acts 13:46, *“Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, ‘It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.’”*

**Significance of the Man Without a Wedding Garment:** When the king came into the wedding hall and saw a man dressed in ordinary clothes, the king asked him how he came to be at the table without wearing a wedding garment. The man had himself chosen to not put on the furnished wedding garment. He had no further answer. The king had him ejected from the feast and cast into the *“outer darkness.”*

What is the significance of this incident? The wedding garment is Christ's righteousness imputed to believers. No one's personal righteousness is adequate. From Adam and Eve through all the ages, God has provided a “covering” for sins. Those who insist on covering themselves end up clad in “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). In essence, the man sat at the wedding table clad in the “filthy rags” of his own “righteousness.” That is not satisfactory. Only Christ's righteousness will suffice. In Revelation the people in heaven wear “white robes” (Revelation 7:9). The whiteness of their robes comes from being washed in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14).

Jesus concludes the parable with the uncomfortable truth that “many are invited, but few are chosen.” Or, to say it another way “many are invited” but few choose to accept the invitation. Many people hear the call of God, but few heed it. They hear and see the sounds and written evidence of the call, but most turn away without heeding the call. Human fallen spiritual nature listens to and heeds the call of the world, the flesh, and the spiritual opponents of God and His people. These siren calls to the human fallen nature overwhelm the gospel call. Only God's miracle of intervening regeneration enables a person to see, hear, and accept the truth of the gospel.

**The Proper Response to the King's Invitation:** When the King's invitation is received, the proper response is to admit that, in and of ourselves, we are unworthy to attend. We constantly sin and disregard God's instructions for living. But though we are unworthy as we are, having no righteousness of our own, the truth is that while we were yet sinners, Jesus died paying the penalty for our sins. He has given to those who believe the covering of His own righteousness. Only in the garment of Jesus' righteousness do we dare to come before the Father. We come at His invitation. We come clothed in the righteousness of Jesus our Lord.

**Final Comments:** The message of this parable to the Jewish religious leaders clearly tells them that if they persist in their stubborn ways, ignoring the invitation of the gospel, they will be left without the required “wedding garment.” When the feast is given, they will not be permitted to attend. If they try to enter the feast, they will be thrown out for trying to stand in their own righteousness rather than being properly attired in the righteousness of Christ. Further, their management of the earthly presence of the kingdom of God will be terminated and transferred to others more worthy.

**What’s Next:** The parable of the Talents.