

Parables About the Kingdom (part 3)

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In this series of articles we have been considering several of Jesus' parables about the Kingdom – a subject that frequently left His disciples confused and His enemies infuriated. In today's article we will see the joy of entering into the kingdom

Are you ready to go to the feast?

The third parable we will consider in this article series is found in Matthew 22:1-14, in which a grand wedding feast is described. Many fascinating and edifying points can be made from this text, as it deals with "kingdom" concepts in more than one way. "*The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son*" (22:2). The atmosphere at such a wedding feast would be one of great jubilation and to be invited to attend this function would have been a great honor. As for heaven, it is encouraging to realize that our time in eternity will not be one of inactivity or boredom. Far from it, in fact! The afterlife can be compared to a celebratory event. Matthew 22:3-6 describes the treatment of this king's slaves when he sends them out to fetch the guests. Some of the excuses made by the invited guests are amazing! First, we must see that this was a second invitation, so it has already been made known to the people when the wedding would take place. There is absolutely no excuse for us, in the same way, when we choose to schedule events at the same time as our worship to God. Second, the excuses are generally inane or ridiculous. What kind of a man rejects an invitation to a feast at the king's palace because he has to go to his farm or business? Even worse, what kind of man abuses and kills the king's servants when they call? It certainly seems that there is a sense of entitlement or laziness in the words of the invited guests, as if they take it for granted that the king desires their company. "There will always be another wedding feast, another banquet, another opportunity to sit in the king's presence," they might have rationalized. Similarly, we might say, "There will always be another Sunday, another time to worship, another chance to study, another opportunity to say and do what I should do for God." Our excuses look pretty pathetic, though, when we are finally faced with judgment.

In completely justifiable anger, therefore, the king sends his armies to destroy the insolent wedding guests (22:7). Will God not be equally justified, and even more so, when He returns in judgment and finds us ignoring Him?

Because the wedding would still take place, the king decided to open up the invitation to everybody else – "*As many as you find.*" Sending out slaves to every corner of his kingdom, the king made sure to leave room for anybody who wanted to attend, both good and evil people (22:9-10). This does not mean evil people will be welcomed into heaven, but that even evil people can hear the invitation and change their lives to become a welcomed guest at the table of the king.

Surveying his guests, the king finds a man in the midst who is not dressed in proper wedding attire (22:11-14). He asks the man why he did not dress appropriately, and the guest is "*speechless*", unable to answer for his error in judgment. While some see the fate of this man as harsh or unfair, the parable simply affirms the truth about the righteous nature of God. When we are invited by God's servants to come to the feast, we must

make an adequate change in our lives to conform to the Lord's will. Like the hapless wedding guest, we cannot think it is acceptable to come to God and not change at all – we cannot become Christians without repenting of our sins and rejecting the ways of the world. We also cannot become Christians and assume that we can “come as we are.” It is interesting that many churches today use that phrase as their motto, or as a selling point. But does God want us to “come as we are?” Truly, He wants us to put on the attire of righteousness and enter His kingdom in the right way. Incidentally, it was customary during Jesus' time to offer appropriate clothes to wedding guests who were unable to provide any for themselves, so it makes the man's failure to “dress up” even more egregious, knowing that all he had to do was ask and the clothes would be given to him!