

The Wedding Guests. A Prophetic Tragedy in Three Acts

Scripture Reading: Matthew 21:45-22:14

The preceding parables of the vineyard served to both instruct the Pharisees and Scribes about the kingdom of God, and for many of them, to harden their attitude of resentment of and antagonism toward Jesus. Some however thought more deeply on these things for in the years to come they were to be found as members of the early church. It was appropriate then that Jesus should take one more step, to share with them the Gospel of the Kingdom in terms that they would understand. To do this Jesus told them another parable. He speaks to our hearts also.

Jesus spoke again to them in *parables* v1 - plural. There are three, but they belong together. In this study we see them as three Acts in a tragedy, for the course is pathos and the end is bitter.

The Characters & Items Identified.

The king: God the Father.
 The son: God's only Son.
 First slaves: Prophets of old.
 Next slaves: The Apostles.
 First invited: Scribes & Pharisees.
 City burned: Jerusalem AD70.
 Commoners: Responsive Gentiles.
 Wedding garment: Imputed holiness.
 Marriage feast: Wedding of the Lamb.
 Gatecrasher: Spurious sects & religions.
 The invitation: The true gospel.
 The chosen: Those who obey the call.

The Pharisees did not possess our hindsight, but they understood all that Jesus intended.

Act I: Israel is Summoned v2-7.

The 'them' in v1 are the Scribes and Pharisees Matthew 21:45. He told another story on them. The king in the story was a human king. The Greek text has it; 'a man, a king'. Israel had long been invited to the heavenly banquet through her prophets of old. One example:

"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost." Isaiah 55:1.

When the time was right he 'called the called' to the celebrations, 'but they did not want to come.' This is portrayed as an amazing and unexpected snub of major proportion for they were those privileged to come. But they

despised their privilege. By this rejection the Saviour was crucified.

How sad it is to see some today, brought up under the call of the gospel, turn to the paltry toys of this world, whereby they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh Hebrews 6:6.

Behold! Look at this! v4 (Not in NIV). Note the amazing patience and forbearing of the king! He calls again sending another contingent of slaves. The words used imply other people of similar kind. They are proclaimers of a new more urgent message, 'My dinner is now ready!' Ready or prepared means to put in order. Everything is now done, the sacrifice is now made.

'Come to my dinner.' Dinner is from a word meaning an early meal. On reception the guests would be served. The fattened cattle were prepared for the full banquet. Matthew Henry puts it:

The day of a feast is *a day of slaughter*, or sacrifice, James 5:5. Gospel preparations are all founded in the death of Christ, his sacrifice of himself. A feast was made for love, it is a reconciliation feast, a token of God's goodwill toward men. It was made *for laughter* (Eccl. 10:19), it is a rejoicing feast. It was made for fulness; the design of the gospel was to fill every *hungry soul with good things*.

In verses 5 & 6 there are two groups of people. The tradesmen and farmers simply paid no attention, as before, and went to work, leaving the scribes and leaders who raised a riot which ended in the mistreatment and even murder of the slaves. The apostles also faced these leaders who raised angry mobs. They were 'not worthy' of the honour they were given.

This part of the story is not about an angry revengeful tyrant. It is a prophetic warning for those needing to change an attitude which among other things was bringing them into conflict with Rome, the occupying power. The arrogance and resistance of these people led to the destruction of Jerusalem. Had there been a change of heart, and new way of life, Jerusalem would have been spared.

Act II The Times of the Gentiles

This period in Jewish history began with the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus. It is the present age of God's grace in which His message of open invitation is being taken to all the world by His servants. It will conclude when Jesus comes again to rule in majesty, as a visible universal King.

Here we see the ministry of the gospel: v9 go - traverse. This word 'expresses motion within limits and with bearing, like the marching of an army' - Strong. Highways means 'where streets converge', the market square, and a centre of communication. It was a transport interchange of the old world. 'Anyone' is taken from two words meaning 'as many as possible'; 'invite whosoever will come, call them to the nuptials' John 3:16. The slaves found both evil and good people. 'Evil' is a response or style rather than an evil intent or character. It is associated with painful labour. 'Good', generally good. A word used of good trees and good fruit. See Matthew 12:35 for a similar usage. The feast was furnished with guests from a cross section of society. They had one thing in common, they were invited, accepted and thus were brought in. The room was filled. The sealed Jews were counted, but the Gentile nations were unnumbered. See Revelation 7:4-7.

Act III The Gatecrasher

The marriage feast shows the marriage of the Lamb as spoken of in Scripture. See: Revelation 19:7-9 (Isaiah 25:6 etc.)

Those who are guests in our parable are also the bride in the Revelation. Parables have limitations (See Rules 1 & 8, Study No 1.)

The parable does not identify the bride. Nor

should we. However the dress of the bride and the cloak of the guests are similar in meaning.

The linen wedding garment is the garment of holiness Heb. 12:14. It was given to the guests. In Revelation 19:8 it is declared righteousness. This word has multiple meanings. It stems from a word meaning to be declared righteous. It is ceremonial, meets the demands of the law and issues in righteous thoughts and acts. See a Strong's Greek Dictionary, word #1345.

When the king came to evaluate to 'see' v11. He 'took particular notice of his guests, he saw one improperly dressed. Only the king saw him because He is the Lord who walks amongst the candlesticks and knows their works.

When the king questioned him, he called him 'friend', better- a clansman or fellow countryman. But the questions 'muzzled' him for he had no answer. Interlopers seldom know that the garments of righteousness are given out at the Cross to those who accept the invitation of eternal life. Those who try to come some other way are inevitably ignorant of this. True righteousness cannot be bought, or manufactured by self effort. This is salvation and it is freely and graciously given, available only by invitation and acceptance.

This lone interloper stands for millions upon millions in this world today who try to come some other way. Jesus spoke readily of them John 10:6-18.

He was excluded from the nuptial feast for he had no right there, away from the light of the room to the night outside, to his sorrow and regret v11.

Many are called (invited), but few chosen. This verse has caused many difficulties. It must be understood in the context in which it is found. It is not intended to exclude, but direct. Those who are chosen are 'chosen in Christ', those who having heard the invitation call have accepted according to the terms of the call. The invitation is to whosoever will come, but must be accepted in simple faith in the good grace of a righteous, holy King. Have you done that?

Bible quotations in this study are from the NIV, unless otherwise acknowledged.

Welcome

Glen Park Gospel Church

Lower Road, Eltham North

Sundays 10.30 am

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