

Matthew 22:1-14

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

Introduction. The immediate context of this parable is that of Jesus in a running dialogue with the religious leaders; see the two previous parables 21:28-43. Jesus continues the same themes of their failure to meet God's requirements and the consequent change in the constitution of the people of God. The parable has an allegorical element as well as the main teaching at the conclusion.

Vs. 1-5. (see 8:11, 25:1ff). A banquet symbolises the blessings of God's salvation. The parable refers to the common practice of sending a further 'invitation' when the wedding banquet is actually ready. The refusal of the invited (the parable is not directed initially to the outsiders) who had promised to come echoes the disobedient son in 21:30 and the tenants in 21:35-36. Their excuses also echoes 6:4 - teaching about not being able to serve God and money.

Vs. 6-7. The parable does not mirror real life but echoes the treatment of the servants in 21:35-36 and probably Israel's rejection of the prophets. 'The city' seems to be referring to Jerusalem which is not immune from facing destruction.

Vs. 8-10. The unexpected people invited to the banquet in place of those who refused echoes preceding parables 21:31-32, 41-43. As the good news is preached both 'good' and 'bad' will be attracted. This necessitates a further expanding of the story before its concluding summary.

Vs. 11-13. The man without the 'wedding clothes' seems to illustrate the truth that entrance into God's salvation is free but there is a proper response, a new life of trust and obedience (see 21:41-43). The wedding garment might also reflect the teaching of Is. 66:6, '*All our righteous acts are like filthy rags*' and Is. 61:10, '*I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness*'.

Vs. 14. This well-known saying sums up both parts of the parable. Those who used their farms and businesses as excuses not to come were 'called' but were not 'chosen'. Even among those 'called' in from the streets one, not in 'wedding clothes', (representative of others?) at least was not 'chosen'. His response was disrespectful of the invitation (see 21:31b-32; 43). All are responsible for how they responded to the invitation, although 'chosen' implies someone else's decision (God's) was decisive. This highlights the paradox of salvation, God's choosing and the human response (see Phil. 2:12-13; Eph. 2:8-10). The parable affirms both the divine choosing and the need for the invited to respond.

Reflection/Response. How does God's initiative both elicit and enable our response? How is our active response to God evident in our daily lives? Read Eph. 2:4-10. How does the knowledge that we have been chosen by God because of His grace inspire us to continue to have faith in Him and seek to do good works in His name?