

Matthew 22:1-14 “Will You Receive Jesus?”

1.7.18

We have watched Jesus make His way to Jerusalem for the last week of His life prior to His resurrection. You will remember, He's ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey on what we call Palm Sunday to the praises of the people...



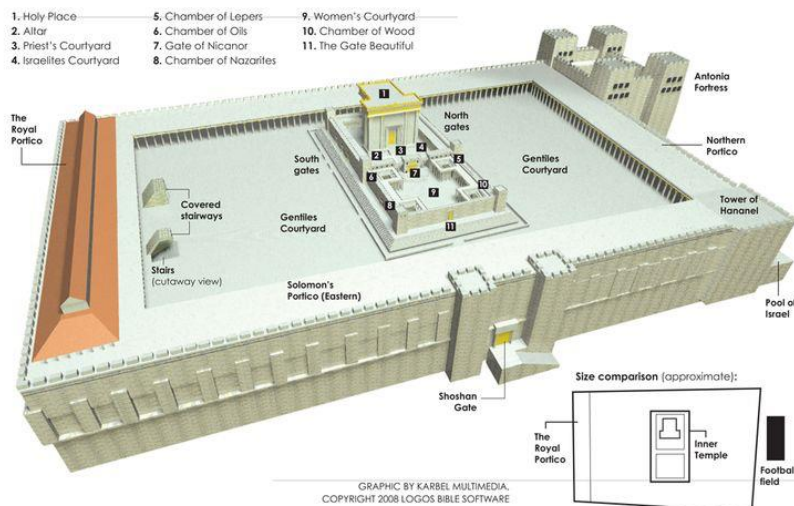
They thought He was the conquering Messiah who would overthrow Rome, but instead...Jesus would go to the Temple and overthrow the money-changers tables...



Jesus would proclaim the Temple as “MY HOUSE,” and that incensed the religious leaders...the Scribes, the Pharisees, and the Teachers of the law. After cleansing the Temple on Monday, Jesus was back on Tuesday in the Temple, teaching the people in the courtyard under **Solomon's Portico**...

Herod's Temple

King Herod the Great began renovations on the Second Temple approximately 20-19 BC. The entire temple wasn't completed until approximately 62-64 AD, only to be destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.



The people were packed into those courtyards to see the One who had raised Lazarus from the dead just a couple of weeks earlier.

And what they saw was the teaching of Jesus that systematically tore down the false teaching of the religious leaders... **Imagine this scene...**



This was a showdown between the false and the truth. It was tense and it was contentious. Jesus is calling out these religious leaders and exposing their hypocrisy! After all, for three years He has been preaching and teaching and performing miracles, giving proof He's the Messiah, yet they refuse to believe. They've totally rejected Him, and within three days, they'll have Him executed by the Romans on a cross.

But for now, thousands of people have crammed into the Temple courtyard to hear Jesus and it's a public showdown and it's epic...because Jesus is showing the people that their religious leaders can't be trusted and He's used 3 parables to illustrate this fact. Today we get the third parable. And might I add that these 3 parables are parables of judgment on those who refuse to receive Jesus...

Matthew 22:1-14

¹ And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, ² "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, ³ and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. ⁴ 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."' ⁵ But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶ while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. ⁷ The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. ⁸ Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹ Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' ¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. ¹² And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. ¹³ 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.' ¹⁴ For many are called, but few are chosen."

Once again, here in this parable, Jesus uses something very common in every-day-life to express and convey profound spiritual truth. He speaks of a wedding and a wedding feast. I want to show you a picture of one of the grandest weddings I've ever witnessed. And I actually wasn't there. I just saw it on TV. Do you know who's wedding this was on Wednesday, July 29, 1981 at St. Paul's Cathedral in London?



That would be Prince Charles' and Princess Diana's wedding. Oh what a grand wedding! They left in a horse-drawn carriage...



All of Britain turned out for this wedding...



After the wedding...there were massive parties, as the people of Great Britain celebrated... Even the school children were treated to parties...



Yes, I remember that marriage well. I was 13 years old and it's what everyone talked about for months, leading up to the wedding. What a spectacle! Here's another pic of the crowds...



It was reported 600,000 people lined the streets of London and 750,000 million people watched it on TV. There were 4.5 billion people on the earth in 1981, so, close to 20% of the world's population watched this wedding.

Weddings are like that...they're special...for many people weddings are one of the most celebratory occasions in all of living. And it was a wedding, and the feast that followed, that Jesus used as the back-drop to describe His coming Kingdom.

Now, weddings were quite a bit different in the first century than they are today. We do our wedding festivities typically over a period of 2 days. We'll usually have a rehearsal and a dinner the night before the wedding (typically on a Friday night) and we'll do the wedding on a Saturday...typically in the afternoon or early evening. Usually the wedding will be followed by a reception that could be light anything from light refreshments all the way up to a full dinner.

Yet, in the first century, they would typically have a weeklong celebration after the wedding, in which the entire town or village would be invited to participate. It truly was more like what we saw with Prince Charles and Lady Diana than what we do now. It was a spectacle that everyone in the town or village participated.

Now take a look at this picture again...to get this scene in your mind...



Jesus is teaching this parable to the people in the Temple courtyards, but He's addressing the Chief Priests and Pharisees.

Matthew 22:1-2

¹ And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, ² "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son,

Now in this parable...Jesus is describing the coming of His Kingdom, (and this is a future event He's describing...) and it's more accurately a parable (really) describing who gets into His Kingdom (heaven) versus those who doesn't. So, in essence, what we're going to see in this parable is an invitation as the main subject and main idea...and might I say the invitation didn't look like this...



That's your typical wedding invitation...but, Jesus isn't talking about an invitation that you get in the mail... He's talking about an invitation made by a King via one of His personal servants. Maybe in our day, we'd picture someone like this guy...



Just imagine a man like this coming and offering you a personal invitation to come to the King's son's wedding feast... And imagine what the banquet hall would look like...



Can you imagine the privilege of being invited in this way? Watch...

Matthew 22:2-4

²“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, ³and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. ⁴Again 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.”’”

This is crazy! This is like the parable we looked at from last week, and the refusal of those tenant farmers to give the vineyard owner what was rightly due to him. What a lack of respect! I mean the King has pulled out all the stops! He told the servants to go out and tell everyone that I've literally killed the fatted calves!

This is as good as it gets! It's what the Father in the account of the Prodigal Son did when his son returned home from living such a wretched life...he killed the fatted-calf he was so happy! This was like having filet mignon and lobster!



Oh my word! Can we have some of that please! ☺

Oh Church family, the wonder and the majesty, the spectacle of this wedding feast is beyond imagination...it's magnanimous! But they wouldn't come... Watch...

Matthew 22:5

⁵ But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business,

Absolute indifference! They've been invited to the most fantastic event you could ever imagine and they say, "Nah! I'm going to go plow the field..." and another guy says, "Nah...I'm going to go to the office." You got to be kidding! This is crazy! Do they not understand what they're missing?

Now, I know some might say, "They're only interested in making money...that's what this means." But, I don't think so. Jesus is describing indifference. "I'm just going to do my thing." And that's what people do. They're blind to the value of the invitation and the plight of those who refuse the invitation. We would look at them and call them, "Crazy or even stupid," but the truth is...their just blind. Satan has blinded their minds (2 Cor. 4:4).

I talked to Pastor Dale about this during the week. He told me how he was saved at the age of 26 and he knew the Gospel...was raised in a preacher's home...but, still walked away Sunday after Sunday. Until one day...the light came on and He accepted Jesus' invitation.

2 Corinthians 4:4

⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

You know, I can almost hear the crowd gasping as they listen to Jesus tell this story. It's unthinkable...it's inconceivable. The people in the crowd had to be looking at one another thinking...this is the most absurd thing I've ever heard in my life! **And that's Jesus' point.** This is absurd. For three years He's performed literally thousands of miracles as invitations...as evidence that He's the Son of God, and yet, the religious leaders continue to reject His invitation to follow Him! This is ABSOLUTELY ABSURD!

The truth is: they don't respect Jesus and that's what Jesus is teaching in the parable...the people didn't respect the King, they didn't fear or reverence or honor his authority enough to grace his feast with their presence. Such selfishness! Such blindness! All the earmarks of Satan! What a horrible scene! But it gets worse...much worse...**an absolute rebellion is going to break out...**

Matthew 22:6-7

⁶ while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. ⁷ The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

Church family, we've now moved from indifference to obstinate rebellion. Who is Jesus describing as those involved in this heinous rebellion? It's the religious leaders...they're getting ready to kill Jesus and He's literally prophesying that fact. In three days they'll have Jesus killed.

What did the King do? Burned their city! The King's patience and His graciousness had run out! You know there's a limit to God's patience. He doesn't want anyone to die and go to Hell, AND THAT'S WHY HE SENT JESUS. And for those, who reject the sacrifice He made to send His only son... Well...eventually there is no more patience...and judgment will fall on those who reject the invitation.

So, the King is angry and He's done, and He sends troops into the city and burns it. **And did you know...that's exactly what would happen in 70AD?** Yes, in less than 40 years, Jerusalem would burn to the ground! Titus Vespasian, the Roman General, who would become Emperor, came to Jerusalem, in 70AD and destroyed the city.

And so, the religious leaders of the nation of Israel had rejected the Messiah, and so, God was rejecting them. You see, it's the religious leaders who are pictured in the parable as the ones who had received the initial invitation. But you remember, Jesus came to His own and His own received Him not! **What does the King do then? Well, He changes course and gives new instructions...**

Matthew 22:8-10

⁸Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' ¹⁰And 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.

The King said to His servants...go out into the crowded intersections...to the main roads and invite everyone... anybody you find...it doesn't matter who they are. "The good and the bad..."

The good and the bad? What does that mean? Again...it's Jesus describing the turning of the page on the nation of Israel... They've rejected Him...and they considered themselves good... And, YES...they can still come if they change their mind...but, Jesus is now opening the way for Gentiles... (whom the Israelites consider "bad" people).

You see, this is why Jesus would eventually say this...

Matthew 28:19a

¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,

Church family, may we never forget that we are to go out into the highways and hedges and compel people to come in! And you know what...it's getting harder and harder to get people to come to church. The attendance percentages of Americans continue to drop. We're headed toward how church attendance is in Europe, where less than 10% of all Europeans attend church on any given Sunday. In America even the most committed members are attending less.

Did you know according to Pew Research over the last 20 years, Christians in America are attending church (on average) one Sunday less per month. Where you used to have people come to church 4 out of 4 Sundays, now they come 3 and those who came 3 out of 4, now come 2. Why? We're busy. We've got (like in the parable...) the farm, the business, and in the last 20

years, entertainment and sports. People go on the weekends... If it's a three-day weekend, they're gone and if they have kids who are decent at sports at all...they're gone. It's just a new day. And it is what it is.

Honestly, I used to lament these facts, but I don't anymore. They're not going to change...they're only going to get worse nation-wide, I believe. So, what do we do? We better do what we do here with excellence, because there is so much competing for your time. We better make this experience something that provides great value in your life...or we might lose you. I get that!

Will we lose you too? Will you continue to come less and less? You see, when I was a kid, you went to church no matter what...that's just what you did. That's what committed members of a church did. You went to church...Sundays and Wednesdays. They worked in the church...they gave of their time and money and you could count on them.

Folks, might I tell you that this is still the expectation that we should have. This is your church and if you're truly committed to the things of Jesus...then you should be committed to what He was committed to. Remember...What did He die for? The Church! The Bride! It's important to Him and it should be to us.

It's a New Year...will you be committed to Christ? Listen to me please, this is what's so sad about the numbers...if the current trends continue, the statisticians tell us church attendance in America will drop from the current 20% to 15.4% in 2020 and then be down to only 11.4% of Americans by 2050 will attend church on any given Sunday. Will that be you?

You see church family, we're doing all we can to try to reach people. To follow the teaching of Jesus to go out literally beg people to come... That's why we do Flag Football and Trunk or Treat and the Christmas Candlelight Celebration...and make it snow...we're going out into the highways and the thoroughfares and compelling people to come. This is us...



We're the Lord's servants and we'll do all we can these next few months to get people to come. We'll do the Passion Play in March and Hunt Easter Eggs at Easter and have Soccer in April and May and we'll be here **every** Sunday in between extending the invitation on behalf of the King! Why? Because He's worthy and it's the least we can do for all He's done for us!

Oh...there's one other thing about the parable that we can't miss... Someone tried to crash the party...

Matthew 22:11-14

¹¹“But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. ¹²And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. ¹³Then 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.’¹⁴ For many are called, but few are chosen.”

You ask, “What does this mean?” Well, there is some debate about this guy and why he didn’t have the wedding garment on and just what the wedding garment is and where he got it...but, I’m not going to go into all of those nuances...instead... I think I might can best explain this by pointing back to our customs during a wedding reception... Take a look at this wedding reception...



As you look at that picture...How do people typically dress for weddings? Do they put on their shabby clothes that they do their yard work in...or do they typically dress up? Dress up, right? Right. So, even in that picture...if someone showed up with shorts on and a tank-top and flip-flops...we’d think that’s odd...right? Sure!

Well, in the first century, Kings would often hand out wedding attire...a garment for the people to wear if they were coming to a wedding for his son or daughter. This was to be kind and gracious so that no one would stick out if they couldn’t afford nice clothes. Everyone got the same thing.

Therefore, to come in to the wedding reception, without the garment on, would be a slap in the face to the King. It would be another sign of disrespect. Again...this guy would be easy to spot. He’d stick out like a sore thumb... So, he’s not hiding from anybody. So, the king walks up to him and says, “What are you doing?” Did you see how the guy responded in verse 12? He was speechless.

Oh, so many people think they’re going to argue their way into heaven. They’re not! They won’t be able to argue their way into heaven. You know, I don’t know what this guy was thinking? Maybe he was thinking... “I’m just going to be me. I’m just going to be myself. I don’t have to wear what anybody tells me. I’m free to be me.” No, you’re not. You’re free to either come on God’s terms or get thrown out. But listen, if you don’t come wearing the garment that God says you have to wear... No, you don’t get in! In fact, you get hauled off and because of your obstinant rebellion, you get thrown into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth...

Listen...**Jesus has described the greatest celebration that those people could ever comprehend in their culture.** In essence He’s said...the Kingdom of heaven is like the greatest celebration imaginable thrown by the wealthiest King, that would be God, and the greatest servabt of them all is inviting you...that would be Jesus. Will you accept the invitation?

Might I pose the question this way... What is the grandest trip you could imagine? Hawaii? Disney? What if I offered you a 2-week, all-expense paid trip to any destination in the world...and \$10,000 worth of spending money to boot. Would you take it? I’d jerk your arm off if you were offering that to me...

And I think I would be excited like this little boy...do you remember him...



That's Charlie Bucket from the movie: "Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory." And here's the ticket he found in the chocolate bar...



So, Charlie got to experience the adventure of a lifetime. He accepted the invitation of Willy Wonka.

Hey Folks...let me show you who's offering you an invitation at this very moment...not to a chocolate factory or to Disney or Hawaii but the paradise of heaven...



And He did more than just extend an invitation for you...He punched your ticket...when He allowed Roman soldiers to punch spikes through His hands and feet. Jesus offered Himself as the sacrifice as the invitation.

Willy you receive Him or will you be like the people in the parable and reject Him. Oh, how I wish I could get into your mind and flip the switch for you if you don't know Jesus! Oh, I wish I could describe to you the unimaginable joy of knowing Jesus...knowing you have on the wedding garment of salvation...it's better than Hawaii or Disney...I love both places...but, they don't hold a candle to Jesus. What a joy to know that one day I'm going to heaven and to be part of that grand Marriage Reception in the great banquet hall of heaven with the King!
