

# 2.4

## THE PARABLE OF THE BANQUET

**TRUTH ABOUT GOD**

God's grace is for the undeserving.

**TRUTH FOR MY LIFE**

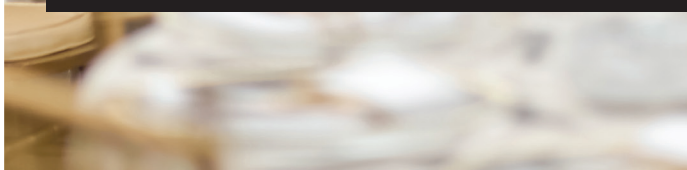
I will accept God's grace to live righteously.



**FOCUS VERSE: Matthew 22:8**

Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

**LESSON TEXT: Matthew 22:1-14**



# BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

**Lesson Text:** Matthew 22:1-14

The Parable of the Banquet demonstrates two major points. The first point is the absurdity and danger in refusing God's generosity toward humanity. The idea that all the king's friends would reject an invitation for a wedding feast at the palace is bizarre. Who could imagine voluntarily missing a feast with free food and drink to work in their fields or warehouses? However, this absurdity is equal to the absurdity of rejecting God's generous offer of repentance and salvation. God has offered eternal life freely for all. How absurd must it appear to Him when some reject it?

Not only is rejecting God's offer absurd, but it is also dangerous. Those who rejected the king's invitation were destroyed. Their farms and merchandise meant nothing afterward. Their lack of proper response had deemed them unworthy of the king's generous invitation. In like manner, there is danger in not accepting God's offer for salvation. As unpopular as the message might appear to some, the Bible is clear that eternal judgment and damnation is awaiting those who reject Christ. God gives us a choice to obey or reject the gospel, and we will reap the blessings or consequences of our choice.

The second major point of this parable is that even though all are invited and welcome, we cannot expect to come on our own terms and conditions. Initially, the response of the king to the guest who did not wear a wedding garment seems harsh. However, in the context of the story, this improperly dressed guest was demonstrating carelessness, selfishness, and lack of respect for the king. Similarly, just because all have been invited to partake in the salvation Christ offers does not mean our sin will be overlooked. We all are invited to come to God's throne of grace, but the invitation is for transformation, not for us to remain the same and still partake in God's blessings. Walking by faith is both active and receptive. Faith is not strictly based on works, as if we could earn God's grace, but neither is faith strictly passive, as if we can expect to receive everything from God while contributing nothing.

In Matthew 22:14, the concluding phrase, "For many are called, but few are chosen," is frequently misunderstood by readers. "Many are called" refers to God's open invitation for salvation. "Few are chosen" refers to those who have prepared their hearts and minds to participate in the salvation God is offering. God is not sadistic, enjoying inviting many just to randomly pick a few. Rather, while God invites all, only some accept His invitation and enter into right relationship with Jesus Christ.

WHILE GOD INVITES ALL, ONLY SOME  
ACCEPT HIS INVITATION AND ENTER INTO  
RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST.

# DAY 1

## Matthew 22:1-3

<sup>1</sup> And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,  
<sup>2</sup> The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,  
<sup>3</sup> and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

### Biblical Insight

The eschatological nature of this parable should be evident from the first line. Weddings were common symbols of Christ's return for His church. Jesus also used the example of a wedding in the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). In the Book of Revelation, our ultimate communion with Christ is described as "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9).

A king would not invite people to the wedding he did not consider his friends or friends of the wedding party. The fact that no one responded to the king's invitation was astounding. However, from Christ's perspective, this example shows how ridiculous it is when people refuse His offer of salvation and eternal life with Him.

### Daily Devotion

If you have ever planned a wedding, you know the frustration that comes with those pesky RSVPs. It is not that difficult to check yes or no, but often no response—silence—is what the wondering bride receives. In the Matthew 22 parable, a verbal RSVP of sorts went out. The servants went to friends of the royal family and invited them, only to receive rejection after rejection. These events were a big deal in those days, maybe even more so than some of the elaborate, fairy-tale weddings today. A refusal in this instance was not taken lightly.

We are invited to the greatest wedding of all time: the gathering together at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Though it is a sacred call, some have tossed their invitations in the trash or lost them under piles of receipts and other nonessential clutter. It is an honor to be invited in, and one we should not take lightly.

Your presence is requested. The invitation is awaiting. How have you or will you respond?

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 2

### Matthew 22:4-6

<sup>4</sup> Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.

<sup>5</sup> But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:

<sup>6</sup> and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

### Biblical Insight

The king was persistent in his invitation. After the first batch of servants returned empty-handed, the king sent others with tempting descriptions of the delicious meal he had prepared. The response of those who received the invitation showed how little they thought of the king and the wedding. The invitees would rather plow their fields and run inventory in their shops than attend. Some invitees were so adamant about not going, they kidnapped the king's servants, abused them, and then murdered them. Such a response was unthinkable, but then again, so is rejecting and despising God's offer of salvation and mistreating His servants whom He has sent to call people to salvation.

### Daily Devotion

The allegory of this specific wedding puts a whole new perspective on the saying, "Don't shoot the messenger." The servants were doing what they were instructed by their master to do. Many of them were mistreated and even killed for simply inviting friends to a joyous wedding.

Many men and women of God also suffer abuse and persecution for extending the invitation to know Christ and to come and dine with Him. The offer is presented to enjoy communion with the Master. Several gladly accept; some angrily reject. When you share what you have been called to, do not expect everyone to receive it gladly. Those who make the correct choice will find new life, rest, and an eternal reward.

The invitation has gone out. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb is being prepared. Will you be in attendance?

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 3

### Matthew 22:7-8

<sup>7</sup> But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

<sup>8</sup> Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

### Biblical Insight

Such a harsh response to the king's call could not go unpunished. The king ultimately destroyed his so-called friends, who had murdered his servants, and razed their entire city to the ground. The king's explanation in verse 8 is telling: "they which were bidden were not worthy." However, the original invitees had been worthy enough to receive an initial invitation but disqualified themselves by their response to the invitation. They were not unworthy because of the king's decree; they made themselves unworthy because of their wicked reaction.

### Daily Devotion

Just like the king gave the invitees a chance to make the right choice, God gives us that choice as well. In the words of the late Robert Frost, "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference." Eternity has only two choices.

We must stay accountable and submitted to godly leadership who are called to protect and guide us along the right path. We may not always agree with them, but they love us and want what is best for our lives.

We must also guard our hearts. Solomon wrote, "Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). Be careful whom you associate with and whom you allow to influence you. Paul later wrote, "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals'" (1 Corinthians 15:33, ESV). Be careful who and what you allow close.

Finally, let's take inventory of how we spend our time and what we listen to and watch. Establish a walk with God for yourself. Nothing is worth losing your soul over. God is gracious and forgiving, but He is also just. When the King invites you, will you say yes to His call?

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 4

### Matthew 22:9-10

<sup>9</sup> Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

<sup>10</sup> So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

### Biblical Insight

By the king's decree, the servants went out and gathered whomever they could find; no cap was put on the number of guests. The king did not discriminate based on family situations, place of origin, wealth, or social status. One way or the other, the wedding feast was going to have guests. Some people's rejection did not discourage the king's continued invitation. His invitation sounds similar to the invitation put forth by the Spirit and the bride at the end of the Bible, an invitation to partake in the water of life that went forth to whosoever will. (See Revelation 22:17.)

### Daily Devotion

Can you imagine being invited to the White House or another renowned site for a party with dignitaries from around the world? You receive the fancy summons in the mail or perhaps by horse-drawn carriage with men in tuxedos and top hats. You plan for months, picking out the finest clothes, and make sure not one hair is out of place on the night of the event.

You arrive and find the only guests are you, the President, and a few diplomats. The food has been prepared in anticipation of hundreds of people, but only a meager few actually show. The President decides to make the most of the situation and sends forth a message via newscast inviting everyone to come. Soon, people of every class, culture, and social status flood through the doors, dressed in the best clothes they have. Those who responded with a yes—though seemingly undeserving—came with gladness. Soon the celebration commences, and the doors are shut.

Like the President in that scenario, the Lord is bidding all to come. There is enough to satisfy all who hunger. He has a place prepared for all who follow Him, no matter how undeserving anyone may feel. There is a seat reserved for you at His table. You are welcome and wanted.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 5

### Matthew 22:11-14

<sup>11</sup> And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:

<sup>12</sup> and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

<sup>13</sup> Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

<sup>14</sup> For many are called, but few are chosen.

### Biblical Insight

Just because all are invited does not mean there are not guidelines to which guests must adhere. The invitees could not simply show up without preparation and expect equal treatment. Nowhere in this parable is it suggested the guest could not afford or did not own a wedding garment. The context of the story suggests the guest neglected the garment out of carelessness, not out of lack of access.

The phrase “weeping and gnashing of teeth” — or a close derivative — is found multiple times in the Gospels. (See Matthew 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28.) Jesus used all these instances to refer to the fate of the unrighteous at the end of time.

### Daily Devotion

A certain rule is enforced in every school across the United States, especially after recent and tragic events. During a lockdown (or code red), once a door is secured, it is not to be reopened until the proper command is given. Students are instructed to find a safe hiding place and avoid being out in the open. The rule of keeping the doors safeguarded may sound harsh, but it is upheld for the safety of those inside. It ensures no one uninvited or potentially harmful is able to gain access to the precious lives on the other side. Even a small crack in the door to allow someone you know to enter can put everyone else at risk.

In Matthew 22:11-14, some entered without the proper precautions, and they were punished for it. Any breach can permit unwelcome and harmful “guests” the ability to access, influence, and even cause destruction to the ones who belong. Once the door is closed, it is up to the Master to decide who can enter. Let us be sure to be ready and living as God has called us to live now and for eternity.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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