

Bi123 The Gospels 2

Lesson Bi123-7 The King's Wedding Feast

Wedding customs vary from place to place, but certain parts are pretty common. At weddings, neighbors and friends usually celebrate with the families of the couple. People dress in their best clothes, eat plenty of good food, and enjoy fellowship. Together they look with hope toward a happy marriage. Sometimes, as this story relates, the original plans don't work. When Jesus spoke in parables, he made use of familiar images and events. In the last lesson he spoke about a vineyard, in this one about a wedding.

Jesus told the crowd: "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused the invitation."

When the day arrived, the king sent some more servants and said, "Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner. My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet" (Matt 22:1-4).

In those days a wedding could last several days. For a king's son and heir, it could be a much longer event. The king called the guests to come, but many of them chose to refuse the invitation. The first invitation was given days or weeks in advance. Then on the appointed day when the food was cooked and ready, the servants went again to tell the guests to come.

Jesus told more of the story, "The invited guests paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city."

Since most of the invited guests had decided they had something more important to do, they chose not to come. By their refusal they dishonored the king and rejected his authority over them. Some even mistreated the king's servants. The king judged them as unworthy to eat at his table and ordered them and their city destroyed.

Then the king said to his servants, "The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find." So the servants went out into the streets, the city gates, and the markets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests (Matt 22:5-10).

Ask yourself this question: What motivated the king to fill the banquet hall with people he did not know?

In this parable, the king represents God, who had prepared a great feast for his son, who represents Jesus. The guests represented the people of Israel. Many Jews refused the invitation to accept Jesus as Messiah and rejected God's authority. Some mistreated his servants, like Stephen

and James. The Jews refused the invitation so God invited Gentiles to come. The gospel is preached wherever there are people who need God.

Two types of people are invited to the feast. The so-called 'good people' think they do not need God. He also invites the 'bad people,' who may think they are too bad to be forgiven by God. From both groups some hear, believe, and accept the invitation. When they do, they become a part of those worthy to come to God's feast. So the first part of the story explains how God includes Gentiles in his salvation invitation.

The second part of the story explains the responsibility of each person. Jesus continued: "When the king came in to see the guests, however, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. He asked, 'How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?' The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are invited but few are chosen" (Matt 22:11-14).

In those days it was customary for a gracious host to provide wedding garments for the guests. However, it seems one person failed to put on the garment provided. This was therefore an insult to the host. The king addressed him directly, because his clothes showed he did not belong there. The man had no response for the king's question.

The Bible speaks of the righteousness of believers as being a white robe (Rev 19:8). Without the proper covering, the righteousness of Christ, the man was cast out into the darkness. Outer darkness, a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, pictures the place of torment the Bible calls hell. In contrast to the banquet hall, full of light and joy, that place is full of darkness and pain.

Many undeserving people are issued undeserved invitations to be part of the Messianic kingdom of God through his servants. In addition God provides the righteousness the invitation demands. The phrase, "few are chosen," suggests that too few actually experience the joys of salvation. Sinners may resist and reject God's invitation. Each individual is responsible for his indifference, rebellion, or self-righteousness. Each person must choose to accept the righteousness that comes by faith in Christ.

This story is **important** because it shows that God is always seeking more people to be a part of his kingdom. This comes through accepting the sacrifice of his son Jesus.

The **main truth** of this story is that though many hear the invitation to be saved; too few respond by faith to it and come.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What was the response of the king when those invited to his feast didn't come?
 - A. [Pause] If you answered that he said, "The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come," you are correct.
2. What did the king say to his servants to make sure the banquet hall was full?

A. [Pause] If you answered he said, “Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find,” you are correct.

3. What did Jesus say to conclude the parable of the wedding feast?

A. [Pause] If you answered that Jesus said, “For many are invited to come, but too few choose to accept it,” you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn the story so you can tell it from memory. After telling the story to someone, ask this question, “What was Jesus telling us when he spoke of the man trying to enter the feast without the proper garment?” (Only those who accept Jesus as Messiah and believe in his sacrifice for sin, will be saved.)