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[Home](#) > [Content Index](#) > [Jesus Christ](#) > [Parables of Jesus](#) > Parable of the Wedding Feast

What is the meaning of the Parable of the Wedding Feast?



Question: "What is the meaning of the Parable of the Wedding Feast?"

Answer: Jesus told the Parable of the Wedding Feast in [Matthew 22:1-14](#). This parable is similar in some ways to the [Parable of the Great Banquet](#) ([Luke 14:15-24](#)), but the occasion is different, and it has some important distinctions. To better understand the context of this story, it is important to know some basic facts about weddings in Jesus' day.

In Jewish society, the parents of the betrothed generally drew up the marriage contract. The bride and groom would meet, perhaps for the first time, when this contract was signed. The couple was considered married at this point, but they would separate until the actual time of the ceremony. The bride would remain with her parents, and the groom would leave to prepare their home. This could take quite a while. When the home was all was ready, the groom would return for his bride without notice. The marriage ceremony would then take place, and the wedding banquet would follow.

The wedding banquet was one of the most joyous occasions in Jewish life and could last for up to a week. In His parable, Jesus compares heaven to a wedding banquet that a king had prepared for his son ([Matthew 22:2](#)). Many people had been invited, but when the time for the banquet came and the table was set, those invited refused to

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The king, enraged at the response of those who had been invited, sent his army to avenge the death of his servants (verse 7). He then sent invitations to anyone his servants could find, with the result that the wedding hall was filled (verses 8-10).

During the feast the king noticed a man “who was not wearing wedding clothes” (verse 11). When asked how he came to be there without the furnished attire, the man had no answer and was promptly ejected from the feast “outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (verses 12-13). Jesus then ends the parable with this statement: “[For many are invited, but few are chosen](#)” (verse 14).

The king is God the Father, and the son who is being honored at the banquet is Jesus Christ, who “came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him” ([John 1:11](#)). Israel held the invitation to the kingdom, but when the time actually came for the kingdom to appear (see [Matthew 3:1](#)), they refused to believe it. Many prophets, including John the Baptist, had been murdered ([Matthew 14:10](#)). The king’s reprisal against the murderers can be interpreted as a prophecy of Jerusalem’s destruction in A.D. 70 at the hands of the Romans (cf. [Luke 21:5](#)). More broadly, the king’s vengeance speaks of the desolation mentioned in the book of Revelation. God is patient, but He will not tolerate wickedness forever ([Obadiah 1:15](#)). His judgment will come upon those who reject His offer of salvation. Considering what that salvation cost Jesus, is not this judgment well deserved (see [Hebrews 10:29-31](#))?

Note that it is not because the invited guests *could not* come to the wedding feast, but that they *would not* come (see [Luke 13:34](#)). Everyone had an excuse. How tragic, and how indicative of human nature, to be offered the blessings of God and to refuse them because of the draw of mundane things!

The wedding invitation is extended to anyone and everyone, total strangers, both good and bad. This refers to the gospel being taken to the Gentiles. This portion of the parable is a foreshadowing of the Jews’ rejection of the gospel in [Acts 13](#). Paul and Barnabas were in Pisidian Antioch, where the Jewish leaders strongly opposed them. The apostle’s words echo the king’s estimation that those invited to the wedding “did not deserve to come”: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles” ([Acts 13:46](#)). The gospel message, Jesus taught, would be made available to everyone.

The matter of the wedding garment is instructive. It would be a gross insult to the king to refuse to wear the garment provided to the guests. The man who was caught wearing his old clothing learned what an offense it was as he was removed from the celebration.

This was Jesus’ way of teaching the inadequacy of self-righteousness. From the very beginning, God has provided a “covering” for our sin. To insist on covering ourselves is to be clad in “filthy rags” ([Isaiah 64:6](#)). Adam and Eve tried to cover their shame, but they found their fig leaves to be woefully scant. God took away their handmade clothes and replaced them with skins of (sacrificed) animals ([Genesis 3:7, 21](#)). In the book of Revelation, we see those in heaven wearing “white robes” ([Revelation 7:9](#)), and we learn that the whiteness of the robes is due to their being washed in the blood of the Lamb (verse 14). We trust in God’s righteousness, not our own ([Philippians 3:9](#)).

Just as the king provided wedding garments for his guests, God provides salvation for mankind. Our wedding garment is the righteousness of Christ, and unless we have it, we will miss the wedding feast. When the religions of the world are stripped down to their basic tenets, we either find man working his way toward God, or we find the cross of Christ. The cross is the only way to salvation ([John 14:6](#)).

For his crime against the king, the improperly attired guest is thrown out into the darkness. For their crimes against God, there will be many who will be consigned to “[outer darkness](#)”—existence without God for eternity. Christ concludes the parable with the sad fact that “many are invited, but few are chosen.” In other words, many people hear the call of God, but only a few heed it.

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kingdom of heaven was opened up to anyone who will set aside his own righteousness and by faith accept the righteousness God provides in Christ. Those who spurn the gift of salvation and cling instead to their own “good” works will spend eternity in hell.

The self-righteous Pharisees who heard this parable did not miss Jesus’ point. In the very next verse, “the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words” ([Matthew 22:15](#)). The Parable of the Wedding Feast is also a warning to us, to make sure we are relying on God’s provision of salvation, not on our own good works or religious service.

Recommended Resource: [Parables of Jesus by James Montgomery Boice](#)

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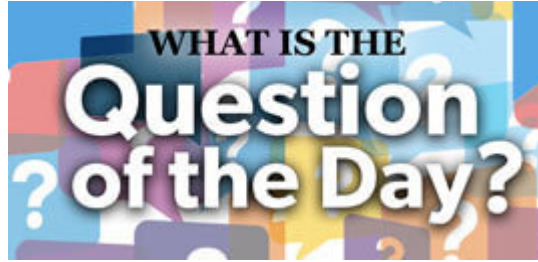
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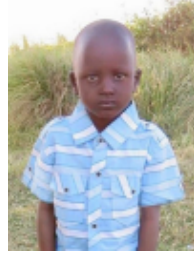


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