

NOON BIBLE STUDY: MATTHEW 22 (PART 1)

Matthew 22:1-14 - Parable of the wedding banquet

1st Century Jewish Wedding Customs

Arrangement & Betrothal - The wedding process typically began with an arrangement: the groom's father would select or approve a bride, negotiate terms with the bride's father, and pay a "bride-price" (Hebrew *mohar*) to seal the agreement.

Once terms were agreed and the contract drawn up (sometimes called a *ketubah*), the couple entered a formal betrothal (*kiddushin*)—this was more than an engagement. The bride was legally bound to the groom, though she still lived in her father's house until the marriage was consummated. The groom would often return to his father's house and build or prepare a home for his bride, then later come and fetch her for the wedding feast.

Preparation & Wedding Feast - After the groom's father approved the preparations, the groom would bring the bride from her father's house to his home or his father's house. Then a wedding feast followed—sometimes lasting for multiple days.

Guests were expected to come to the feast in proper attire. In some Jewish wedding representations, the host provided wedding garments or expected a standard of dress befitting the event.

There are 7 Layers I observed in this parable:

1 - 1st group of invitees unwilling to come. This is likely representative of God's invitation to the Jewish people, aka the "chosen people"

2 - 2nd invite to the first group with a "beefed up" appeal - still unwilling to come. 2/3rds of the invitees just go back to their normal lives (farm and work) and 1/3rd actually mistreats the messengers.

Q - Why would someone reject the direct invitation of a king?

Q - How does this relate to the reasons people would reject the direct invitation to the kingdom of God?

3 - Judgement comes to the group that violently rejected the King's message and hurt his messengers

v. 7 - seems like an extreme punishment - but this may be an inference to the coming destruction of Jerusalem.

4 - The wedding is still happening and so a new invitation is sent out to anyone who would hear and respond to the invitation. Main highways, as many as you find, "all they found", evil and good.

5 - The guests come to the wedding, invitees who were not the first choice, but who responded to the invitation. (There is an indication that these guests understand the privilege it is to be invited to this wedding.)

6 - However, even though a guest is invited to the wedding (with a free invitation), there is an expectation in that culture that the guest comes prepared and properly dressed. The invitation is to the wedding feast of the son of a king!

There is some indication that the king would provide the garments for the guests invited. For those who were invited, given proper attire and then still choose to do things their own way, there is no tolerance from the master of the feast.

Joseph reunited with his brothers and father:

Genesis 45:20-22 (NLT) - Don't worry about your personal belongings, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours." 21 So the sons of Jacob did as they were told. Joseph provided them with wagons, as Pharaoh had commanded, and he gave them supplies for the journey. 22 And he gave each of them new clothes-- but to Benjamin he gave five changes of clothes and 300 pieces of silver.

Samson, as he is preparing for a wedding offers reward for answering riddle:

Judges 14:10-13 (NLT) - As his father was making final arrangements for the marriage, Samson threw a party at Timnah, as was the custom for elite young men. 11 When the bride's parents saw him, they selected thirty young men from the town to be his companions. 12 Samson said to them, "Let me tell you a riddle. If you solve my riddle during these seven days of the celebration, I will give you thirty fine linen robes and thirty sets of festive clothing. 13 But if you can't solve it, then you must give me thirty fine linen robes and thirty sets of festive clothing." "All right," they agreed, "let's hear your riddle."

King of Persia honors Modechai who saved his life:

Esther 6:6-9 (NLT) - So Haman came in, and the king said, "What should I do to honor a man who truly pleases me?" Haman thought to himself, "Whom would the king wish to honor more than me?" 7 So he replied, "If the king wishes to honor someone, 8 he should bring out one of the king's own royal robes, as well as a horse that the king himself has ridden-- one with a royal emblem on its head. 9 Let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials. And let him see that the man whom the king wishes to honor is dressed in

the king's robes and led through the city square on the king's horse. Have the official shout as they go, 'This is what the king does for someone he wishes to honor!'"

In this culture, a wedding garment wasn't optional. It was an expected mark of honor and participation. Guests typically arrived wearing a celebratory robe or were provided one by the host. Thus the man found without it wasn't an accidental outsider — he was someone who refused the host's provision.

7 - Those who respond to the invitation but do not properly prepare themselves to enter the castle are expelled.

Matthew 22:14 - Many Are Called, Few Are Chosen

The phrase “many are called, few are chosen” has been the source of much debate and speculation in different corners of the church. Let's consider its meaning from the parable itself (aka from Jesus himself!). This parable illustrates that though the invitation went out to many (the first group and then a general invitation to everyone), it was a much smaller number that actually ended up enjoying the feast. The parable tells us the reason why - it isn't because God loved some people more or that he really only picked a few that he wanted ahead of time - but it is because of both the valuation and reaction of those invited.

Many are called (invited)

Few are chosen (the ones who end up enjoying the feast)

Q - “What does it mean, in our context, to ‘put on’ the garment the King provides? If we are invited, does it matter how we show up?”

The gospel message is our invitation. We aren't “worthy” to be at the king's feast, but he has invited us and we would be wise to RSVP: “YES”. He has provided what we need to attend and be dressed appropriately, through the sacrifice and covering of Jesus Christ. We then “clothe” ourselves in the righteousness of Jesus and follow him. This righteousness is two fold - we gain are made righteous by the sacrifice of Jesus, and then we live righteous by obeying his words.