



The Wedding Feast

FAMILIES IN TRUTH

Matthew 22:1-14



Jesus longs for us to understand the kingdom of heaven. In Matthew 22:1-14, we get another glimpse of our Heavenly Father. He is generous, patient, and just. He provides everything we need to enter eternal life - if we will just receive His free gift. Pray each day and talk to God about what you are learning.

Day #1: The Banquet

† Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son." - Matthew 22:1-2 (NIV)

Jesus makes it clear from the beginning of this story that this parable is describing the kingdom of heaven. He compared heaven to a great wedding celebration. Whom does the king represent? He represents God, the King of heaven and earth. The guests who were originally invited to the feast represent the people of the nation of Israel, God's holy, chosen people. God promised Abraham that He would make a great nation out of his descendants (Genesis 12:2) and these people, the Israelites, would be set apart from all other people on the earth (Deuteronomy 7:6).

Celebration feasts, such as the one in the parable, would have been a huge event. This was especially true in a royal family. The guests would have been invited well in advance. The people would have let the host know they intended to come, and then when the feast was ready, the servants would alert the guests.

God had promised the Israelites that He would send them the Messiah, a Savior, to save them from their sins (Isaiah 59:20). His people longed for the Messiah to come for years and years. The Israelites anticipated the coming of the Savior, just as the invited guests would have anticipated the big wedding feast.

Finally, the day of the feast arrived! Wouldn't you be excited to go to the greatest party ever held in your town? But look how the guests responded!

*He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the dinner. The servants told them to come. **But they refused.*** - Matthew 22:3

They refused to come! Those who were honored with an invitation rejected the great feast their king had provided. Likewise, God's chosen people rejected God's provision for the forgiveness of their sins - Jesus, the Messiah (Luke 9:22). The feast in the story was not given by just anyone; it was given by the king! The people did not understand his authority over them. We must understand God's authority over us in order to sit at His table (Matthew 8:5-13).

Pray and ask God to help you understand His authority over you and over everything in creation.



Day #2: Second Chance

Imagine planning a huge birthday party and sending out all the invitations. Your parents spend several days decorating and getting ready. The morning of your party, you get up and get dressed really early. You want to be ready when your friends come. The hour arrives, and . . . no one comes. You watch the clock slowly tick. You even check the invitation you sent to make sure it had the right day and time. But no one comes - not one guest. How would you feel? How would you treat the friends you invited the next time you saw them?

When the invited guests refused to come to the king's celebration, how did he respond?

† *Then he 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."* - Matthew 22:4 (NIV)

Why would the king send **another invitation** to his ungrateful subjects? The answer is found in our Heavenly Father's character:

But Lord, you are a God who is tender and kind. You are gracious. You are slow to get angry. You are faithful and full of love. - Psalm 86:15

God is patient and loving. He wants all people to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). He does not want anyone to miss out on heaven.

So what did the people do when the king extended another invitation? This time he even had his servants describe how great the feast would be. He had prepared his best animals for the meal. Surely, they would run to partake of this extravagant meal - after all, **they did not have to do anything but receive the blessings.**

But the people paid no attention. One went away to his field. Another went away to his business. The rest grabbed his servants. They treated them badly and then killed them. - Matthew 22:5-6

Again, the people rejected the invitation. Some people merely went on with their daily life, content to miss out on the feast. But others became violent and killed the king's servants. This seems way too harsh of a reaction for a wedding invitation, but remember, Jesus said this is really a story about the kingdom of heaven. The Israelites often harmed or killed the prophets that God sent to them (1 Kings 19:14). And Jesus knew that He, Himself, would soon be hung on a cross by the people He had come to save.

Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to make you aware of God's call in your life. Do not let the busyness of daily life get in the way of responding to God's invitation.

Day #3: Too Late

We have seen that the king sent a wedding invitation to a select group of people. Then his servants went to gather the guests, but they wouldn't come. Then the king sent more servants with a stronger plea. Again, the people rejected the king's offer and some of the invited people even killed the messengers. The king had been generous and patient, but what did he do next?

The king became very angry. He sent his army to destroy them. They killed those murderers and burned their city. - Matthew 22:7

There comes a time when enough is enough. Even a loving, generous, patient king must be just. He must punish wrongdoing. The king in this story is a picture of God. He is loving and patient, giving His people many opportunities to turn from their sins. But because He is perfect, He must punish sin.

+ *He is the Rock, His works are perfect, and all His ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is He. - Deuteronomy 32:4*

God's chosen people rejected Jesus, God's provision - the only WAY to get into heaven (John 14:6). They did not believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah, even though God made it very clear to them (Isaiah 53, Micah 5:2, Zechariah 9:9). Jesus was not what they were expecting. They did not want a humble Savior, they wanted a glamorous king. They did not want to come to God His way, they wanted things their way. God's chosen people killed many prophets who came from God (2 Chronicles 36:16, Acts 7:52) and even killed Jesus. God's judgment finally came to those who rejected the Messiah. [Parent's note: The city of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman Army in 70AD. The Temple was destroyed and it is estimated that 1.1 million Israelites were killed.]

This is very bad news for those who did not trust God's Way. Tomorrow we will look at some incredibly wonderful news!

Pray and ask God to make your heart ready for the awesome news He has for you.

Day #4: The Good News

Yesterday we looked at some very bad news. There is a time when it is too late to accept God's provision of Jesus as our Savior. This was symbolized when the king destroyed the people who rejected His invitation. What did the king do then? Did he cancel the feast?

+ *Then the king said to his servants, "The wedding dinner is ready. But those I invited were not fit to come. Go to the street corners. Invite to the dinner anyone you can find." So the servants went out into the streets. They gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad. Soon the wedding hall was filled with guests. - Matthew 22:8-10*

The king invited ANYONE the servants could find to come to the royal gala! Jesus makes it clear that this time, anyone who would come was welcome. Likewise, God has opened the invitation of heaven to all men and women, all boys and girls. The invitation is no longer just for His chosen people, but to all who believe. This is AWESOME news!

There is no difference between those who are Jews and those who are not. The same Lord is Lord of all. He richly blesses everyone who calls on Him. - Romans 10:12

Jesus even uses the words "both good and bad." We might expect the king to invite the people of the town who seemed good, but it

Day #4 continued:

is surprising that he would include the bad people. The Greek word used for bad is "poneros." It could mean physically imperfect, such as someone who was diseased or blind. It could also mean bad in behavior. Why would the king's servants gather those who were obviously bad as well as those who seemed good?

Again, we can look to the character of our Heavenly Father for the answer. God makes it clear that there is nothing we can do to earn our way into heaven. Not one person is good enough. Romans 3:23 tells us, "Everyone has sinned. No one measures up to God's glory." It is only by accepting what He has provided for us that we can enter heaven. When we place our faith in Jesus' substitution on the cross for the atonement of our own sin, we receive eternal life.

We firmly believe that people are made right with God because of their faith. They are not saved by obeying the law. - Romans 3:28

[For a more detailed discussion, see Days #2 and #3 of FIT: Parable of Gates at <http://www.bl4k.com>

Day #5: Righteous Robe

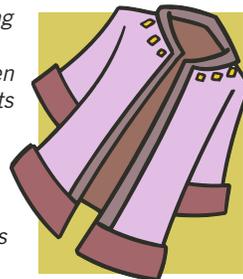
+ *The king came in to see the guests. He noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. "Friend," he asked, "how did you get in here without wedding clothes?" The man couldn't think of anything to say. Then the king told his servants, "Tie up his hands and feet. Throw him outside into the darkness. Out there people will sob and grind their teeth." Many are invited, but few are chosen. - Matthew 22:11-14*

It was customary for Kings in the Middle East to provide the wedding garments for their guests. It was not something the guest was expected to come with. It was a gift from the king. But this man decided not to receive this gift. He thought what he was wearing would do. But his clothes were NOT acceptable to the king. It was the King's celebration. The subjects must do things HIS way.

The man's clothes represent the things people try to do to earn their way to heaven. But, because God is perfect, even the very best thing we can do is filthy compared to His goodness. Isaiah 64:6 says, "All of the good things we do are like polluted rags to you." The Bible often uses clean garments to represent righteousness (or being without sin).

The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you." - Zechariah 3:4 (NIV)

We are joyful because we belong to our God. He has dressed us with salvation as if it were our clothes. He has put robes of godliness on us. - Isaiah 61:10b



We are all standing in filthy rags before a perfect God. Will you accept His provision of a fresh, clean, holy robe of righteousness? If God has revealed to you that you are a sinner, and you believe that Jesus is God's Son, that He came to earth in human form, that He lived a perfect sinless life, and that He died on the cross to meet God's requirement (Leviticus 17:11), pray and tell God you believe. Place your trust in Jesus as the ONLY WAY to have eternal life. When you trust and believe, God will help you turn from your old ways and follow Him as the Lord of your life.

I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation. - 2 Corinthians 6:2b (NIV)