



The King's Ransom

Matthew 20:28

Text

Matthew 22:1-14

Topic

Jesus tells a parable in which He compares the earthly kingdom God promised the Jews to a wedding banquet

Title

"My Big Foretold Jewish Wedding"

Introduction

You're familiar with wedding crashers, but did you know there are wedding **bashers**?

Bridal websites and publications are using the term more frequently. They use it to describe someone who spends the day finding fault with the wedding.

Then there are the weddings that get more seriously bashed.

I read an article describing a wedding reception that turned into a brawl after the best man pushed into the buffet line to help himself to a piece of chicken.

The bride's sister was left with a broken nose and two black eyes after she was allegedly punched unconscious by her uncle.

Bashers and crashers figure prominently in the Parable of the Wedding Feast Jesus told. It goes without saying that you don't want to be identified with either of them.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You Should Have No Resemblance To A Wedding Basher, and #2 You Should Have No Reason To Be A Wedding Crasher.

#1 You Should Have No Resemblance To A Wedding Basher

(v1-7)

We are living at a time when anti-Jewish sentiment is high and growing. An August 6 web article stated the following:

A heavily Jewish section of Paris was looted and attacked as crowds shouted "Gas the Jews." Multiple synagogues and Jewish centers in Paris and elsewhere in France were firebombed.

In Berlin protesters shouted "Jew, cowardly pig, come out and fight."

While in Frankfurt they carried signs such as "The Jews are Beasts" and the Star of David is "The Star of the Devil."

In the Hague, Netherlands, crowds chanted "death to all Jews."

In England, particularly London, there have been over 100 anti-Semitic incidents.

In Miami, protesters chanted "Jews, remember Khaybar, the army of Muhammed is returning," commemorating an Islamic war victory.

In Boston, pro-Israel supporters had to be rescued from an angry crowd that shouted "Jews back to Birkenau" and "Drop dead." A pro-Israel student was attacked by a woman insisting that Jerusalem would be cleansed of Jews, while another crowd shouted that "Jews better learn how to swim."

There are dozens of other examples.

Worse than all those, however, is the fact that the professing church has, in large part, abandoned Israel. One researcher claims,

Today there are approximately 100 million American church members who have very little to no understanding of Bible prophecy. These church members are from replacement theology churches that don't teach Bible prophecy and who look at prophetic scriptures as allegorical and not literal. Consequently, they do not understand the importance of Israel to the God of Israel or God's redemptive plan for Israel and the nations.

What is "replacement theology?"

Replacement theology essentially teaches that the church has replaced Israel in God's plan. Adherents of replacement theology believe the Jews are no longer God's chosen people, and God does not have specific future plans for the nation of Israel.

I found a list of the major denominations that adhere to replacement theology. It seems well researched. On the list are the Roman Catholic Church, the United Methodist Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., the Episcopal Church, and the United Church of Christ.

Reformed theology, in general, is replacement oriented. While many in the Reformed camp argue their position isn't 'replacement,' they do not believe Israel has a unique place anymore in the plan of God.

Replacement theology is a form of wedding bashing. God is not through with His chosen nation - and that should be obvious to even a casual observer.

The church did not replace Israel in God's plan, but is something beautiful in addition to His plan for Israel.

If God can renege on even one of His promises to His covenant people, than what hope do we have He will keep them to us?

We have every hope, because our God is faithful, and cannot lie.

The Parable of the Wedding Feast is a simple, strait-forward explanation of God's dealings with Israel.

- The King in the parable is God.
- The son is His Son, The Lord, Jesus Christ.

- The wedding banquet is the literal kingdom on the earth promised to the Jews throughout their Scriptures.
- The initially invited guests are the Jews, the nation of Israel.
- The messengers sent to them are the prophets, and the first preachers of the Gospel.

Mat 22:1 And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said:

Mat 22:2 "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son,

God made certain unconditional covenants with the Jews:

1. The Abrahamic Covenant promised Israel a land, a posterity and a ruler, and a spiritual blessing (Genesis 12:1–3).
2. The Palestinian Covenant promised Israel a restoration to the land and occupation of the land (Deuteronomy 30:1–10).
3. The Davidic Covenant promised Israel a king from David's line who would rule forever - giving the nation rest from all their enemies (2 Samuel 7:10–13).

(BTW: The Bible never uses the term "Palestinian Covenant," and Moses certainly never would have called the land "Palestine." It's better to refer to it as the Land Covenant).

Many Old Testament passages describe a literal kingdom on the earth. It's when the lion will lie down with the lamb, to quote one of the most famous representations of it.

We learn in the Revelation of Jesus that it will last one thousand years, and because that is *mille annum* in Latin, we call it the Millennium or the Millennial Kingdom.

The wedding motif represents God's attitude about the kingdom He promised to establish for Israel. He envisioned it as a festive time that every one of His chosen people would rush to attend and enjoy. The thousand years would be like one, long wedding feast.

A meager earthly equivalent would be something like the recent royal wedding of Prince William to Kate Middleton. It was watched by millions of people in over 180 countries around the world. It was a spectacle, a phenomenon, and if you were invited, you planned months in advance to be there.

But it's like an afternoon at *Chuck E. Cheese* compared to what God has in store.

Mat 22:3 and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come.

Notice that the servants were sent out "to call those who were invited to the wedding." They were *already* invited by virtue of being God's specially chosen nation. The time they should have been preparing for had arrived.

There had been a previous announcement - what today we'd call a 'save the date' announcement.

We can even get specific about the date. Daniel was praying back in about the sixth century BC. The Lord dispatched the angel Gabriel to give Daniel a remarkable prophecy that describes the history of Israel. It's the Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks.

We don't have time to go into it right now, but it contains a mathematical component by which the Jews could have calculated the exact date on their calendar that Jesus Christ would enter Jerusalem as their King.

They did not 'save the date.' But God would not be deterred.

Mat 22:4 Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding." '

This second wave of "other servants" might refer to the first ten or so years after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus into Heaven. The apostles and those converted by their preaching continued to invite mostly Jews to the kingdom.

Mat 22:5 But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business.

Mat 22:6 And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them.

Stephen is a good example of this. The first martyr of the church, he was stoned to death for preaching the Gospel to the Jews.

As far as we know, all the original apostles, with the possible exception of John, died martyr's deaths; and John was severely persecuted, even if he did die a natural death.

The Jews continued stiff-necked in their refusal, and at the end of the Book of Acts the apostle Paul said,

Act 28:28 "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!"

The promised kingdom was on hold; postponed. Jesus would establish it upon His return to the earth, at His Second Coming.

Mat 22:7 But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

Would to God this were just a figure of speech or an allegory. It was not.

We typically say that Titus and the Roman legions destroyed Jerusalem and its Temple in 70AD. That was the year they breached the walls, true; but the entire campaign started in 66AD and last until 73AD.

It was, to put it simply, awful. Accounts of it are for Mature Audiences, rated V for extreme violence.

Contrary to popular sentiment, that was not the end of God's care and concern for Israel. He promised to restore them to their land - which He has. Through the coming Great Tribulation, He will turn the hearts of His people back to Him. They will receive Jesus at His Second Coming and He will establish their kingdom just as He promised.

What can we glean from this parable? Quite a lot.

In verse five we read, "But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business."

The Jews knew (or could have known) the exact date that their King would roll into town. Instead, "they made light of it"; they thought little about it. They were apathetic.

Dare we say that making light of prophecy can lead to spiritual apathy? *Of course it does.*

The apostle Peter thought that prophecy was the thing that kept you razor-sharp as a believer. The whole last chapter of his second letter encourages you to look for and thereby hasten the coming of The Lord.

We have very little excuse for ever growing spiritually apathetic. For one thing, we **don't** know the date The Lord is coming for us, because His coming is imminent. It could happen at any moment. There's no time for apathy if you're looking for The Lord to return at any moment.

Imminency ought to keep us sober and vigilant. If I'm taking the Christian life lightly, putting off my walk with The Lord, I'm betting He won't return while I'm being spiritually lazy, or while I'm in sin.

It's a bad bet, not just because I might get caught off-guard at His coming for the church, but because it begins to affect my walk in general, and I think less-and-less about personal holiness.

We also read, in verse five, they "went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business."

Those aren't bad things; there's nothing wrong with farms and businesses. But we might do well to consider how we might insert The Lord in them; how we might acknowledge His ways through them.

Is it just *Chic-fil-A* and *In-n-Out* and *Hobby Lobby* that are called to let the world know there is something more - Someone greater? We should be asking The Lord how we can insert Him in our daily business.

It's also one of those "what does it profit you" comparisons. If your farm, or your business, is keeping you from serving The Lord, there's a problem.

What is His way for your farm? For your business? For your family? For your future?

Develop a spiritual strategy to be more of a witness everywhere you find yourself.

#2 You Should Have No Reason To Be A Wedding Crasher (v8-14)

A third wave of invitations is sent out:

Mat 22:8 Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy.'

Mat 22:9 Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.'

Mat 22:10 So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.

Historically, this would describe all the period after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple until the kingdom is established.

It's the time in which we live, which Jesus earlier described as the church. It includes the Great Tribulation - the seven years after the church is resurrected and raptured.

During this time, the invitation is going out all over the earth, to everyone, everywhere.

"Both bad and good" are invited. What does that mean?

It's a summary of things Jesus has said before. Commentator Adam Clarke points out that Matthew had already recorded several such opposites. Clark said,

The church is the threshing floor, where the wheat and the chaff are often mingled (Matthew 3:12). It is the field, where the tares and the true grain grow together (Matthew 13:26-27). It is the net, which collects of all kinds of fish, both good and bad (Matthew 13:48).

Later, in Matthew twenty-five, Jesus would use yet another contrast to describe the folks who survive the Great Tribulation - the sheep and the goats.

"Bad" and "good" are shorthand for those we would call "lost" and "saved."

At the end of the age, when Jesus returns to establish the kingdom, only those who are saved will enter it. The parable describes this in terms of whether or not the person is wearing the wedding garment provided him by the King.

Mat 22:11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment.

Apparently, you had to wear a special wedding robe, given to each guest by the host. Whether this was the custom at every Jewish wedding, or just for royal weddings, I cannot tell.

It's really not so strange a custom. There are still restaurants where, if you're a guy, you cannot eat without wearing a jacket. Many of them have jackets on hand you can borrow; but in others, you're simply turned away.

Mat 22:12 So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless.

First, let's talk about the garment. It is among my favorite illustrations of the salvation that you receive by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

The prophet Isaiah said of us,

Isa 64:6 But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags...

He was describing what we would look like, spiritually speaking, if we were to stand before God. If all of our good deeds - our "righteousnesses" - could be spun into a beautiful robe, our very, very best would be like filthy rags in comparison.

Who do you consider to be the most holy, saintly person to ever live? Most of the time, the average person will say, "Mother Theresa."

Her entire lifetime of very best good deeds are filthy rags when seen in the holiness of Heaven.

How filthy? I need to tell you what the text is really describing; and it's pretty gross. If you don't want to be exposed to it, or if you've got little ones - time to cover ears.

Ready? The phrase "filthy rags" describes a woman's used menstrual cloths.

Let me give you a more complete picture of the garments. It's found in Zechariah chapter three.

Zec 3:1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him.

Zec 3:2 And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?"

Zec 3:3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel.

Zec 3:4 Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes."

Zec 3:5 And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head, and they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the LORD stood by.

Understand that Joshua was the high priest. He was dressed, on earth as he served in the Temple, in the most glorious, expensive, garments ever sown. He was decked-out with gold and gems galore.

Standing before The Lord, on earth, he looked magnificent. He was the best-dressed person on earth, and through the rituals and ceremonies required of him, he was the most prepared person on earth to stand before God. He was the only one allowed to enter the Holy of Holies.

In Heaven his righteousnesses were still filthy garments.

God exchanged Joshua's garments for those of His own provision. The "Angel of The Lord" Who stood nearby was none other than Jesus Who would provide those garments for Joshua and for everyone who believes by His death upon the Cross.

Second Corinthians 5:21 summarizes it, saying,

2Co 5:21 For He made Him [that is, Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Our sin - like a filthy garment - was put on Jesus, while His righteousness - like a pure robe - is put on us.

This exchange takes place when God's grace frees your will to enable you to receive His Son as your Savior. He exchanges righteousness for sin, and declares you righteous on the basis of what Jesus did on the Cross.

The garment is given, not earned. There is therefore no reason for remaining in your sin.

Mat 22:13 Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

This is when you start singing, *Mamma Told Me Not to Come*.

We might joke now; it's black humor to defer the horror. Eternal torment is real. Hell is real. I wish it weren't; but it is. One author wrote,

Jesus chose strong and terrifying language when He spoke of Hell. I believe He chose to speak this way because He loves us and wanted to warn us. So let's not miss the point: He spoke of Hell as a horrifying place, characterized by suffering, fire, darkness, and lamentation.

I believe His intention was to stir a fear in us that would cause us to take Hell seriously and avoid it at all costs.

Mat 22:14 "For many are called, but few are chosen."

This saying of the Lord's has been used to try to limit the scope of His call to salvation, when, in fact, it does not.

The terms "many" and "few" divide the whole of humanity into two unequal parts. The "many" and the "few" **add up to everyone**.

If you're not buying that, the parable itself teaches us that "many" and "few" add up to everyone, because **everyone** who could be found **anywhere** - both good and bad - was included in the invitation.

It was an all-inclusive invitation.

Jesus said of Himself that, if He be lifted up on the Cross, He would draw all men to Himself (John 12:32).

He didn't mean all men would be saved, but that the Cross would exert an influence of grace upon every hard human heart to free the will in order to be enabled to receive or reject Him.

Jesus is the Savior of all men - especially those who believe. His sacrifice as our Substitute on the Cross is sufficient to save everyone, but only becomes effective in those who receive Him.

In that sense, you are "chosen" by God, having received His Son by grace, through faith.

If you are not yet saved, what is your reason?

The guest in our parable offered no reason. He realized there was no reason, and, he realized too late, *that it was too late*.

It's not too late, not today, not for **you**.

For those of us who are walking with The Lord, let's ask Him to show us how His ways and our ways either coincide or are out of synch - so that we can be those who live preparing for the trumpet that will call us home in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.