

THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING BANQUET

Matthew 22:1-22

Key Verses: 22:1,2

"Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: `The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son.'"

In the last passage, through the parable of the tenants, we learned that we must be careful when we obtain God's blessing so that we may maintain God's blessing properly. If we don't maintain God's blessing properly, we fall into the illusion that the vineyard is not God's, but it is ours. We can say, "My children are not God's children given to me as gifts, but they are mine. This one is mine and that one is mine. All my children are mine. My life is mine." Those in this illusion abandon God; finally they become godless and candidates for the kingdom of the devil. Today we study about how God wants to bring his children to his glorious kingdom, the kingdom of God through the parable of the wedding banquet. Let's learn the importance of having a living hope in the kingdom of God.

First, the kingdom of God (1-2). Look at verse 2. "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son." This verse tells us that the kingdom of God is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. The kingdom of God is the place of happiness and joy and is full of blessing.

People who live in this world suffer much, but they suffer most because of their sorrow. One pianist almost mastered her piano performance. In order to concentrate only on piano practice, win a [contest](#), and be a piano soloist known around the world, she divorced her husband. As soon as she divorced and began to live by herself, contrary to her wishes, her right hand began to suffer from rheumatism. Instead of practicing piano, she had to suffer from unbearable pain. After two months her right leg was also invaded by rheumatism and she could not practice piano at all. In addition, [after divorce](#) she suffered from loneliness. So she gained weight remarkably. Suffering from rheumatism was nothing compared to her loneliness. Now she is slightly more than middle-aged; her hope of becoming a world famous pianist left during her time of suffering from rheumatism and loneliness. In short, she is a very sorrowful woman, caused by her human ambition. There are many gorgeous [looking](#) young men and women. But during the time of Bible study with them we find that their hearts were broken when their parents broke up. They could not overcome their sorrow, and they cry endlessly. When they don't cry in sorrow, they engage in outrageous behavior toward others. America is a rich country. But America may be number one in the world in having sorrowful people. Two sisters who are very sincere are always sorrowful because their parents are quarreling every night without any obvious reason. They are sorrowful because their parents quarrel over very trivial matters. They study so well, but they are not happy; they are sorrowful. Because of this, Jesus Christ came to this world and became a man of sorrows and was rejected and despised in order to wipe the tears from our eyes. Revelation 7:17 says, "For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God

will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Here the phrase, "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes," means there is no sorrow in the kingdom of God. In the kingdom of God there is only happiness and joy and peace. Again, Revelation 21:4 says, "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." At the beginning of this verse, "He will wipe every tear from their eyes," means that there is no one who sheds tears due to sorrow in the kingdom of God. There are so many people who are pretty much aged. They are crying because of the premonition of their miserable deaths. But in the kingdom of God there is no death. There is only eternal life and eternal beauty in the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ. In short, there is no sorrow in the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is ruled by love and peace. Revelation 5:9,10 say, "And they sang a new song: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." Again, Revelation 5:12 says, "In a loud voice they sang: Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" This verse tells us that our Lord Jesus Christ is worthy to be the eternal Ruler of the kingdom of God, because as the Lamb of God he was slain for our sorrows and sins. The kingdom of God is not like a worldly apartment unit. The kingdom of God is indeed beautiful. Revelation 21:1-2 say, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." The kingdom of God is like a wedding banquet. Most people live to eat well and sleep well. Eating seems to be nothing. But eating is very important. Revelation 3:20 says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." The kingdom of God is the place where we can eat with our Lord Jesus Christ, who was slain for our sins. We know how beautiful it is when a boyfriend and a girlfriend, who grew up purely and nobly, are going to marry. They have a final date right before the marriage and go to a very expensive restaurant. They eat and look at each other and smile, and sometimes the woman's face flushes in shyness and joy. The kingdom of God is like this. The kingdom of God is where Jesus, who was slain, is. There are no tears in the kingdom of God. There is no sorrow in the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is where our Lord Jesus Christ, who was slain for our sins, rules together with us. The kingdom of God is so beautiful that pen and tongue cannot describe it. It is partially described by John who was on the island of Patmos. In short, there are no tears or sorrow in the kingdom of God.

Second, the inimicality of the invited people (3-7). Look at verse 3. "He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come." The last part of this sentence says, "...but they refused to come." They refused to come because they were blind to the spiritual reality.

Look at verse 4. "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.'" In this verse, "he" refers to God. God really wanted to bring his suffering people back to his kingdom. As we know well, people's pride is very easily hurt. When people refused his invitation, God could have punished them. But in his great mercy, he invited them again. He even widely advertised through channels two, five, seven and eleven. The contents of the advertisement were as follows: "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 and rejoice and be happy."

Look at verses 5-6. "But they paid no attention and went offone to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them." We can understand why they rejected the invitation. In the past, a young and very ambitious servant of God, who had a dream of world conquest, thought that a senior pastor who talked a lot about the kingdom of God was too sentimental, mainly because of his old age. The young servant of God thought that it would be good to impute the idea of modernization and world conquest, and that always talking about the kingdom of God makes people gloomy and is impractical. Like that young servant of God, many Christians these days do not have the slightest idea about the kingdom of God. Many young people only want to achieve something. Some want to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. Some want to pick up a boyfriend. Some want to establish future security, when there is no security in this world. But they are very indifferent about the kingdom of God. When we study Matthew's Gospel, we find 54 times the story about the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. And in Matthew's Gospel there are many parables which make some of us very sleepy. These parables mainly talk about the kingdom of God. Today's passage, "The Parable of the Wedding Banquet," describes how God wants to bring his children back to his kingdom so that they may be happy. But they have no idea about the kingdom of God because their heads are buried in the earth and they have no spiritual reality.

The kingdom of God gives us a living hope. But the people of the world want to make some achievements and want to be men and women of fame. One of our shepherdeses was once a feminist, simply because she wanted to be the President of the United States of America. There was a young American who became old during his Ph.D. program. Even after sixteen years had elapsed, he could not pass his prelim, not to mention getting a Ph.D. So he shot his advisor and he also shot himself in the head. Some want to solve their security problem. As soon as they finish undergraduate study they get a proper job and try to marry and establish their future security. These kinds of people only lose all their hair and later become couch potatoes. They have not at all the idea of obtaining the kingdom of God.

Matthew 5:10 says, "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This is the reason Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom (Mt 4:23). Matthew 13:38 says, "The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one...." These verses explain that those who do not have hope in the kingdom of God are like evil men or weeds.

As we have seen, people of the world are very busy. Both husband and wife work to make their future security. One woman worked three full-time jobs for fifteen years, then lost all the money she had earned through gambling. The most serious problem is that men do not know who they are. They think that if they have money, they can live in this world happily and forever. But God made a life span for each person. It is appointed when they are born, and they will die and go to eternity according to God's sovereign will. We cannot live in this world forever. Those who try to do so are earthbound and only interested in the things of the world. They feel bothered by the invitation to the kingdom. So some of them even killed God's servants. This is the reason our one-to-one Bible teachers are rejected again and again, until sometimes they think they are born to be rejected or they lose the sense of their holy mission. But we should not think so. We must follow the footsteps of Jesus. Jesus was rejected again and again, until he was crucified on the cross and shed much blood from his wounds. Therefore, inviting people to the heavenly banquet is not a happy job, but it is a glorious and holy mission given to us.

Third, God's broken shepherd heart. Look at verses 8-9. "Then he said to his servants, The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find." In these verses we can see God's broken heart to invite his suffering people in the world to his heavenly banquet. Look at verses 9-10. "Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find." So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests." God wanted to invite his suffering people in the world, without missing one. Finally God invited all kinds of people and filled the banquet hall. In this way the wedding hall was filled with guests. God's broken shepherd heart always wants to invite anybody and everybody, and any kind of people. There is no discrimination in God in inviting people to his kingdom.

Fourth, wedding garments. Look at verses 11-12. "But when 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 was speechless." Here "wedding garment" is comparable to Jesus himself. Many think that when they say they believe in Jesus, they can go to the kingdom of God, because God is love. But it is mere hallucination. We need a wedding garment to attend the heavenly banquet for the crown prince. We have to prepare wedding garments as a matter of first importance. Ephesians 3:16,17 says, "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you (may be) rooted and established in love...." In short, these verses tell us that our inner man must grow when we accept Jesus Christ. Even if one believed for forty years, if he did not grow, his inner man is like a little infant. So he cannot know who Jesus really is. Again, Colossians 2:6,7 says, "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness." In short, these verses tell us that as the children of God we must commit ourselves in Jesus and build ourselves up as mature children of God, and finally we must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In order to do this, we

need a decision of faith. One pretty young girl said, "I believe in Jesus, but I didn't accept Jesus as my personal Savior." This girl is very pretty. But one of her legs is in the kingdom of Satan and the other leg is in the kingdom of God. So her inner person is in the torment of Satan most of the time; sometimes she is happy when she hears the word of God. These verses tell us that we must make a personal commitment to Jesus. But these days the word "commitment" is taboo in this country. It is because commitment requires responsibility, and people cannot indulge their personal privacy. There are many lesbians, homosexuals, and uncontested divorces in this country because people don't want to be responsible for anything. How can one commit to his wife? How can people commit to their jobs or to God's mission? It is impossible. But it is possible. When one commits to our Lord Jesus Christ, he can commit to his wife, and to his children, and to his country, and to God's holy mission, and his reward will be great. He will be great and he will be a blessing.

We must pray that this country may be rich with those who have committed their lives and futures in Jesus and the kingdom of God, and be poor in uncommitted people. St. Paul cried out in Philippians 3:10, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...." Everybody knows that St. Paul was the best philosopher in the West and the East and the best theologian, who completed the framework of Christianity by writing Romans. But he had never been satisfied with his knowledge of Jesus. So he cried out, "I want to know Christ." After a few minutes, he cried out again, "I want to know Christ." In his dream he cried out again and again, "I want to know Christ." When he woke up, he again cried out, "I want to know Christ." Those who are shallow in learning have the motto: "I know what you are saying." If somebody says something he doesn't know, he answers, "Yeah, I knew that too." But practically, he doesn't know the answer. Such people never want to know something. They become very habitual, like Chicago squirrels. How can we prepare wedding clothes? There is only one way: We must commit in Jesus our lives and futures and learn of him day and night. Then we will be accepted into the kingdom of God and be happy forever.

Those who have no inner man's growth in Jesus will have an especially hard time. Look at verse 13. "Then the king told the attendants, Tie his hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Many worldly Christians think that they can go to heaven because God is love. God is love, and at the same time he is righteous. So those who are not committed in Jesus will be tied up hand and foot and thrown outside into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth forever.

Look at verse 14. "For many are invited, but few are chosen." This verse sounds not so meaningful. But this verse is a sorrowful lamentation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus wanted to invite all people to his kingdom. This is the reason he came to this world and was born in a stable of animals and laid in a manger. He was despised and rejected and finally crucified to open the way to the kingdom of God so that he might invite them all. He diligently invited them to the kingdom of God through his preaching and healing. Jesus invited so

many. But few are chosen to enter the kingdom of God.

Fifth, the Pharisees' intrigue to kill Jesus through a taxation matter (15-22). After hearing Jesus' words that the kingdom of God is like a wedding banquet, they felt Jesus was telling this parable to them. They were very upset. So they planned to trap Jesus in his words to kill him. They made a very clever question. They said, "Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are. Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" This was a very tricky question. At that time, the people of Israel were outraged to pay tax to Caesar, the Roman Emperor. They had a fixed idea that they must pay only the temple tax as the expression of worshiping God. Jesus knew their evil intent and hypocrisy. He said, "Show me the coin used for paying the tax" (19). "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?" "`Caesar's,' they replied. Then Jesus said to them, `Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's'" (21). Jesus' answer is very difficult to understand. When we think simply about this answer, we realize that he is saying that we must fulfill our obligation to our country and at the same time we must fulfill our obligation to God. Human beings are human beings because we have small and large responsibilities. Those who have no sense of responsibility are not noble people; they are sub-human beings. They are those who should not exist in the United States of America. We must fulfill our responsibility for our families, and for our children, and for our country. Most of all, we must fulfill our responsibility to our God Almighty. God wants us to pray that God will make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Today we learned that our main goal in Bible study should be the kingdom of God. And while on earth we should be men and women of responsibility to our nation and to our God.