

## **The Wedding Feast**

**By Elder David Pyles**

The parable of the wedding feast recorded in Mt 22:1-14 is a remarkable piece of prophecy and is also a lesson conveying important scriptural principles. The parable is about a king who prepared a wedding feast for his son. The king sent forth his servants to bid his friends to the feast. Surprisingly, they all refused. So the king sent his servants to bid them again, but this time the servants were to tell that the feast was prepared and ready to be partaken. Those bidden refused yet again, making light of the event, and they even persecuted and killed some of the messengers. The angry king then sent his armies to destroy them and their city. After this, the king sent his servants out a third time, but with the instruction to go to the highways and bid as many as they found, both good and bad. Those of this class came to the feast. However, there was one among them who had no wedding garment. He was ejected on this account. Finally, Jesus summarized the intents of the parable by saying, "*For many are called, but few are chosen.*" (vs 14).

Most Bible readers probably understand the general meaning of this parable, but there are important details that I think many will miss or misinterpret. An understanding of the parable of course begins by properly identifying its characters. The king represented God the Father. The son was Jesus Christ. The messengers were God's apostles and preachers. The wedding was the unification of Christ with His church. Those initially bidden were the Jews. The good and bad taken from the highways were the Gentiles. The armies were of the Romans, who would move to destroy the Jewish nation and the city of Jerusalem about 40 years after this parable was given. The guest with no wedding garment was one who came in apparel of his own choosing instead of what was supplied by the king. This person represented one who thinks he can enter heaven on the strength of his own righteousness instead of the freely-given, imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ.

The Jews were first bidden to the feast when Christ and His disciples preached the gospel to them during the 3.5 years of His ministry. For the most part, the Jews rejected what these men had to say. But God sent His messengers to the Jews a second time

after the resurrection of Christ, and this time they had a more powerful message to tell. The spiritual feast was no longer pending but was already prepared because Christ had been raised from the dead, showing that the salvation of His people had been secured. The second message was also powerfully corroborated by multitudes of prophecies that had been recently fulfilled and by numerous miracles that had been recently done, including some at the hands of the messengers themselves. Notwithstanding all this, the Jews continued to reject the message. God then gave the Jews up to destruction and dispersion by the Romans, and He redirected His messengers to the Gentiles world, where the message would not be limited to a single nation or race as before, but be indiscriminately preached, both to the best of them and to the worst of them. The gospel message has remained primarily with the Gentiles ever since and has spread throughout the world.

The prophecies implicit in the parable have been so accurately fulfilled that anyone who would dismiss the parable as coincidental is even more unreasonable than the recalcitrant guests it describes. The exact fulfillment of these prophecies should also move us to the conclusion that all other details of the parable must be carefully noted. However, this is where some Christians either become careless or else spin the parable to support preconceived notions.

In particular, the king is commonly represented as “inviting” the various persons to the feast. Even some modern translations of the Bible commit this error. In fact the word “invite” is never used; rather, the guests were “bidden.” The underlying Greek word is elsewhere translated as “called.” The Bible never represents the preaching of the gospel as an invitation, nor does it represent it as an offer. Rather, it is a “call.” The difference is important. A man does no wrong for declining an invitation or an offer, but the characters in the parable were punished for refusing to respond. This is because they had been “called” by the king, and this call imposed on them an obligation. Accordingly, all men are called by the gospel, and called to acknowledge that Jesus is the resurrected Son of God, and called to believe and obey His word. This call is accompanied with the blessed promise that all who sincerely respond are the recipients of eternal life and partakers of a spiritual feast. However, this call is not an invitation or an offer. Those who reject it will endure the worst imaginable consequences.

Another part of the parable that is commonly misconstrued or dismissed is the conclusion that Jesus said should be drawn from it. He ended the parable saying, "*For many are called, but few are chosen.*" (vs 14). This may be a surprising conclusion to some because they expected Him to say, "For many are called, but few choose." Because it is contrary to prior notions, this part of the parable is commonly dismissed as if it were a mistranslation. The problem is that all reputable translations of the Bible agree there is no credible evidence supporting such doubts.

The stated conclusion conveys a higher truth that underlies the superficial impressions of the parable. This higher truth is so abundantly taught in scripture that experienced students will not be surprised to find it presented here as well. The higher truth is that men rightly choose in spiritual matters because they were chosen by God to do so. They were chosen by God for a change of heart by the Holy Spirit to enable and dispose them to proper spiritual choices. A mere sample of scriptures teaching this principle is: Ps 65:4, 110:3, Prov 16:1, Jn 15:16, Rom 11:5-7, Eph 1:4, 1Thes 1:4, 2Thes 2:13, Tit 1:1, 1Pet 1:2, 2:9. Scriptures also repeatedly say that without this enabling grace, men invariably respond to the gospel as was done by the rejecters in the parable (e.g. Ps 10:4-6, Jn 8:43-47, Jn 10:25-30, Rom 8:5-8, 1Cor 2:14).