

The Church of the Servant King
Survey of the Bible Series
The Gospel of Matthew
(Lesson SB-MT22)

The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14)

Summary of the meaning of this parable: This parable (as most of Jesus' parables) is designed to illustrate or teach a point of truth regarding the Messianic kingdom (i.e. the "kingdom of heaven" or the "kingdom of God"). The point of truth that Jesus is teaching is simply that those who had rejected the invitation to enter the kingdom of heaven (i.e. the Messianic kingdom) through the message of the gospel of the kingdom (preached by Jesus and His disciples and John the Baptist) would be destroyed by the armies that attend Christ's Second Advent prior to the establishment of the Messianic (Millennial) kingdom. [e.g. Matt 24:29-31; 25:31] Also, after the Second Advent and as the Messianic kingdom is being established during this battle, the invitation to participate is extended to Gentiles as well as Israel. Any unbelievers (the man without the wedding garment) will be destroyed and ultimately cast into the Lake of Fire at the Last Judgment.

Further points of analysis in support of this interpretation: There are other interpretations of this parable that have been made by dispensationalists and others which attempt to connect this passage with 1) a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD; and/or 2) to interpret the casting "into outer darkness" to refer to the fate during the Millennial Messianic kingdom of the unfaithful believers of the Church Age dispensation (in resurrection body). However, I find those interpretations unacceptable.

The destruction of Jerusalem did occur in 70 AD and represented the 5th Cycle of discipline (Le 26:14-33) toward Israel for failure to accept the offer of the kingdom (e.g. Acts 3:19). However, to interpret the destruction in this passage to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD would require that the wedding feast (i.e. the establishment of the Messianic kingdom) follow that event. The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD was in no way related to the establishment of the Millennial kingdom and did not accomplish the purging of unbelievers from the kingdom as is taught in this parable (verses 11-13) and as will occur during the establishment of the Messianic kingdom.

The phrase "weeping and gnashing of teeth" is never used in reference to the Church Age believer. It is a phrase descriptive of the Jewish (and Gentile) unbeliever during the period of time that the gospel of the kingdom (i.e. "the kingdom of heaven is at hand") was preached during Jesus' public ministry. Unbelievers during that period will join other unbelievers of all dispensations at the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the Millennial kingdom in what is known as the Second Resurrection (Re 20:11-15) and be cast into the Lake of Fire after having been judged "according to their works" (Re 20:13) which are not sufficient to save. [For a further analysis of this phrase "weeping and gnashing of teeth" see the chart and notes associated with our study of Matthew 8].

Other points of analysis of this passage which bolster this interpretation include the following –

- The "king" (verse 2, 7, 11, & 13) represents God the Father.
- The "son" (verse 2) is Jesus Christ.
- The "marriage" (verse 2) is the uniting of all believers on earth under the rule of the Messiah. Believers of prior dispensations rule and reign with Christ during this period [Heb 12:22-24; Re 3:21; 5:10; 20:4, 6] and Israel has a very prominent position among the nations once again [e.g. Is 2:1-4; 11:11-16; 44:21-28 among many others].
- The "servants" (verse 3) are the prophets and Jesus' disciples who proclaimed the Messiah's arrival, but who were rejected by the religious of Jesus' day. See also Matthew 21:33ff.

- The “wedding” (verse 4) is the same as the “marriage supper of the Lamb” [Re 19:9] or the “wedding feast” that pictures the Messianic kingdom after the Second Advent of Christ.
- The “armies” are angels that will attend Christ’s Second Advent and defeat His foes [Re 19:14].
- The “murderers” (verse 7) are those unbelievers during the last seven years of the Age of Israel (Dan 9:24ff) known as the Tribulation who will persecute believers (even to the point of death for some [Re 20:4]). **Note:** It is vitally important when interpreting this parable of Jesus to keep the dispensational perspective in mind that Jesus had and that should have been understood by believers within the last years of the pre-Trib portion of the Age of Israel, i.e. the years of Jesus’ public ministry on earth. The fact that not many, if any, Jewish believers understood the prophetic timeline with the clarity that Jesus did is not the issue. The issue is what was the perspective from which Jesus taught and ministered. That perspective was one which recognized the possibility that Israel might accept Jesus as the Messiah, suffer seven years of Tribulation after the Messiah’s death at the hands of the Romans, and those who endured until the end of the seven years would enter the “kingdom of heaven” on earth in the form of the Messianic reign at His Second Coming. There was no Church Age in view for the Church was a later intercalation into human history due to Jewish rejection of the offer.
- The “wedding garment” is the righteousness of God possessed by every believer as a result of trusting in Christ as the Messiah (Age of Israel) or trusting in Christ’s death as the payment for sin (Age of the Church). Both are in reality the same message with just a different emphasis on Christ’s person and work. Believers of all dispensations possess the righteousness of God. However, only believers of the Church Age are said to be in union with Christ.
- The man without the wedding garment is an unbeliever within the Age of Israel (specifically the Tribulation) who is discovered during that period between the Second Advent and the establishment of the Messianic kingdom of God on earth (Millennium). It is during this period that the Jewish believers are gathered to form a believing nation of Israel and Gentile believers have the privilege of participating in the joys of the Messianic kingdom. **Note:** The events associated with the Second Advent and the establishment of the Messianic kingdom do not all transpire in a second of time even though the Second Advent occurs in an instant of time. Over the course of several days to perhaps a month or so, the Second Advent will occur, the campaign of Armageddon will be concluded, and unbelievers (Jew and Gentile) will be culled out and destroyed while believing Israel is gathered. Believing Gentiles will be identified and allowed to enter the Messianic kingdom. They will be invited to attend the “wedding feast”. These are somewhat overlapping events in terms of sequence; therefore, it is indeed possible that an unbeliever could be identified during the period that the Messianic kingdom on earth is being established (i.e. the “wedding feast” is prepared) and cast out just prior to its inaugural event (i.e. the “wedding feast”).
- The “outer darkness” is the abode of all unbelievers awaiting the Great White Judgment Throne at the end of the Messianic kingdom and the conclusion of the Battle of Gog and Magog. [Re 20:11-15]

As I mentioned earlier in the notes, there are other interpretations of this parable from those of a dispensational perspective. I will chart out just a few below so you might get a better perspective regarding the other views and how they contrast and compare with the above. This analysis is not meant in any way to be critical of the motives or the spiritual lives of any of the men mentioned. Each of these men are admirable men who have only the purest of motives based upon my knowledge of them. Each has made a great contribution to many believer’s understanding of Scripture. However, as I’ve said before, when a person teaches 99 points that are correct, it doesn’t automatically mean that the 100th point will be correct. Evaluate each point on its own merits – not based upon the fact that other statements have been correct and supported.

| Author/Reference | Synopsis of View | Points of Comparison/Contrast |
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| <p>Jody Dillow – <i>The Reign of the Servant Kings</i>, pages 345-6, & 535.</p> | <p>Dillow connects the parable in this passage to Christians of the Church Age. The man without the wedding garment is the “Christian” who suffers loss of reward at the Bema Seat (2 Co 5:10; Ro 14:10-12) and the loss is defined to be rejection from the wedding banquet in the Messianic kingdom even though the unfaithful “Christian” is not completely excluded from the kingdom. On the same page, Dillow also makes the statement that “the invitation to attend is to be understood as an invitation to national Israel to accept Christ as Messiah.” The wedding garment is defined as righteous deeds of the saints (i.e. experiential righteousness) and Dillow uses Revelation 19:7-8 to support that view. In my opinion, in his admirable attempt to defend the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer, Dillow has not exegeted this passage, but he has eiseged in order to defend this doctrine. The sad thing is that the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer is not even in question in this passage based upon the interpretation I presented on the first two pages of these notes. Also, while it is true that CA believers who have been unfaithful during their time on earth will experience a loss of reward at the Bema Seat, the exact nature of that loss is not defined in Scripture.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Believers of the Church Age will rule and reign with Christ during the Millennium. Dillow and I are consistent on that point. ➤ Dillow associates the loss of reward that the unfaithful Church Age believer suffers at the Bema Seat with the sorrow expressed through “weeping and gnashing” of teeth in this passage as well as not being allowed to participate in certain aspects of the Millennial reign, i.e. the wedding feast and ruling and reigning with Christ. He has been accused of advocating a type of Christian purgatory for unfaithful believers during the Millennial reign. ➤ Dillow views the wedding garment as experiential righteousness (righteous deeds). This conclusion is based upon the assumption that this person is in fact the established Messianic kingdom and ignores the fact that the establishment of the Messianic kingdom is not as instantaneous as is the Second Advent itself. This view overlooks the fact that Age of Israel believers possessed the righteousness of God also even though never said to be “in Christ” as is the CA believer. ➤ Dillow equates loss of reward for the CA believer with certain loss in the Millennium. While I agree that there will be loss of reward for the unfaithful believer, Scripture doesn’t disclose the exact nature |

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| | | <p>of that loss. A logical conclusion is less ruling and reigning authority in the kingdom; however, there is no Scripture to support that statement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Finally, nothing in the context of this passage requires an understanding of the Church for its interpretation. |
| Lewis S. Chafer, <i>Systematic Theology</i> | Doesn't mention this passage in his <i>Systematic Theology</i> . | |
| John Walvoord, <i>Prophecy Knowledge Handbook</i> , page 362 | Walvoord gives only very brief treatment to this passage. However, he does equate the man without the wedding garment to an unbeliever and states that "without salvation, it is impossible to go to heaven." | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In another book (<i>Major Bible Prophecies</i>, page 386), Walvoord includes this passage (among other passages) in a discussion relating to entrance into the Messianic kingdom. ➤ Walvoord doesn't address the timing of the destruction of the city, i.e. 70 AD or 2nd Advent. ➤ Therefore, my interpretation and Walvoord's interpretation of this passage seem to be consistent. |
| Dwight Pentecost, <i>Things to Come</i> , page 227 | Pentecost includes this passage (among others) in his discussion of the marriage or wedding supper. He defines the marriage supper as a "parabolic picture of the entire millennial age, to which Israel will be invited during the tribulation period, which invitation many will reject and so they will be cast out, and many will accept and they will be received in." Because of the rejection of the invitation by Israel, many Gentiles are allowed entry into the Millennium. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The view that I presented in the first couple of pages of notes is consistent with Pentecost's interpretation. ➤ Pentecost doesn't specifically address the man without the wedding garment nor does he address the phrase "weeping and gnashing" of teeth in the Matthew 22:1-14 passage in this book. ➤ Pentecost doesn't address the timing of the destruction of the city |
| Dwight Pentecost, <i>Thy Kingdom Come</i> , page 231 | Pentecost's interpretation is consistent with that contained in his <i>Things to Come</i> . | |
| Dwight Pentecost, <i>The Words and Works of Jesus Christ</i> , page 386 | Pentecost's interpretation is consistent in that he relates this parable to the Messianic kingdom being offered to Israel. He provides a little more information regarding the requirements necessary to | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pentecost interprets the "weeping and gnashing of teeth" to relate to eternal judgment. ➤ However, he interprets the wedding garments to be related to "a righteous |

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| | enter the kingdom, i.e. a righteous life not just the righteousness associated with initial faith in Christ. | character and holy life”, i.e. experiential righteousness. ➤ He doesn’t address the timing of the destruction of the city. |
| <i>The Bible Knowledge Commentary</i> , editors John Walvoord & Roy Zuck. (Commentary on Matthew authored by Louis A. Barbieri), page 71. | The offer of the kingdom by Christ is in view. The wedding banquet portrays the Millennial Age. | ➤ The “weeping and gnashing of teeth” is seen as related to the eternal judgment. ➤ The destruction of the city is seen as related to 70 AD. ➤ The “wedding garment” is interpreted to be related to experiential righteousness not righteousness associated with belief (Phase 1 imputed righteousness). |
| <i>The Nelson Study Bible</i> , footnotes, page 1615. | Virtually identical interpretation to the interpretation of <i>The Bible Knowledge Commentary</i> . | |
| <i>The Expositor’s Bible Commentary</i> , Frank E. Gaebelin, General Editor, pages 456-457 | This commentary is written more from a covenant theological perspective; however the insight that it provides has proven valuable on occasion when properly sifted. | ➤ The allusion to 70 AD in regard to the destruction of the city is rejected. ➤ The “kingdom of heaven” is seen as having already dawned in spiritual form which is consistent with the amillennial perspective. ➤ The commentary avoids a specific interpretation of the wedding garments as either related to imputed righteousness (Phase 1) or experiential righteousness (Phase 2). |

Critical to the interpretation of this passage is the question which must be satisfactorily answered by any interpreter – Why would Jesus have even taught about the Church or the Christian to disciples and others within the waning days of the Age of Israel when absolutely every bit of His public ministry was focused upon presenting and explaining the Gospel of the kingdom? In addition, the context of this passage is set right in the middle of Jewish rejection and His ministry was to Jews first. Any interpretation that mixes the Church into this passage does grievous harm to a precise dispensational approach and establishes an erroneous and inconsistent hermeneutical precedent that becomes only more detrimental when applied to other passages. It makes interpretation even more subjective and tends to ignore the dissimilarities between dispensations through excessive focus upon certain spiritual similarities that are present between dispensations.

What’s the harm and isn’t this being inordinately divisive? When an inconsistent dispensational hermeneutic is consistently applied to the interpretation of Scripture, then all manner of distortion of the Church Age believer’s spiritual view results, e.g. tithing, a theocratic

view of the government's role in our nation (e.g. viewing the USA as a client nation and the concept of the 5 Cycles of Discipline found in Lev 26 are applied to the USA), one's view of the nature of the "filling of the Holy Spirit" and His ministry to the believer of the Church, the purpose of the Mosaic Law, etc. Morality (i.e. the keeping of the Law) and the spiritual life of the Church Age believer are two separate and distinct dynamics even though there are overt similarities. Inconsistencies in the dispensational approach opens the door to confusion regarding the spiritual life of the believer in this Age of the Church.

The Attack of the Pharisees (22:15-22)

Unlike most of the Jews, the Herodians openly supported the reigning family of Herod and its pro-Roman bias. Little is known of the Herodians, but it is believed that they held that it was right to pay homage to Rome so as to obtain the friendship of Rome and other advantages. They were not a political party nor a religious sect and they differed from the Pharisees on this issue. The Pharisees opposed Rome and all attempts by Rome to intrude on the Jewish way of life. A common enemy (Jesus) makes strange bedfellows. Later they even lie and misrepresent what Jesus said (Lu 23:2).

Principle: The self-righteous person will always compromise integrity when his/her agenda is threatened and attempt to justify the means with the desired end result. (Example: the political/social agenda of certain politicians today).

The Attack of the Saducees (22:23-33)

As we have studied previously, the Saducees did not believe in the resurrection. However, since their writings have not survived, little is known about them except what rival groups said about them. The Saducees were aristocratic and dominated the higher echelons of the priesthood. They based their beliefs solely on the Pentateuch and did not accept the authority of any other Old Testament book. They also rejected the oral traditions that had grown up around the interpretation of the Law which the Pharisees (the common-man group) accepted. Rejecting the resurrection and an afterlife led to a view that heaven would simply be an extension of those things on earth that men most enjoy. Therefore, they did not believe in rewards or punishment in the life to come.

These views put them in direct conflict with Jesus. No doubt, they found His teaching threatening their beliefs and power. Jesus presented Himself as the Messiah Who would rule in the coming kingdom and He challenged prevalent attitudes toward money and social status. Most likely, the question that the Saducees pose to Jesus has been posed to the Pharisees on previous occasions. The law that is the basis of the Sadducees' question is found in Deuteronomy 25:5-6 and is known as the law of the levirate marriage.

In His rebuke, Jesus quoted a statement that God had made to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3:6. Jesus' point is that if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died without any afterlife, then God would not have used the present tense "I am", rather He would have used the past tense "I was". Also, Jesus refers to the status of angels in heaven because the Saducees denied their existence. This was a double slam of the Saducees. The crowds certainly understood Jesus' point for they were "astonished". Furthermore, Jesus presented His case from the Pentateuch which was accepted by the Saducees.

The Attack from the Scribes (22:34-40)

To answer the lawyer's (the Scribe's) question, Jesus uses the passage that is the basis of the Jewish confession of faith called the Shema. This confession begins with the Hebrew word Shema meaning "hear" and is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-5. The blessings associated with the Law and the Shema are found in Deuteronomy 11:13-21. The word Shema is the first word in this confession and is translated "hear".

The Gospel of Mark adds that the Scribe responded that Jesus had correctly answered and that love for one's neighbor was more important than burnt offerings and sacrifices (Mark 12:32-33). Jesus responded that he was not far from the kingdom. Evidently, Jesus struck a chord in this man's heart. Mark also added that from that time forward, no one dared to ask Jesus another question (Mk 12:34).

Jesus Takes the Offensive with the Religious Crowd (22:41-45)

Jesus asks the religious leaders to identify the Christ. Jesus' response to their answer indicated that the Messiah had to be more than the earthly son of David since David ascribed deity to Him (Ps 110:1). In that Psalm, David referred to the Messiah as "my Lord." His critics were completely silenced.