

The Parable of the Wedding Feast

The Parable of the Wedding Feast

By Jan Lilleby

This parable is actually two parables, and nothing in these parables, or any other parables told by Jesus had anything to do with our present dispensation of the free Grace Gospel according to Paul!

This parable seems to be prophetic – He pointed to something in the future to happen.

Why I say this is because there cannot be much doubt, as we look back at Bible history, that the first half of this parable found in Mat. 22:2-7 was what happened as the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, the temple and great parts of Israel in 70 AD.

Thus, I find it convenient to explain that part of the parable separately, and we shall then have a look at the second part after that.

From New King James Version, Mat. 22:2-7,

*“The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. 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.”’ But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. 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.**”*

(In this narrative, the servants are the apostles and their associates)



We will notice that Jesus delivered this parable to the audience in the temple site, as it was the 13th of Nisan 28 AD (our 27th of April, Tuesday), the Passover was the next day, the day of the crucifixion of Jesus. IMAGE: *The temple burning in 70 AD.*

Jesus had cleansed the temple at 12th of Nisan (see Mat. 21:12, 13), healed many sick people and thus provoked the evil-minded Pharisees there. They were after Him, but they dared not arrest Him in the open – with the people there witnessing it, like told in Mat. 21:46,

“And although they were trying to arrest Him, they feared the throngs because they regarded Him as a prophet.”

Imagine then, that as Jesus spoke the parable saying that ‘A king sent out his servants to invite for his son’s wedding banquet’ – the angry hateful Pharisees were listeners among the crowd there. Jesus addressed His parable directly to them! As it says in verse 1, it is clearly an addressed parable, and that receiver was the flock of Pharisees present there: *“Jesus spoke to them (Pharisees) again in parables, saying:”*. And the Pharisees understood that it was them He talked about ...*THEY were not willing to come (to the wedding)*. It was still the Pharisees He shot at, saying, ...*and the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and KILLED them.*

That last sentence was then a prophesy. Jesus told them to their face that they would go and kill His apostles/disciples, in a persecution. Jesus was right, for we read of this in Acts, how they jailed them and killed them, over the years.

As we find Paul at Rome in custody 60-62 AD, Josephus Flavius told in his book on the Jewish War, that Governor Festus, who represented the Roman rule in Palestine at that time, got very ill and went to Rome for cure. That left the strict rule of the Roman Governor partially vacant, since no one could fill the position immediately, and thus, Josephus wrote that the *priesthood and temple guards took advantage of his absence and attacked the Messianic assembly at Jerusalem. Ananias II (he who had slapped Paul in the face) had the elders and James stoned to death, and many fled up to Pella to escape this killing spree.*

This was the very end of the persecution which Jesus foretold in His parable of the Wedding in Mat. 22, for just

four years after, the war with Rome was started as Jews made rebellion against their rule.

The brutal attack against the assembly at Jerusalem – added to the confrontation Paul had with the unbelieving Jewish leaders at Rome (Acts 28:25-28) – had the effect that God simply gave up on Israel, and He considered them fallen away from Him.

That fall was confirmed by God letting the Roman army destroy Israel entirely, sending thousands of prisoners to the slave market in Alexandria, all according to Moses' prophecy in Deu. 28:68. History tells us that Titus made use of around 70 000 Jewish prisoners to build the huge arena Colosseum in Rome. But the other prisoners were sent to Egypt like I mentioned.

This destruction was what Jesus prophesied in verse 7 of the parable. The king got angry and sent his armies and killed the murderers and set fire to their city (Jerusalem). When king Nebuchadnezzar took Judah and Jerusalem in 587 BC, Jeremiah on behalf of the Lord, said of the king that he was a servant of God for that punishing cause. And so it was also when Rome took Jerusalem, it was an army of God sent to punish and destroy the sinful nation which had just persecuted and killed God's servants, the apostles.

That took place on 10 Av (our 10th of September) which was a Sunday. Same calendar day as when king Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian army took Jerusalem in 587 BC when Zedekiah was king of Judah – and burned down the city and deported Jews as prisoners to Babylon.

So, there is no doubt that Jesus foretold of the destruction of Israel in 70 AD.

Ironically, the destruction was not really a Roman initiative but it was provoked by the Jews themselves as it arose two men among them saying they were the Messiah of God.

There had been an episode of sacrilege in the synagogue at Caesarea initiated by a Roman official, and that stirred up an angry mob which attacked the Roman Garrison there, and it spread to other places – especially near Galilee, north in Palestine. Eventually this brought in among others, the two leaders I mentioned above. They both had followers and they started a more organized rebellion which ended by a total disaster for Israel.

The two leaders were Eleazar ben Ananias and Johannes Ben Levi. The entire time of the rebellion seems to have been a time of confusion and Jews fighting Romans, and Jews fighting Jews in disagreement – total mayhem was raging. Eleazar was the leader of the first aristocratic Jewish rebel government. Ananias II eventually was killed by his own followers turning on him during the struggle between the Sicarii extremists and the more moderate party in this rebellion against Rome.

The Jews could only thank themselves for all the destruction

that fell upon them – a direct result of having crucified the one and only Messiah God had sent them, Jesus. The king was *infuriated* and had His army execute these murderers who had killed His servants, the apostles.

There are three elements I would like to mention here, which are the parable of the barren fig tree in Luke 13, and the incident which took place just the same morning Jesus told His parable of the Wedding Feast – as we read Mat. 21:19 Jesus *cursed the fig tree* at the road side and miraculously it withered up immediately. His disciples were shocked. And the third element is that Wedding Feast parable.

Actually, Mat. 22:1 is using *plural tense* “Parables” introducing the parable of the Wedding Feast. This is correct, for it is two parables told there, and I shall come back to this shortly. If you read the rest of chapter 22, until the last verse 46, you will find no other parable/parables in that chapter. Neither will you find any in the next chapter, Jesus’ famous chastising of the Pharisees and all of their hypocrisy, lies, and heretical teachings – branding them as the children of the devil. So, it is quite Biblical to say that the *plural tense* in Mat. 22:1 – *parables*, is actually *only talking* of the one of the Wedding Feast. Mat. 22:46 says straight forward that Jesus hereby had definitely stopped the Pharisees and their many attacks against Him,

“And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day did anyone venture or dare to question Him.”

I am convinced that the barren fig tree in Luke 13, which should have been cut down, was a *prophetic image of the unbelieving Israel*: In three years the owner of the vineyard (the fig tree was planted in a vineyard) had come looking for fruit but found none. In three years Jesus spent His ministry on earth to preach to Israel, but they would not receive Him, they would not believe (the fruit is their eventual *faith*). Israel would not believe on Jesus, - so therefore cut down that fig tree! But the vinedresser pleaded with the owner, if he could try one more year putting on manure and digging in the soil around it to see if it could come up with fruit. That ‘one year’ was equal to the time used by the ‘vinedresser’ (here the vinedresser represents the flock of apostles Jesus sent out). But even after that extra year (30-some years in historic timeline of Acts) the fig tree of Israel was still barren, AND IT WAS FINALLY CUT DOWN BY THE ROMAN BATTLE AXE.

Likewise, Jesus cursing the *fig tree* at the road side, and it withered, - this was also a prophetic image of the very same. This fig tree made up Israel and her lack of faith.

And as third element, as already mentioned above, in the same narrative, Jesus delivered His parables of the Wedding Feast, for which He sent out His apostles to invite Israel to come to the wedding – for Israel is the *bride of*

Jesus Christ as she comes to faith in Him. BUT...the big awesome BUT: He foretold them that they would NOT BELIEVE ON HIM in the future, and therefore they would persecute and kill His servants.

THE LAST HALF OF THE PARABLE

There are several scenarios involved in how Christianity interprets this part of the parable.

Let me first quote it to you, from verses 8 to 14, (Amplified Bible)

"Then he said to his servants, The wedding (feast) in prepared, but those invited were not worthy. – So go to the thoroughfares where they leave the city (where the main roads and those from the country end) and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find. – And those servants went out on the crossroads and got together as many as they found, both bad and good, so (the room in which) the wedding feast (was held) was filled with guests. – But when the king came in to view the guests, he looked intently at a man there who had on no wedding garment. – And he said, Friend, how did you come in here without putting on the (appropriate) wedding garment? And he was speechless (muzzled, gagged). – Then the king said to the attendants, Tie him hand and foot, and throw him into the darkness outside; there will be weeping and grinding of teeth. – For many are called (invited and summoned), but few are chosen."

Before we can leave the parable, we need to learn what is said in verse 15,

"Then the Pharisees went and consulted and plotted together how they might entangle Jesus in His talk."

They had become more and more angry – actually they became filled with pure hate against Jesus. Why? He hung them 'Out-to-dry' while the people in the temple heard it all. Then we read that they came with the foolish attempt of trying to make him speak badly of the Roman Emperor...as they showed Him a coin asking Him if He thought it was lawful to pay tribute to him or not. Then we get the famous saying from Jesus: *'Give to Caesar what is due to him, and pay to God the things that are due to God'*. The Pharisees lost again and had to leave Him, shamefully over their lack of ability to talk back. They were SPEECHLESS just as Jesus told of that one man who was thrown out into the darkness outside! This made the Pharisees even more certain that Jesus talked of them – as He had left them speechless more than one time.

And angrier than ever!

THE PARABLE FROM VERSE 8 AND ON IS ANOTHER

Jesus started actually a new parable – it had changed contents and He had ended the first half (verses 2 to 7) with the king sending armies to kill the Pharisees, - and made a different 'cast' of the scenario than the scenario

which ended with the destruction of Israel in 70 AD. As I already mentioned above, Mat. 22:1 says that it were *parables*, in plural tense and not parable as in singular! Jesus used the scenario of a wedding in both parables, and that can bring some confusion if the Bible reader skips such facts. We need to read the Bible often in a scrutinizing manner.

Jesus therefore could not have begun at the same start-point as that of the destruction of Israel. We have to look upon this whole parable as a short preview of contexts, which in the verses 2 to 7 was all about Israel's destruction after having killed His apostles during Acts period. And the second half verses 8 to 14 is of the Pharisees being *cast out of the kingdom of God* for their lack of faith. Thus creating a *second* parable actually.

Neither can we regard verses 8 to 14 as something that followed after the destruction of Israel in 70 AD.



The actual context in the parable's last half is that *Jesus used the theme of 'inviting to a wedding feast' – but with the intent to show that there was an illicit guest there who had not put on wedding garment:* Jesus pointed directly to the Pharisees. They knew this, and therefore they tried desperate to catch Jesus by His own words, but failed miserably. Notice what Jesus said: *'Tie him hand and foot and cast him into THE DARKNESS OUTSIDE (outside the kingdom of God – remember, the parable was about the kingdom of God) – there shall be weeping and grinding of teeth.'*

IMAGE: *Cast the unbelieving Pharisees out into the darkness!*

Jesus had already warned the Pharisees prior to this telling of the parables of the wedding feast, in Mat. 21:43 He spoke straight forward to their faces *...the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce the fruits of it.* Verse 45 says a lot: *“And when the chief priests and the Pharisees **heard His parables** (comparisons, stories used to illustrate and explain), **THEY PERCEIVED THAT HE WAS TALKING OF THEM.**”*

And so, the next parable after the Pharisees concluded and understood that Jesus was talking of them, He came up with this parable (parables) of the Wedding Feast.

And Jesus used that *'sneaked in' single wedding guest who had not the wedding garment on,* to tell the very same Pharisees that if they came into this wedding, they would be thrown out into the darkness. They would be lost of the kingdom of God, because of *their unbelief.*

The Pharisees heard that Jesus told them that they would

persecute and kill the apostles; they heard Him also conclude sternly that because of that, the nation of Israel would be destroyed.

Jesus concluded the second part of the parable, that *many were called but few are chosen – saying that to be able to come to the wedding, one must be chosen, that is, one must have faith in Jesus Christ. The Pharisees did NOT have faith in Jesus.*

Some scholars and preachers and pastors – both inside the Acts-28 camp and outside it, – hold that the parable is telling of a future 'Wedding Feast' and thus invitation, to people along the 'Highways', as some translations say, such as NKJV; (but NIV says 'Go to the street corners').

In the understanding of that this 'invitation' went out *after the destruction of Israel in 70 AD.* But I cannot agree with those. They are ignorant of the fact that the parable of the Wedding Feast actually is two parables.

We cannot look past the fact that Jesus prophesied the end and destruction of Israel, which was fulfilled in 70 AD. Since that time, no 'kingdom-gospel' has been preached by anyone sent by God, and absolutely no 'Wedding Feast Invitation'.

If such an enterprise has been going on, then I ask: Where is it? Who are they? What exactly are the names of the leaders of such a movement? Can anyone give me a valid actual address with a phone number or an email address so I can check them out? Can I participate in a meeting or service they eventually hold? Are they seen and heard on any TV-media? I could go on and on...but I am afraid this so-called operation of going out on the 'Highways' with such a wedding invitation in the aftermath of Israel's destruction is just chasing invisible ghosts. It is a fantasy freak-show which nobody can see or identify in any manner. It simply does not exist.

I say that all kingdom-preaching ended the same day as Paul had his revelation of the Mystery in Eph. 3:1-9 – the dispensation of the Church, the Body of Christ. Most probably we are talking of the year 62 or 63 AD. That is when Paul wrote his two epistles, the one to the Ephesians and the one to the Colossians; revealing the free Grace Gospel for all people, and no more preaching of the kingdom of God, the millennia. It is possible that Paul was in a second jailing when he wrote to the Ephesians and Colossians. He might have been set free from all charges by Nero's appeal court, but arrested a second time, maybe because of the turmoil caused by the great fire in Rome...but this cannot be proven.

In this dispensation there are only true Jesus-believers, trusting in the Gospel of the free grace for all people on earth, as taught us by Paul the apostle to the Gentiles. Israel is fallen and is just one nation among other nations. Eph. 2:14, 15.

So, there is no parallel calling running at the same

time as the calling of the Body of Christ is.

The last half of the parable of the Wedding Feast is therefore NOT a continued effort on God's hand to reach out to Jews with the message of a Wedding Feast (only Israel can be the Bride of the Lamb, Jesus, *the believing Israel*, and not all people on earth).

The dispensation of the Church, the Body of Christ, is standing *all alone* as long as it exists. God is not working with Israel today, they are still considered as fallen away from Him, actually, they are considered as 'non-existent' when talking of a nation. They were returned to Egypt as slaves in 71-72 AD by Roman sea vessels to Alexandria.