



# THE GREAT WEDDING FEAST

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Ever wonder what Heaven will be like?

The truth is that *“eyes have never seen, nor have ears heard, nor have human minds conceived the things God has reserved for those who love Him.”* Heaven is beyond comprehension, even beyond imagination!

In fact, human language is barely useful to describe such sublime realities. But what else do we have to work with?

In a similar vein, how do we know what God is like? There have been dreams and visions and poems, expressed in words for us to read and ponder—but that’s all like looking through frosted glass (we see shapes and movement, without clarity or color). Until Jesus came... who said, *“If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father. The Father and I are one.”*

Once God was born into a human body, we no longer depended exclusively on thought and reasoning; we began to experience Him. Hear the tone of His voice. Feel the touch of His hand. See the look in His eye, the smile on His face. Observe how He related to others, and to us. See how He reacted to circumstances. God, as a man, was relatable. Even though He was a significantly different man, He was one of us. He became knowable. By sense and intuition, as well as reason.

Today, we cannot see God in any other way. Like the wind, which we cannot see, except by its impact on other tangible things, we can only see God’s imprint (where He has worked and impacted people and other things), but not Himself. Except in Jesus.

And Jesus announced to us the arrival of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Kingdom of Heaven is not Heaven, but the incarnation of Heaven—a visible representation of Heaven on earth, Heaven’s impact in our world. And to help us recognize it in our surroundings, Jesus provided brief stories to illustrate certain characteristics of the heavenly Kingdom, when He said, *“The Kingdom of Heaven is like...”*

A farmer who planted seed...

A mustard seed planted in a field...

Yeast used in making bread...  
A treasure hidden in a field...  
A merchant looking for choice pearls...  
A fishing net thrown into the water...  
A landowner hiring workers for his vineyard...

## **The Story of a King**

Today, in Matthew 22:1-14, we'll encounter one of those privileged glimpses, where the Kingdom of Heaven is likened to, or illustrated by "*the story of a king.*" Please note, it is not the feast, but the king who hosts the banquet, who gives us a glimpse of the character of the Kingdom. This is a critical distinction, because we catch a glimpse, not just of the atmosphere of Heaven, but of Heaven's Ruler Himself, who sets the tone and course for all the impact that Heaven has on humanity. Please listen carefully.

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus also told them other parables. He said, <sup>2</sup> "The Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a king who prepared a great wedding feast for his son.*

The first thing to note is that the king has a son, a beloved son. And the son is about to be married, so the king has planned "*a great wedding feast*" to celebrate. Pause with me to reflect on this evident tone of joyous celebration. It is an epic occasion in the life of a man, to find the one with whom he will share the rest of his life.

The ancient Jewish tradition followed the final exchange of vows with a celebratory feast (*seudah*) of up to seven full days of food, wine, music, and dancing. This was to be a GREAT wedding feast!

<sup>3</sup> *When the banquet was ready, he sent his servants to notify those who were invited. But they all refused to come!*

After a bride and groom agreed to be married, and a dowry was arranged, a formal betrothal ceremony followed. For the next year, the couple was recognized as married, though they did not live together, nor have sexual relations. This was the period of preparation. The bride focused on bridesmaids and garments, while the groom prepared a home for them to share.

The precise date of the wedding was unknown to all, depending on the son's completion of his tasks. Since the bride did not know just when it would take place, she and her entourage had to remain ready for the groom's call the entire time. The father of the groom dictated the precise time for the marriage to be finalized, and finally sent his son to retrieve his bride from her parents' home. This afforded a public procession in which the whole village or neighborhood could participate.

## Unworthy Guests

In this story, when the time arrived at last, the invited guests were unwilling to come.

*<sup>4</sup> “So he sent other servants to tell them, ‘The feast has been prepared. The bulls and fattened cattle have been killed, and everything is ready. Come to the banquet!’ <sup>5</sup> But the guests he had invited ignored them and went their own way, one to his farm, another to his business. <sup>6</sup> Others seized his messengers and insulted them and killed them.*

The feast had been prepared, everything was ready, there was no more delay. But the invited guests ignored the pressing invitation to go “*their own way*”—they had work to do. Some were not indifferent, they were hostile, and abused the messengers.

*<sup>7</sup> “The king was furious, and he sent out his army to destroy the murderers and burn their town.*

This was a king. He had, not only servants, but an army at his disposal. What sort of guests would ignore or despise an invitation to their king’s palace for a banquet? Only ignorant fools or rebels.

*<sup>8</sup> And he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, and the guests I invited aren’t worthy of the honor.*

Please listen carefully: For the king to include you on the guest list is an honorary act of grace. How do you become worthy of the king’s grace? Simply by accepting his invitation.

“*Aren’t worthy.*” This stinger was aimed first at the Jewish people who considered themselves too involved with their own way of being religious to bother with King Jesus’ invitation to the banquet. It may also apply today, as it is extended to the many who have been raised under Gospel teaching, but have decided that doing life on their own terms is all they care about; they show themselves to be unworthy of the honor, no matter how nice or upright they are in their own sphere.

## Extreme Grace

*<sup>9</sup> Now go out to the street corners and invite everyone you see.’ <sup>10</sup> So the servants brought in everyone they could find, good and bad alike, and the banquet hall was filled with guests.*

The invitation was then extended to “*whosoever wants to,*” and the king’s servants were instructed to simply invite “*everyone you see.*” Suddenly, the door of salvation was flung open to the entire Gentile world. “*Good and bad alike*” were welcome to come.

And, at last, by this extreme measure of grace, the banquet hall was filled with guests. Today, all around the globe, the banquet hall is filling up! Men, women, boys, and girls are responding to the King's invitation. Currently, there are 2.5 billion people on the planet who identify themselves as Christians, and that number is growing faster than the overall population! Among Christians, Pentecostals and Evangelicals are growing the fastest, and both are growing faster than they were just two years ago. By contrast, there are fewer atheists in the world today than there were in 1970.

There are, however, 2.2 billion people who have not heard an invitation at their street corner; they have never been invited.

We have a job to do, my friends! And may I say, that it begins with a simple invitation—an invitation which every one of us can convey to someone we know.

It's not your concern how they respond—the King will take care of that—your part is to extend the invitation. Are you doing your part? Will you look for someone on the “street corners” of your life—good or bad—and invite them to come? Pray for an opportunity this week.

### **What Should I Wear?**

Now this story takes what seems to many an odd turn at the end...

*<sup>11</sup> “But when the king came in to meet the guests, he noticed a man who wasn't wearing the proper clothes for a wedding. <sup>12</sup> ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how is it that you are here without wedding clothes?’ But the man had no reply. <sup>13</sup> Then the king said to his aides, ‘Bind his hands and feet and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ <sup>14</sup> “For many are called, but few are chosen.”*

Without the proper clothes for a wedding. It seems that this man followed the crowd, but didn't know where they were heading. Perhaps he was simply interested in a free meal. (Remember the crowd that Jesus rebuked because they followed Him simply because He multiplied a boy's lunch to feed them all?)

Have you repented of your self-will? Have you left your sins behind to follow Jesus? The wedding garment is a robe of righteousness, washed white by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ.

Just attending church services won't make anyone a Christian, any more than living in a garage would make you a car. If you're not serious about following Jesus Christ, more closely today than yesterday, then be warned. It may feel easier for you today, but it won't be easier for you in the end.

*“For many are called, but few are chosen.”*

Remember, this is not a story about Heaven, but about Heaven's influence in the earth. The Kingdom of Heaven is the Church's present season of growth and impact in the world. The King is God the Father. His Son for whom the wedding is prepared is Jesus. His servants are the church who carry the Gospel message to others. The challenges faced by the servants in the story are like those faced by the Church in this age.

We are servants of the King of kings. Let's be faithful to Him and to His plan. Whatever the cost here and now, the rewards are great and everlasting.

Will you pledge your service to Him today?