

–J.C. Ryle *Expository Thoughts on Matthew* || Matthew 22:1-22–

I. Introduction:

- A. The parable of the wedding feast is full of imagery and analogy that is so helpful in shaping our theology and even our Christian terminology. In recent weeks, we've seen a number of parables and explanations about the shift in the invitation of the gospel and who will be in the Kingdom of Heaven. While we see the Jews in this parable being relegated and the Gentiles invited in, Ryle would have us consider that any of us who hear the gospel and do not respond, are the same as the Jews first invited to the feast.

II. Matthew 22:1-14 Ryle gives us 4 observations to consider about this passage:

A. *Let us observe that the salvation of the gospel is compared to a marriage feast.*

1. The context and setting of the parable would have resonated deeply with Christ's listeners. Weddings were extended events lasting days and were not to be missed, much less an invitation from the King.
2. The participants in the parable are simple. God is the King and Christ is the groom. The wedding guests are believers, even though elsewhere the church is called the bride of Christ.
3. The purpose of the parable is to declare that the net of the gospel will be cast wide and that the Kingdom of Heaven will not be limited to those first invited to the feast.
4. The analogy of the gospel to a wedding feast is so appropriate because we find in the gospel a complete provision for all the wants and needs of the soul.
5. *He offers to take us into union with himself, to restore us to the family of God as dear children, to clothe us with his own righteousness, to give us a place in his kingdom, and to present us faultless before his Father's throne at the last day. The gospel, in short, is an offer of food to the hungry, of joy to the mourner, of a home to the outcast, of a loving friend to the lost. It is glad tidings. God offers through his dear son, to be at one with sinful man.*

B. *Let us observe that the invitations of the gospel are wide, full, broad and unlimited.*

1. Nothing is lacking from God for salvation. The wedding is ready, the feast is set, the dinner is prepared. All we need to do is show up.
2. No one will ever be able to say that it was God's fault that someone was not saved. It is the duty and responsibility of every person to believe. Every individual owes God for their debt of sin, therefore every individual must be reconciled to God.
3. *The Father is ready to love and receive, the Son is ready to pardon and cleanse guilt away, the spirit is ready to sanctify and renew, angels are ready to rejoice over the returning sinner, grace is ready to assist him, the Bible is ready to instruct him, heaven is ready to be his everlasting home.* The sinner must be ready to repent and receive Christ.
4. No one is excluded from the range of the offer of the gospel. Though efficient only to believers, the offer is sufficient for everyone. All are invited, though few enter through the narrow gate.

C. *Let us observe that the salvation of the gospel is rejected by many to whom it is offered.*

1. The offer of the gospel is flatly rejected every single day. We all know many people who have rejected it, with or without proper exposure.
2. People reject the gospel casually each day, but this rejection is not a casual affront to God. It is just as egregious as rejecting the wedding invitation of the King.
3. Consider the countless thousands who sit in church each Sunday for years, yet the gospel does them no good. The pleasures of the world carry much more allure. Multitudes who are so close to the truth they can almost touch it, will find themselves in hell, not because of open opposition to the gospel, but simply from indifference to it and neglect of it.

D. *Let us observe that all false professors of religion will be detected, exposed, and eternally condemned at the last day.*

1. One wedding guest was not like the others. It was clear to all that he was not wearing the proper wedding attire.
2. To gain entry to the wedding feast, to the Kingdom of Heaven, you must be clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

3. Through the atonement of Christ, he is the propitiation for us. With the guilt of our sin removed, and clothed in the righteousness of Christ, we are reconciled to God. God looks at us and sees the righteousness of Christ. There is no more comforting doctrine in all of scripture.
4. Those who are not truly in Christ will be found out. There will always be false Christians in the church. We may not be able to identify them, but they will be found out in due time.

III. Matthew 22:15-22 Ryle calls our attention to 2 important things.

A. *Notice the flattering language with which our Lord was accosted by his enemies.*

1. The Pharisees do not approach Christ with fiery darts of accusation but with flattery. Literally honey dripping from their lips.
2. The Pharisees mocked Christ by their flattery because they did not believe their own words. They also opted to try a different strategy in their repeated attempts to entrap Jesus. Ps 55:21.
3. As Christians, are we on guard against such flattery? *We mistake greatly if we suppose that persecution and hard usage are the only weapons in Satan's armoury. He knows how to poison souls by the world's seductive kindness, when he cannot frighten them by his fiery dart or the sword.* We must not be ignorant of this.

B. *Notice the marvelous wisdom of the reply which our Lord made to his enemies.*

1. These altercations with the Pharisees happened throughout Christ's earthly ministry, and different tactics were used at different times, but Christ never faltered.
2. *Had he simply replied that it was lawful to pay tribute, they would have denounced him to the people as one who dishonoured the privileges of Israel, and considered the children of Abraham no longer free, but subjects to a foreign power. On the other hand, if he had replied that it was not lawful to pay tribute, they would have denounced him to the Romans as a mover of sedition, and a rebel against Caesar, who refused to pay his taxes.*
3. By turning the question back to the Pharisees, they are forced to acknowledge that the Romans held authority over them, and that by using their money as currency, they were subjecting themselves to Rome as the ruler of their land.
4. Christ is declaring in no uncertain terms that we owe obedience to the civil government under which we live, in temporal matters that do not require us to violate scripture.
5. Christ is also saying when it comes to spiritual matters, our obedience is to God alone, and must not be influenced by the world or any civilian authority.
6. Christ is also setting a precedent for the separation of Church and State. Ryle: *it is certain that the church must not swallow up the state; it is no less certain that the state must not swallow up the church.*
7. Final thoughts: This type of intellectual battle happens more commonly than we think. It's easy for us to get dragged into debates about religion with unbelievers who seek to trip us up while we see it as an opportunity to prove ourselves and the Bible right.
8. We know we stand in the truth, and we acknowledge that the Holy Spirit changes people's hearts, so why do we suppose that we can change a man's heart by winning a battle of wits? The enemy is cunning and witty and would entangle us in our own words in the blink of an eye.
9. We must rely on wisdom from above to guide our thoughts and words, and rely on the holy spirit to change man's heart. For all the intellectual argumentation on the biblical side of things, there is equal energy poured into intellectual argumentation on the other side. Rarely does this end well, seldom is someone converted because the smarter man won the debate.
10. Give the truth, hold true to scripture, but haste and suppose-ed intellectual superiority might just trigger the trap that was set for you. Let's learn from Christ's example.