

The Parable of the Vineyard and the Marriage Feast (part 4 in our 4 part study)

The parable of the marriage feast is a necessary follow-up to, and not a repetition of, the vineyard parable which precedes it. In segment one we established an important distinction. The Lord describes the vineyard as representing the “kingdom of God,” while portraying the marriage feast as a manifestation of the “kingdom of heaven.” Jesus’ application for each parable is significantly different as well. Most important of all, the marriage feast parable serves the purpose of answering the two-fold question implied in Matthew 21:43-44 –

“Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing the fruit of it. And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.”

The “people” to whom the kingdom of God would now be given, will include a mixture of Gentiles and Jews (Matthew 22:9-10; Ephesians 2:11-22). In addition, the kingdom of God on earth, in this transfer of stewardship, undergoes a transformation by becoming “heavenly” in nature (Ephesians 1:3; Hebrews 3:1). The strategy for establishing the kingdom will no longer consist of the centralized location of a vineyard. Instead, it will involve the King’s servants issuing invitations to a wedding feast which will take place in heaven (22:3; cf. Revelation 19:7-9). Those “calls” were initially given to the very Jewish people who had originally mismanaged the vineyard (Acts 2:37-39; 3:17-26). Even so, only a tiny remnant would be open to receiving what was offered (Romans 11:5). The vast majority who rejected the opportunity to be a part of this new expression of the kingdom, would experience the judgment predicted by Jesus in Matthew 21:44; 22:7 and confirmed by Peter in Acts 3:23, as well as Paul in 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16.

So how can we accurately and comprehensively interpret the parable of the marriage feast from our Savior’s terse but definitive conclusion in Matthew 22:14?

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

As the kingdom of heaven would manifest itself on earth, to even the remotest parts of the earth (Acts 1:8), two invitations or calls to the marriage feast would be continuously issued (Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). The “general call” would be universally offered, yet unanimously rejected (1 Corinthians 1:18-23). Nevertheless, the second call would prove to be successful, in that it would overcome the failure of the first, by producing the desired result (1 Corinthians 1:24-31). If you have been the merciful recipient of the second call (Romans 9:22-24), in lieu of your sinful rejection of the initial call, then it is my hope and prayer that 1 Corinthians 1:31 would be perpetually true of you.