



Lesson 8

Chapter 22: Conflict with Pharisees and Sadducees

The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-13)

Matthew links this parable with that of the tenants in the vineyard (see Lesson 7). Jesus had told the Jews that *'the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits'*. The Jewish rulers understood that Jesus was talking about them (Matt. 21:45) and tried to arrest him. Jesus now reinforces this vital message with the parable of the wedding feast.

The parable shows both God's longsuffering and care for His people Israel and also how badly they treated God's servants, disciples who would preach the good news of the kingdom. It is difficult to understand and it will help us if we first read these words from the book of Revelation.

"Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"- for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."
(Revelation 19:6-9)

In the parable Jesus says that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a wedding feast prepared by a king for his son. He sent out invitations to the guests but those invited were too busy with everyday things of life to attend, so they missed their opportunity. The king then invited others instead but one man turned up without the wedding garment provided for him to wear. The king was angry and told his servants to throw him out. Still more came clothed with their wedding garments and were accepted by the king.

The king (God) invited wedding guests (Israel) to the marriage of his son (Jesus). He sent out his servants (Jesus' disciples) to invite them to the wedding, many were not interested (read Matt.10:6-7, 22). Again the king sent out servants to invite guests, these servants told the guests that the feast was prepared. Some of those who were invited (Jews who wanted to keep the Law and their own traditions) seized the king's servants (apostles) and even killed some of them.

In verse 7 Jesus warned them that those who rejected the offer of the Kingdom of Heaven were accountable for their actions. The city (Jerusalem) would be besieged by armies and burned with fire (Forty years later, in AD70 this happened exactly as Jesus had said). By their rejection of the Gospel message about the Kingdom of God, the Jews were found unworthy. Therefore after the destruction of the city the king invited others to come to the feast. The invitation of the Gospel message went out to the Gentiles.

The king came to see the guests who had responded to the invitation. One guest was not wearing a wedding garment, although he had declared himself to be a disciple of Jesus, he did not try to follow the Lord's example in his life, he was not a true disciple. It is those who truly believe and who try to follow the example of their Lord who are clothed with the righteousness that God provides and given a place in His kingdom.

Many are Called (22:14)

We are told that God does not want anyone to perish - to die without the hope of the kingdom (2 Peter 3:9). God wants all people to accept His gracious offer of salvation for *"God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish"*.

However most reject this, as the Pharisees did. So *"few are chosen"*.





Questions (22:15-40)

Much of the rest of the chapter is about rival groups of religious Jews trying to trap Jesus in his words. The Pharisees tried first. If Jesus had simply said 'Yes, it is right to pay tax to the Romans', the Pharisees could have said he was a supporter of the hated Roman people who were ruling over Israel. If he had said 'No', they could have reported him to the Roman authorities as a trouble maker. His answer shows that we should obey both God and our human rulers (when their orders do not conflict with our duty to God – see Acts 4:19 and 5:29). Romans 13:1-7 shows how we should submit to our governments and obey the laws of our country which include paying taxes.

However, when the Lord Jesus spoke about giving to Caesar and giving to God, he was referring to two different images. The coin had Caesar's image but people bear God's image (Genesis 1:26). Just as Caesar had to be accepted and taxes paid to him, so people need to respect and serve God. This applies to us as well as the people of Jesus' time.

The Sadducees then tried to trick Jesus. They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead and mocked it by their question. Jesus told them that they were ignorant about Bible teaching and about God's power to raise people. The dead will certainly rise again. Those that are raised and given everlasting life will be made like the angels who do not marry.

Jesus explained that the certainty of the resurrection was shown in the way that God spoke of Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This did not mean that they still existed, they were dead and their bodies had returned to the dust. However, their resurrection to immortal life is certain, which is why God spoke of them in this way. God's plan for their future requires them to live again. They must be raised from the dead and given eternal life so that they can inherit the land forever as God has promised them.

Then a lawyer asked Jesus a question about which was the greatest commandment in the Law. Jesus showed how all of the Ten Commandments can be summarised in answer he gave. He quoted from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18.

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:36-40)

Jesus teaches us that loving the Lord God with every part of our being and loving our neighbour as our self are the most important commands in the Law and are the basis for everything he did and taught in the New Testament.

Jesus – Son of David (22:41-46)

Finally Jesus asked them a question, '*Whose son would the Christ be?*' They answered correctly when they said that Christ would be the son of David, so he asked another question, quoting from Psalm 110:1. In this psalm David calls his future Son, 'Lord', yet the Jews did not think any son could be greater than his father.

Although Jesus was the Son of David through his mother, Mary, he was also the Son of God. So he was far greater than his forefather, David. Look at what this Psalm says about him.

"The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.'" (Psalm 110:1)

The word LORD in capital letters is used in the Old Testament for the name of God – 'Jehovah' or 'Yahweh'. So God is inviting Jesus to sit at His right hand in heaven until all his enemies were overthrown. It was a prophecy written by David who was inspired by God.

The chapter ends by telling us that no-one dare ask Jesus any further questions. This is the end of his public ministry and he has silenced all his opponents.





Angels do not marry!

It is useful to note that verse 30 says that angels do not marry. Many people wrongly believe that a wicked angel came to the earth and married a human, and they call this being 'satan' or the 'devil'. Nowhere in Scripture does it say that this happened, although they often think Genesis 6:2 provides the idea because the phrase 'sons of God' is used.

But believers are called sons, or children, of God in places like 1 John 3:1, 2. Genesis 6 tells us that the godly line of Seth's descendants (called 'the sons of God') intermarried with the wicked descendants of Cain (called 'the daughters of man') and so the earth became corrupt and full of violence and God sent the great flood.

People who think that 'Lucifer' or the 'Day Star' of Isaiah 14:12 is a supernatural evil being should read all of Isaiah 14 which clearly shows it is about the king of Babylon (see verse 4) and calls him a man (verse 16).

Ezekiel 28 is also sometimes used to support this wrong idea but this chapter is about the king of Tyre.

We should not accept what people tell us about the Bible without checking for ourselves!

Chapter 23: Woe to you Hypocrites!

Jesus Condemns the Scribes and Pharisees (23:1-15)

After Jesus had silenced the Pharisees and teachers of the Law, he turned to his disciples and the common people and showed how wrong their spiritual leaders were.

They wanted people to follow their strict rules but did not keep them themselves. They completely failed to show compassion and to help those who found it difficult to keep these rules. They were proud and wanted people to think they were good and important.

They liked to be called 'Rabbi', a Hebrew word meaning 'my great one' or 'master'.

The phylacteries (verse 5) were little boxes containing scripture verses, worn on the forehead and arm when praying. The Jews were very proud of these.

The contrast between what the leaders did and what God wanted is shown in Deuteronomy 6:8 where we see what this custom should have meant to them. God showed Israel that they should remember Him in all they did and talk to their children about Him.



"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.
You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.
And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.
You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.
You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."
(Deuteronomy 6:4-9)