

Christ's Authority (continued)
Matthew 22:1—14

As Jesus taught in the temple, the religious leaders of Israel came to Him asking the source of His authority to teach as He was teaching, to heal and to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple. From their standpoint, Jesus was a huge threat to them by swaying the people to leave their teachings and leadership in order to follow Jesus (John 11:48). They so hated what Jesus was doing that they desired to kill Him thinking that would solve their problem (John 5:18; Mark 14:1).

Jesus seems to evade their question about His authority but actually leads them to the answer with His own questions and parables. He first asked them a question about John the Baptist, where did John receive his authority. If they answered from heaven they would condemn themselves because they rejected John's message. If they answered from man then they would lose respect of the people because the vast majority of people perceived John to be a prophet. Since John received his authority from God (John 1:6) and he came announcing Jesus Christ to the nation of Israel, the religious leaders would know Jesus' authority was also from God. This is why they said they could not answer Jesus' question.

After this Jesus told them a parable about the two sons. The first said he would not work in the vineyard but did go while the second said he would go and work in the vineyard but did not. Jesus then says the first son represents the tax collectors and prostitutes. This leaves the religious leaders to be the son that was disobedient, not doing the work in Israel that they were called to do and not believing John the Baptist when he called them to repentance. They should have recognized John's authority and therefore Jesus' authority.

Another parable is then told to them concerning a landowner who planted a vineyard and put others in charge of it. They were to make sure the vineyard produced good fruit but were negligent and it produced no useable fruit. When the landowner sent people to check up on those in charge, they beat and killed them. When the landowner sent his son they killed him too so they could seize his inheritance. This parable describes the religious leaders of Israel for at least the past 800 years. They were bad grape-growers and bad shepherds (Jeremiah 23:1—4; Ezekiel 34:1—10) and, as in the parable, the Cornerstone, Jesus Christ, will crush them. Telling them this parable hit a nerve because they were born out of the generation of corrupt, unbelieving leaders of Israel who were doing the same thing as those before them. They rejected the Cornerstone, but the Cornerstone will be the cause of their demise. Saying this emphasizes Jesus' authority and the results of a failure to acknowledge Him.

Parable of the wedding feast

This is the third parable that Jesus told to the religious leaders while in the temple. The leaders are becoming more and more desperate to silence Jesus because in their eyes He is stirring up the masses against their perceived power over the people. This is another teaching parable to illustrate what will happen to these godless leaders.

A king was hosting a wedding feast for his son and sent out his slaves to call those invited to come to the feast but they declined the offer because they were just too busy with other things to bother. So, with everything ready, the king sent out other slaves to once again invite them to the wedding feast. Most ignored the invitation while others seized the slaves and mistreated and killed them. The king's response was to destroy these evil men and their city. Another call went out beyond the destroyed city to call both bad and good and the wedding was now completely filled. However, there was a man in the feast who was not wearing the proper wedding garments. The king asked him how he got into the feast. Speechless, the man was bound and cast into everlasting darkness.

In this parable the king is God the Father hosting a wedding for His Son, Jesus Christ. The slaves that were sent out were God's spokesmen sent to Israel. Those rejecting the invitation were most of Israel while those

who killed the Son were the religious leaders. The wedding feast is the marriage supper of the Lamb described in Revelation 19:9. This is the marriage between Jesus Christ and Israel. From John 3:29 we know Jesus is the Bridegroom (also Matthew 9:15). Since Jesus' ministry was exclusively to Israel (Matthew 15:24) it's easy to see that Israel would have to be the bride. This is backed up by many Old Testament prophets such as Jeremiah 2:2; 3:14; 31:31—33; Hosea 2:19—20; Isaiah 54:4—8 and Isaiah 62:1—5. We are not the Bride of Christ, we are the BODY of Christ. We can't be both since each has a separate function and future in eternity.

It appears that the first group of slaves sent out (verse 3) represents John and the Disciples. They went out throughout Israel calling them to repentance. This was the first time the Kingdom was said to be "at hand" meaning the Kingdom was soon to be set up. It appears the second group of slaves (verse 4) was sent out to invite Israel to the feast after Christ's death, burial and resurrection. This is all recorded in early Acts. Those slaves who were seized, mistreated and killed included Stephen (Acts 7:59—60) and James (Acts 12:2). This enraged the Father (verse 7) and it's because of Israel's rejection of Jesus Christ the city of Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed.

Beginning with verse 8 is where most people insert the Church, the Body of Christ. They assume that since the destruction of the temple has been completed and that the slaves are told to go out to the highways and invite as many as they find that it must refer to us. However, God is still dealing with Israel according to Prophecy and therefore has not yet revealed the Mystery truths—they will remain a mystery until given to the Apostle Paul (Romans 16:25—26). These are the Jews living outside of Jerusalem. They could not be members of the Body of Christ because verse 10 says that both good and bad are invited. In fact we see one of the guests not wearing proper attire questioned by the king (the Father). He represents those who were called to come to the feast but he was not wearing cloths of righteousness only available by God the Father through Jesus Christ. This man came in wearing his own garments—that of self-righteousness. In spite of this the Father calls him friend indicating there is an opportunity for this man to repent and put on the proper garments. This man went speechless, not confessing his need and was bound and cast into outer darkness.

It's with this parable that Jesus condemns the religious leaders of Israel and indicated their eternal fate for ignoring all the opportunities to believe. Like the man in the parable, they will have no excuse and will stand speechless before God at the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 19)

Many called, few chosen (verse 14)

This saying is directly tied to the above parable. This is the last call to come into the Millennial Kingdom and participate in the wedding feast either as the bride (Israel) or as a guest (Gentile). The call is going out to all who are going through the Tribulation and is most likely done through the 144,000 Jews who will be appointed for bringing the Gospel of the Kingdom to the whole world (Revelation 7:4; Matthew 24:14). It is only after the Gospel of the Kingdom is preached throughout the world that the end of the Tribulation comes with the coming of Jesus Christ to take His rightful place on the earthly throne to reign over the earth. This particular invitation is going out to those who are enduring the Tribulation. Even though many people are being called, only a few will actually be chosen to go into the Kingdom along with others who will be resurrected so they can participate in this marriage celebration (Matthew 8:11).

The few chosen are not those who are elect unto salvation. How cruel would it be of God to have many called into the Kingdom but find out that most were not elect to stay in the Kingdom. The few in this verse refer to those who do respond to the Gospel of the Kingdom, have repented, have been baptized, and therefore have put on garments of righteousness because they have responded in faith. To summarize, the many include all alive at the end of the Tribulation but only a few who have come to Christ in faith will be chosen to enter into the Kingdom.

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