

Session 8: First Commandment: End-of-the-Age Ministry Paradigm

I. THE BRIDAL PARADIGM OF THE KINGDOM

² *The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king [the Father] who arranged a marriage for his son, ³ and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding ... ⁵ They made light of it and went their ways ... ⁸ He said to his servants, “The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy ... ⁹ Go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding ...” ³⁷ Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord...with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your mind.” (Mt. 22:1-9, 37)*

A. Jesus called Israel to the first commandment in context to the parable of the wedding feast. In this He reveals the bridal paradigm (point of view or perspective) of the kingdom. The Father’s eternal plan is to arrange a marriage for His Son. Our relationship with Jesus is a marriage. In other words, we are invited to the unique privilege of experiencing intimacy with His heart.

⁷ *For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. ⁸ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen ... for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. ⁹ Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb! (Rev. 19:7-9)*

B. God’s eternal purpose for His creation is to provide a family for Himself and an equally yoked Bride for His Son as His eternal companion who will reign with Him in love. God is raising up a prepared Bride for His worthy Son. Our garments will proclaim the measure of our love.

C. Jesus referred to Himself to as the Bridegroom, the apostles as friends of the Bridegroom (Mt. 9:15), His kingdom as a marriage (Mt. 22:2), and the New Jerusalem as the Bride (Rev. 21:9).

D. Jesus’ much anticipated ride into Jerusalem on a donkey to fulfill the famous messianic prophecy in Zech. 9:9 set the tone for His teaching throughout all of Mt. 21-25, in which He emphasized the end times. His next visit to Jerusalem will be on a white horse as the King (Rev. 19:16).

II. THE KINGDOM MESSAGE: EVANGELISM AS AN INVITATION TO THE WEDDING

³ *[The king] sent out his servants to call those ... invited to the wedding; they were not willing to come.*

⁴ *Again, he sent out servants, saying, “Tell those who are invited, ‘See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.’” (Mt. 22:3-4)*

A. The Father sent servants, or messengers, to invite people to a wedding. In this parable, Jesus reveals His burning desire for us and longing for a deep relationship with us that will last forever. This reveals the purpose of humanity, the design of history, and the highest focus for ministry.

B. The bridal perspective changes the way evangelists preach salvation, pastors counsel people in difficulty, teachers teach the Bible, forerunners prophesy, or apostles build churches. It affects how we view people and preach on salvation, holiness, or judgment. We are saved from something terrible and to something glorious. We need salvation to escape hell as well as to qualify and empower us to engage in a deep eternal relationship with God (1 Cor. 1:9).

III. NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO GOD'S LOVE: PASSIVITY AND HOSTILITY

⁵ They made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. ⁶ The rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. ⁷ But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. (Mt. 22:5-7)

- A. **Passive resistance to Jesus**: passivity about God's deep desire and great provision for us is a serious crime of ingratitude. People say that they must be practical, but there was nothing practical about creation and the incarnation. God went out of His way for love. Farms and businesses are given to us as God's gift to experience His love and express it back to Him. No blessing or ministry assignment in God is ever to take the place of our relationship to Him.
- B. **Active resistance to Jesus**: hostility to God's messengers (treated spitefully and killed).
- C. **God's active response**: the king sent his armies to destroy those who murdered his messengers. God sends His armies in His fury to destroy the murderers and burn their cities. God will burn cities of the Antichrist, because He arranged a wedding and they killed His beloved (Rev. 16:17-21; 19:2, 11-21). The Romans' attack on Jerusalem in AD 70 was a partial fulfillment of this.
- D. The intensity of the Father's love is the same intensity of His wrath against all that hinders love.
² **True and righteous are His judgments, because He judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth ... and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her.** (Rev. 19:2)
- E. There is no contradiction between the passion of the Father and His anger. The context of God's fury is His intensity in arranging a marriage and protecting His people (v. 2). We can only make sense of Jesus as the Judge if we understand Him as the Bridegroom. He works with the Father in judgment to remove everything that hinders love and all that harms His Bride.
- F. The fury of the Father is an expression of His passion for Jesus and His Bride (Ps. 2:5-9).
⁵ **He [the Father] shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure ...** ⁸ **"Ask of Me, and I will give You [Jesus] the nations for Your inheritance ..."** ⁹ **You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces.** (Ps. 2:5-9)
- G. On the island of Patmos, sixty years later, Jesus developed Matthew 22:7 in more detail for John in the judgments described in the book of Revelation. Revelation is about a Bride being prepared for her wedding, the first commandment filling the earth, and evil being driven off the planet.
- H. We must not be ashamed of God's fury and thus seek to hide it, or downplay it as if it is a fault in God's character. We must not be afraid to be accused of being "gloom and doom" or "fire and brimstone" preachers. Jesus preached a message of doom to those who opposed His fiery love. We can only preach judgment in a right way with a right spirit by understanding the Bridegroom. God's judgment is best understood in light of the refusal to receive His intense love.

- I. We downplay the fury of God’s judgment because we do not understand the reality of His passionate love. The Father burning cities in Revelation is part of the bridal message. We have no authority to change God’s Word or adapt it to our cultural sensibilities because of fear of man.
- J. Paul prayed that they would be rooted and grounded in understanding and experiencing God’s love. All speaking on judgment is to be rooted in revelation of the intensity of Jesus’ love.
- ¹⁷ That you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend ... what is the width and length and depth and height—¹⁹ to know the love of Christ. (Eph. 3:17-19)*

IV. GOD’S GLORY: HIS DESIRE FOR ALL TO PARTICIPATE IN THE WEDDING

⁸ Then he said to his servants, “The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ⁹ Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.” ¹⁰ So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. (Mt. 22:8-10)

- A. Those invited were not worthy because they did not respond with love. Being worthy of salvation does not mean that we earn it, but that we respond in grateful love to Jesus’ love.
- B. The primary “currency” in eternity is voluntary love formed in our hearts in this life. Christianity through the lens of the bridal paradigm makes radical abandonment to God’s love reasonable and has no interest in “fire insurance Christianity.”
- C. God’s heart is seen in His desire for both the bad and good (Mt. 21:31). Jesus wants the “bad” ones. There is no one who has gone too far; if they will simply respond, then God wants them.
- ³² Jesus said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you.” (Mt. 21:31)*
- D. God’s zeal to send His messengers to the highways and byways is an expression of His fiery passion. He wants His servants to participate in this great drama. It was unthinkable to the Jews of that day to go out of their way to bring salvation to the Gentiles in the highways and byways.
- E. The Lord has no pleasure in the death of wicked and desires all to be saved.
- ²³ “Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?” says the Lord GOD, “and not that he should turn from his ways and live?” (Ezek. 18:23)*
- ⁹ The Lord is ... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (2 Pet. 3:9)*
- F. The wedding hall will be filled—the Great Harvest at the end of the age.
- ⁹ Behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. (Rev. 7:9)*

V. THE NECESSITY OF RESPONDING IN HUMILITY AND LOVE

¹¹ *But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment.* ¹² *So he said to him, “Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?” And he was speechless.* ¹³ *Then the king said to the servants, “Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* ¹⁴ *For many are called [invited], but few are chosen [respond so as to be chosen]. (Mt. 22:11-14)*

A. A wedding garment will be required to participate in the great wedding feast. It speaks of the righteousness of God imputed and imparted to us. Wedding garments will be given to each believer according to their behavior (acts of obedience). This is different from the robe of righteousness we receive as a gift (2 Cor. 5:21; Isa. 61:10).

⁷ *For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.* ⁸ *And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen ... for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.* ⁹ *Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb! (Rev. 19:7-9)*

1. Legal position: the gift of Jesus’ righteousness is imputed to us instantly at the new birth

2. Living condition: righteous character is imparted to us progressively by the Holy Spirit

B. This man speaks of those who seek to enter the celebration of salvation on their own terms.

1. The garment of religion: includes “nominal Christianity,” Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, etc., or those who think they will receive salvation outside of being born again. The man with religious pride trusts in his own merits, thinking he is qualified for salvation.

2. The garment of compromise: those with continual compromise presume on God’s mercy by thinking they are saved without being serious about loving Jesus with obedience.

C. God has great mercy toward us in our many failures. What He does not accept is our long-term unwillingness to war against our failures with sincere repentance. It is not enough to be familiar with biblical language and attend worship gatherings. Our immaturity does not disqualify us, but our insincerity does. We must distinguish between rebellion and immaturity. If we mistake immaturity as rebellion, then we run from Him instead of to Him when we see our weakness.

D. Many (multitudes) are *called* (invited); only few are *chosen* (by responding with loving faith). This principle connects this parable with the parable in Matthew 21:1-10. The Lord calls “many,” reflecting His invitation to all, “as many as you find” (Mt. 22:9). The “chosen” refers to the responsive, who seek to love Jesus with all their heart (v. 37). The “called” lose their privilege by their own unresponsiveness to God’s gracious call and invitation.

E. Divine election works with human responsibility so that voluntary love is manifest (v. 37).