

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

By the Rev. Dr. Harry Wendt, Founder of Crossways International

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Matthew 22:1-14

Year A - Proper 23, Text: Matthew 22:1-14
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The Parable of the Wedding Feast contains many allegorical elements, e.g., the burning of the city of the guests who refused the king's invitation (v. 7). This image corresponds to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70, an event seen as God's judgment on Judaism's unresponsive leaders.

This text contains details that resemble those found in the previous parable: the sending of two groups of servants (verses 3–4), the murder of the slaves (v. 6), the punishment of the murderers (v. 7), and the entrance of a new group into a privileged situation of which the other invited guests had proved themselves unworthy (verses 8–10). The parable ends with a section peculiar to Matthew (verses 11–14), which some interpret as a distinct, separate parable.

In this parable, Matthew presents God's kingdom as something already present that one can enter in the here and now (verses 1–10) and as something that only those who can stand the scrutiny of the final judgment will possess (verses 11–14).

Note, however, that God's people are never saved by works; they are saved for works. God's free forgiving grace calls people to costly discipleship.

Verses 22:1–2: Already in the Old Testament, final salvation is portrayed in terms of a banquet (Isaiah 25:6). Here, the reference is to a wedding banquet — that of the king's son.

Verses 22:3–4: The servant/messengers represent both the Old Testament prophets and those whom Jesus sends forth to bear witness to Him.

Verses 22:5–6: Some ignore the messengers; in doing so, they shame the king. Others mistreat and kill the them. The treatment they mete out to them enrages the king. Here the reference is clearly to how the prophets of old were rejected and killed by the people to whom they were sent (see Matthew 23:37).

Verse 22:7: The king has those who murdered the servants put to death, and burns their city. The reference is to what would take place in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and killed hundreds of thousands of Jewish people.

Verses 22:8–10: The king now commands his servants to go out into the streets and invite all, both good and bad, to the wedding banquet — with the result that the wedding hall is filled with guests. This can be taken as a reference to the future inclusion of the Gentiles in family of faith, or it could simply point to the fact that it was sinners who responded to Jesus, rather than those who were righteous.

Verses 22:11–14: The reference to a person not wearing the appropriate wedding garment is puzzling one to many. It has nothing to do with the possibility that the rejected guest might not have been able to afford such a garment, because it would have been host's responsibility to provide one if required. Nor is it a backhanded way to reestablish the idea of salvation by works.

Rather, this passage speaks to the person who wishes to participate in God's banquet of grace, but has no desire to respond with servant discipleship. The message of these verses is: God's Kingdom is marked by a complete change of heart and mind that is demonstrated outwardly in a life of faith toward God and love for neighbor — produced by God's own Spirit at work in us.

Just as Paul affirms in Galatians 3:27, "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." In living the life of faith, we trust not in our own merit or worthiness, but look to be clothed in the righteousness of Christ alone (2 Corinthians 5:1–4).