

Matthew 21-11-21b

Let's resume our study now in Matthew chapter 22. We are halfway through the first of these parables of the king giving the wedding feast for his son and the focus is on the relationship between the invitees, those who are called, and the king and what their ultimate fate is based on the decision they make relative to his invitation. He is the king.

There is no other. They live in his land. When he issues an invitation, there is a choice.

They are not compelled to come against their will. I think if I was more Calvinist in my Bible interpretation, I would be wondering why the servants don't just say, sorry, but I don't care if you have a business or a farm, you're coming, grab them by the arm and drag them kicking and screaming into the banquet hall. But as it is, they choose not to come.

And those who are indifferent, just disappear from the scene. We don't see them anymore. The farmer and the businessman, we don't know what happened to them.

These who seize his servants, treat them spitefully and kill them are the recipients of the king's fury. He sends out his armies, destroys those murderers and burns up their city. Then he says in verse eight of Matthew 22 to his servants, the wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy.

They do not meet the standard. The standard is come when you are called, respond when you are invited. Therefore go into the highways and as many as you find invite to the wedding.

The call that was originally given to Israel came to the patriarchs, to Abraham in Genesis 12, to Isaac, to Jacob, to the 12 tribes, to those who came out in the Exodus with Moses, to those who entered the land with Joshua, to those in the days of the judges, to those in the days of the united monarchy under Saul and David and Solomon, and then the divided monarchy with Jeroboam and Rehoboam and the Southern kingdom of Judah, where the temple continued to stand and where the priests continue to function and where there was still opportunity to respond to God's call. God sent prophet after prophet to the Northern kingdom. Notably, Elijah and Elisha were prophets to the Northern kingdom.

Elisha is going to travel down to the South, but he takes Elijah's place prophesying and fulfilling God's mandate to issue the invitation. So what is the response? Well, you find this beginning with those who were called out of Egypt. Psalm 95 verse 10 sums this up nicely.

God says, for 40 years I was grieved with that generation and said, it is a people who go astray in their hearts and they do not know my ways. Isaiah chapter one verses two

through 15. Hear O heavens and give ear O earth for the Lord has spoken.

I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his owner, the donkey knows his master's crib, but Israel does not know my people do not consider. Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corruptors.

They have forsaken the Lord. They have provoked to anger the Holy one of Israel. They have turned away backward.

Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick and the whole heart faints from the sole of the foot, even to the head. There is no soundness in it.

Wounds and bruises, putrefying sores. They have not been closed or bound up or soothed with ointment. Why are these open sores and gaping wounds not healed? Failure to respond to Yahweh Rapha, the Lord who heals.

Why would you not be healed? Why would you not come? It is choice. It is fellow. They were not willing.

Your country is desolate. Your cities are burned with fire. Strangers devour your land in your presence, and it is desolate, overthrown by strangers.

The daughter of Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, a hut in a garden of cucumbers as a besieged city. Unless the Lord of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom. We would have been made like Gomorrah.

Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom. Give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me, says the Lord? Now, this is scary.

You're still making sacrifices to the God of Israel, but to what purpose? I've had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls or of lambs or goats. When you come to appear before me, who has required this from your hand to trample my courts? Bring no more futile sacrifices.

Incense is an abomination to me. The new moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies, I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts, my soul hates.

They are trouble to me. I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you.

Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean, put away the evil of your doings from before my

eyes.

Cease to do evil, learn to do good. Seek justice, rebuke the oppressor, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow. All of those, by the way, notice the difference between being interested in your own farm and your own business or looking out for the interests of others.

Come now, God says in verse 18 of Isaiah one, let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red, like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.

If you are willing, fellow, obedient, willing and obedient, two separate things. This comes out in the latter part of our parable. When you get to the robe, willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.

But if you refuse and rebel two separate things, refusing is one rebelling is worse. You shall be devoured by the sword for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. It could not be more clear.

The invitation went out centuries before. To the people in Jesus day. Messengers were sent.

Servants were sent. Other servants were sent pleading. Here are John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus and his disciples presenting the imminent kingdom.

The oxen and fatted cattle are slaughtered. Everything is ready. Come to the feast.

But they will not. The. Call continues in chapter five, verse four of Isaiah, what more could have been done to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes? You remember that beautiful parable in Isaiah chapter five of the vineyard.

My beloved and so on. Uh, turn with me. This is worth looking at.

Turn with me to Jeremiah chapter seven. We're looking at the K Klaymanos, the called ones, those having been called. Do we qualify under this title? Have we been called? Absolutely.

Read Romans eight, 28 through 30, Jeremiah chapter seven. The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah saying, stand in the gate of the Lord's house and proclaim there this word and say, hear the word of the Lord. All you house of Judah who enter in at these gates to worship the Lord.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel and mend your ways and your doings. And I will cause you to dwell in this place. Do not trust in these lying words that say the

temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.

These, if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless and the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place or walk after other gods to your hurt, then I will cause you to dwell in this place in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. Boy, are those pungent words for the present time? Will you steal murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to bail and walk after other gods whom you do not know. Then come and stand before me and this house, which is called by my name and say, we are delivered so that you can do these abominations as this house, which is called by my name, become a den of thieves in your eyes.

Behold, I, even I have seen it says the Lord go now to my place, which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first. See what I did to it because of the wickedness of my people, Israel. Now, because you have done all these works, says the Lord, I spoke to you rising up early and speaking, but you did not listen.

You did not hear. I called you, but you did not answer. Therefore I will do to the house, which is called by my name in which you trust and to this place, which I gave to you and your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.

I will cast you out of my sight as I've cast out all your brethren, the whole posterity of Ephraim. Therefore do not pray for this. People do not lift up a cry or prayer for them.

Do not make intercession to me. I will not hear you point of application here. You cannot effectively pray for people who are willfully rebellious.

God will not listen. Do you not see what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? Verse 18, the children gather wood. The father's kindled the fire and the women need dough to make cakes for the queen of heaven.

They pour out drink offerings to other gods that they may provoke me to anger. Why would you offer sacrifices and do obeisance to other gods? Why would people in practical terms do this? Why did Israel, why did the, did the nations, why did the Canaanites, the Amorites, why did they worship these gods? Why did they bake cakes to the queen of heaven? Why did they go to Ashtoreth and Baal and Kemosh and all these others? Why? What did they think would happen? Well, Baal is the storm god. If I want my crops to flourish, I need good weather.

I don't want storms and hail coming and obliterating my crops. The queen of heaven, I want her to smile on me and make my, my fields and my flocks and my herds fruitful. She's the goddess of fertility.

I want many calves and many kids and many young lambs in my flocks. So if I sacrifice

to her, she will give me what I want. Uh, no faith in the actual God of heaven, but trusting in what amounts to lucky charms and tradition.

And well, this has been the, this has been the way in this land for centuries. People, people know what makes good crops. I've got a neighbor and he makes cakes to the queen of heaven.

And he always has wonderful flocks and herds. If I do that, I will have similar prosperity trusting in lying words, false promises, false cause and effect scenarios. So verse 20, we're in Jeremiah chapter seven, thus says the Lord God behold, my anger and my fury will be poured out on this place.

What does Matthew 22 say about the King? He was furious at the response to his invitation and the self-interested pursuit of other things, businesses and farms. My anger and my fury will be poured out on this place on man and on beast, on the trees of the field, on the fruit of the ground, it will burn and not be quenched. The King destroys those murderers and burns down their cities, their city.

22, I did not speak to your fathers or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices. This is what I commanded them. I said, obey my voice and I will be your God.

And you shall be my people walk in all the ways that I have commanded you that it may be well with you. People are depending on these rituals that have become empty and meaningless because their heart's not in it. If I sacrifice at the temple, God will give me good luck.

He says, sacrifice and offering isn't what I told your fathers when they came out of Egypt. I said, I'm looking for response. I'm looking for obedience.

I'm looking for coming when you are called. Obey my voice. I will be your God.

You shall be my people walk in the ways I've commanded you that it may be well with you. Yet they did not obey or incline their ear. Notice they didn't incline their ear, much less obey.

They followed the counsels and dictates of their evil hearts and went backward and not forward. They went away from the wedding feast, not toward it. Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I've even sent to you all my servants, the prophets daily rising up early and sending yet.

They did not obey me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. Remember the picture of the stiff neck. This is when people are looking at you.

You say something, you deliver a message and they turn around and show you the back

of the neck. The stiff neck is literally showing the back of the neck. They turn and in disrespectful disregard, walk away, stiffen their neck.

They did worse than their fathers. Therefore, you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not obey you. You shall also call to them, but they will not answer you.

Notice Jesus is delivering the parable of the wicked vine dressers, the parable of the two sons, the parable of the King's wedding feast to the elders, the chief priests, the scribes, the Pharisees, all of these who are represented in the Sanhedrin and all of those who aspire to be there. Those who are the the leaders of the people. And it is so straightforward.

It is so clear. They know Jesus is talking about them, but just like verse 27, they will not obey. They will, even though you call to them, they will not answer you.

So you shall say to them, verse 28 of Jeremiah seven, this is a nation that does not obey the voice of the Lord, their God, nor receive correction. Truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth. Cut off your hair and cast it away.

Take up a lamentation on the desolate Heights for the Lord has rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath, his fury. Children of Judah have done evil in my sight, says the Lord. They've set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name to pollute it.

They have built the high places of Tophet in the Valley of the son of Hinnom. Uh, this is where Gehenna comes from gay Hinnom, the Mount, and therefore the Valley of Hinnom to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into my heart. Therefore, behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when it will no more be called Tophet or the Valley of the son of Hinnom, but the Valley of slaughter, for they will bury in Tophet until there is no room.

The corpses of this people will be food for the birds of heaven. And for the beasts of the earth, no one will frighten them away. I will cause to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride for the land shall be desolate.

You begin to understand the heart, the Anthropos Basileus, the man who is the king, who loves his son, who is creating an occasion for joy and celebration and people turn their back on it and reject it and end up despising and killing the messengers who bring that good news. It's graphically illustrated there. So when these servants are rejected in the first case and other servants are sent, these servants are the imminent servants.

The food is on the table. So you can't help but think of John the Baptist. You think of the Lord Jesus himself.

You think of the disciples who in many cases end up being martyred. You think of Stephen. You think of James.

You think of their intent to try to kill Simon Peter. And it is hard to believe that there is this hateful reaction when God is so patient and so gracious. He sent out the first invitation.

He sent the servants to call them to the banquet. They're ignored. He sends other servants.

The patience of God, and I go back to that Playanastic use of Anthropos, God is so invested as it were, as an anthropopathism, in benefiting not only his son and the bride and having the wedding feast, but to bless the guests. And you saw that in Jeremiah 7.13. I spoke to you rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear. I called you, but you did not answer.

God doesn't immediately respond when there's rejection and just destroy Israel over and over again. All day long I have held up my hands to this disobedient and stiff-necked people. Jeremiah, that was 7.13, is I spoke to you rising up early and speaking.

You did not hear. I called you, but you did not answer. In verse 25, we saw since the day your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have sent to you all my servants, the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them.

Jeremiah 11.7, I earnestly exhorted your fathers in the day I brought them up out of the land of Egypt until this day, rising early and exhorting, saying, obey my voice. That's 11.7 in Jeremiah. Jeremiah 25.3, from the 13th year of Josiah, the son of Ammon, king of Judah, even to this day, this is the 23rd year in which the word of the Lord has come to me, Jeremiah, and I have spoken to you rising early and speaking, but you have not listened.

Can you imagine? We've had Grace and Truth Bible Church now for 27, 28 years, something like that. Jeremiah spent almost that long, 23 years, day in, day out, rising early, speaking the truth of God to the people of Judah, and they didn't listen. It is no wonder that he wrote the book of Lamentations.

It is no wonder that he's called the weeping prophet. Can you imagine a non-response to your faithful ministry of the truth of God for 23 years? And of course, it extends even further after this day, but in Jeremiah 25.3, this is the 23rd year in which the word of the Lord has come to me, and I have spoken to you rising early and speaking, but you have not listened. Verse four, the Lord has sent to you all his servants, the prophets rising early and sending them, but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear.

Not just Jeremiah, but other servants, different servants. You have not listened or inclined your ear. Ezekiel 18.23, 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? Now, I will occasionally point out why I disagree with a very prevalent theological perspective that says that there is an effectual call and the called will respond.

These are the elect. It's the whole tulip series of events, irresistible grace and so on. What do you do with these passages? 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? Ezekiel 18.23, it is not the will of God that any perish.

Ezekiel 18.32, I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies, says the Lord God. Therefore, turn and live. Ezekiel 33.11, say to them, as I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.

Turn, turn from your evil ways. Why should you die, O house of Israel? Remember the fig tree parable that Jesus tells over in Luke chapter 13, verses six through nine? Jesus spoke this parable. A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard and he came seeking fruit on it and found none.

Harbinger of things to come. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, look, for three years, I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down.

Why does it use up the ground? But he answered and said to him, sir, let it alone this year also until I dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit, great. But if not after that, you can cut it down.

Jesus is giving them this one final opportunity. If they don't respond, tree is going to be cut down. And of course, that's exactly what, what happens.

Romans chapter two, verse four, all of this is looking at the Anthropos aspect, the heart of God, that there be benefit, that there be blessing, that there be celebration in this great occasion of the wedding feast, which stands for the kingdom of the son. Romans two four. Do you despise the riches of his goodness, forbearance and long suffering? How patient is the Lord God? Do you despise that not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? His goodness argues for leads us to change of mind.

Why would we despise his goodness? Why would we despise his forbearance? Why would we despise his long suffering? But this illustration makes it abundantly clear when we do not let the word of God penetrate into our hearts and change us and make us different. This is the result. We're not responding to his goodness.

Romans nine 22. What if God wanting to show his wrath and to make his power known endured with much long suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction? He's put up with it for a long, long time, showing his wrath and power is under control, showing that it is preceded by forbearance and patience and mercy. God is going to display his wrath.

He is going to manifest his power, but not before grace, not before every opportunity to exercise change of mind and repentance. Paul says in first Timothy one 16, that he obtained mercy so that in me first, Jesus Christ might show all long suffering as a pattern to those who are going to believe on him for everlasting life. Look how patient God was with me.

Paul says, I was a persecutor. I was chief of sinners, but God demonstrated long suffering and patience in putting up with me until my heart and my mind changed. It's an exhibition of the long suffering of Jesus Christ.

There was great evil in the days of Noah when the ark was a building, as it says in the king James, but Peter says in first Peter three 20, uh, these angels who formerly were disobedient when once the divine long suffering waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared in which a few, that is eight souls were saved through water. God waited in the days of Noah and there was every opportunity for people to ask Noah, what are you doing? What, what does God say? And there was great long suffering, every opportunity to express repentance and change of mind. They didn't avail themselves of it.

Second Peter chapter three, verse 15, consider that the long suffering of our Lord is deliverance. He puts up with us. We shouldn't decide that.

Well, God must not care because nothing bad has happened. Um, I'm doing okay. So this whole notion that there's judgment and the wrath of God may be exhibited.

Nothing bad has happened to me. This is, you know, look the wicked prosper. God doesn't seem to care.

Consider that the long suffering of our Lord. Second Peter three 15 is deliverance as also our beloved brother. Paul, according to the wisdom given him has written to you.

Paul has explained this many times. Well, the reaction to the guests is either indifference or violent reaction. Well, this is exhibited with the Lord Jesus himself.

Um, when they see Jesus do great works, they ascribe it to Satan. Remember we saw in chapter 12, verse 24 of Matthew, the Pharisees heard that Jesus had had cast out demons. They said, this fellow does not cast demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.

Then of course, Jesus goes on to talk about the house divided against itself. In chapter 16, verse 21, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and be raised the third day. We saw it in chapter 20, verse 18.

We're going to Jerusalem. The son of man will be betrayed to the chief priest and scribes.

They will condemn him to death.

Countless, countless examples. God is patient. God is long suffering, but his patience is not limitless.

There is a day when the arc of the door, the door of the arc slammed shut. Uh, Genesis six, three, the Lord says, my spirit will not put up with man forever. My spirits are not going to do this indefinitely.

Proverbs 29, verse one, he who is often rebuked and hardens, his neck will suddenly be destroyed. And that without remedy, Daniel five 22, Daniel talking to Belshazzar. Remember the writing on the wall and the impending demise of the, the, uh, kingdom there.

Nebuchadnezzar's, uh, successor is eventually Belshazzar. So Daniel says, talking about Nebuchadnezzar, you, his son, Belshazzar have not humbled your heart. Although you knew Nebuchadnezzar's history, you knew how he was humbled.

And for seven years, eight grass and his toenails grew long and so on. You have not humbled your heart. Although you knew all this, you have lifted up yourself up against the Lord of heaven.

They have brought the vessels of his house before you. And you and your Lords, your wives and your concubines have drunk wine from them. You have praised the gods of silver and gold bronze and iron wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know.

And the God who holds your breath in his hand and owns all your ways. You have not glorified plenty of opportunity, but misusing the things of God, using them for selfish purposes and self-indulgence. That is why Belshazzar is destroyed.

We just saw this in the last chapter. When the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine dressers? And even the ungodly knew what would happen. He will destroy those wicked men miserably, lease his vineyard to other vine dressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.

Revelation chapter two, talking about Jezebel. Revelation 2, 21 and 22. I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, her porna, her faithless covenant breaking, and she did not repent.

Indeed, I will cast her into a sick bed and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. There is still time for change of mind. Well, the king dispatches his armies.

He destroys the murderers, sets fire to their city. We know what happened to Jerusalem. Let me close this morning as a reminder of the fulfillment after great patience, great

opportunity.

40 years after Jesus comes before Jerusalem is destroyed. But let me read you an eyewitness account of what happened when the city was destroyed by the king's troops. This is from Josephus, especially when you get to his latter books.

He wrote six books and the last two or three. Here is his eyewitness account of what happened when Titus came into Jerusalem, the building, the temple at Jerusalem. However, God long ago had sentenced to the flames.

Now in the revolution of the time periods, the fateful day had arrived. The 10th of the month lose the very day on which previously it had been burned by the king of Babylon. One of the soldiers, neither awaiting orders nor filled with horror of so dread and undertaking, but moved by some supernatural impulse snatched a brand from the blazing timber and hoisted up by one of his fellow soldiers, flung the fiery missile through a golden window.

When the flame arose, a scream as poignant as the tragedy went up from the Jews. Now that the object, which before they had guarded so closely was going to ruin while the sanctuary was burning, neither pity for age nor respect for rank was shown. On the contrary, children and old people, lady and priests alike were massacred.

The emperor ordered the entire city and sanctuary to be raised to the ground, except only the highest towers, Fossil, Hippocas, and Mary Annie. And that part of the wall that enclosed the city on the West. So it was a horrific destruction, but how could God not after so many calls, so many invitations.

So we have a lot more to see in this, but as it says in Hebrews, how can we neglect very same verb? So great a deliverance. God gives us every opportunity to have change of heart, to respond to the truth that has been spoken in his word by his servants. What's going to happen that so many times the bad consequences of failure are not emphasized.

We love to dwell on the blessings. We love to dwell on the future. So bright and fair, the heavenly glory, when Jesus comes and takes us to himself, the blessings, but we do not take to heart the warning passages of scripture.

They are dismissed. They are deflected as belonging to unbelievers. Those who have never gotten saved, quote unquote.

And we do not realize these are God's people. These are those who were invited. The king doesn't invite people from outside the kingdom in this parable.

These are his own subjects. They belong to him. He's got authority over them.

And when they disrespect him and when they disrespect his servants, he has kingly authority to go in there and execute judgment on them because they are his subjects. They are his people. He doesn't go attack some foreign land because they, their ambassador refused to come to the wedding.

That's a different scenario. These are God's people. Jeremiah chapter seven, read it.

These are God's people who have refused to respond, who are in a covenant relationship with him. And what are the consequences? We can be motivated not only by love for God and the desire to please him and to receive his many graces and benefits, but also to remember that the danger of distraction and self-interest and becoming apathetic and being too much in this world and too involved in too many things that please us is dire. It is important to respond.

It is important to obey. Not only that, not only to respond and to come, but also to have the wedding robe. Wait till we get to the wedding robe next time.

This is a revelation and we'll see it when we return to our study next week. But let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, we do thank you for your patience, your faithfulness, your long suffering toward us and sending your son, the Lord Jesus Christ to die on our behalf, making available to us in this age so many wonderful benefits, so many great opportunities, so many potentials.

We pray that as we reflect on these truths, that your Holy Spirit will make them real to us, shine the light in the dark areas of our soul where there needs to be repentance. We need to have a change of mind. We need to be more fully dedicated to your will and not to our own, more fully invested in your kingdom and not our own, more fully prepared to follow the Lord Jesus Christ in this life and in the next to reflect his glory in yours.

We pray these things in Jesus name. Amen.