

22:1 *A certain king made a marriage for his son*- As often with the Lord's parables, He begins by setting up an expectation (in this case, of joy and fulfilment) which is then dashed by human failure, and turns very unpleasant and indeed calls forth the hardest judgments. The parable is clearly related to that of the wicked husbandmen at the end of chapter 21, and seeks to add more detail and justification for that judgment upon Israel. The feast can be understood as a betrothal feast, to celebrate the engagement of the Son, rather than speaking of the marriage supper of the Lamb. And yet it could also refer to this, in that this was planned and could have happened far earlier than it finally will do, just as in the previous parable, the time of fruit was ready right from the time of the sending of the first servant.

The parable is clearly quarried from Zephaniah 1:7,8: "The day of the Lord is at hand; for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests. And it shall come to pass... that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel". The context of Zephaniah is his appeal to Judah at Josiah's time (Zeph. 1:1), who had *appeared* to respond to Josiah's call to repent, but not in their hearts. It was exactly his "princes" who had apparently responded to his appeal for radical reformation (2 Chron. 34:29-32); but in Zeph. 1 they are condemned as insincere. This is clearly seen by the Lord as analagous to Israel having responded to John's attempted reformation- when their hearts were far from it, and eventually they like the Judah of Josiah's day were to be judged and have their city and temple burnt by the Gentiles.

22:2 *Is like*- The parable of the marriage supper is what "the Kingdom of heaven is like". As with so many of Christ's parables, this one too is quarried from the book of Proverbs; in this case Prov.9:2-5, which describes how wisdom makes everything ready for her feast. The food and wine which is there represents the wisdom of God. The Kingdom of God is therefore likened to this supreme feast on the knowledge of God. The Kingdom will therefore be a feast of such things. We love God in this life, but surely we cry out for a greater understanding and appreciation of Him? Do we not cry for wisdom, and lift up our voice for understanding? If we do have this feeling, then we will be supremely motivated to strive to reach that glorious time of true knowledge.

22:3 *His servants*- The parable is similar to that of the preceding parable of the wicked husbandmen. These servants are God's "servants the prophets" who in Old Testament times called Israel to repentance and the Kingdom. The term "servants" is used throughout the parable. The servants go again to Israel, and are beaten and killed (:4). Those "other servants" are perhaps the apostles in their witness to Israel after the Lord's death, whose rejection culminated in the burning up of their city of Jerusalem (:7). More "servants" are then urgently sent to bring in anyone willing to say "yes". And they refer to our witness in this age. Yet it is also the "servants"

who bind and destroy the rejected (:13). These servants are all "sent", *apostello*. There is a clear continuity between the witness of the prophets, the apostles and ourselves. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" in the sense that our preaching of Him is in the spirit of the Old Testament prophets (Rev. 19:10). Again we are all encouraged to see ourselves as brethren of the prophets; they were not, as Judaism supposed, some separate group of white faced saints. Our witness is the equivalent of being them in the new Israel. The "servants" who bind the man in condemnation refer in other parables to the Angels. It could be that we too do this work; or it may be that we're being shown that we are not only in a continuum with the Old Testament prophets and 1st century apostles, but are likewise inline with the Angels. Hence an Angel urged the apostle John that He was one with John and also "your brethren the prophets" (Rev. 22:9). We are not alone. We are in a direct line, on a continuum, with Angels, prophets and apostles, the *elohim* of the new Israel and new age created in Christ.

God's servants (the Old and New Testament prophets - Rev. 2:20; Acts 2:18; 4:29; Am. 3:7; Zech. 1:6) were sent by God "to call them that were bidden to the wedding: but they would not come" (Matt. 22:3). The Greek word for "call" being the same translated "bidden", we have here an example of the interplay between predestination and the calling of God through the Gospel - the word of the prophets/apostles 'called them who were (already) called' in God's purpose. This class must primarily refer to the Jews. The refusal to attend the wedding obviously equates with the Jewish rejection of Christ's work. God pleaded, "I have prepared my dinner", i.e. the Kingdom (Matt. 22:2). This corresponds with the Kingdom 'coming nigh' to Israel through the first century preaching of the Gospel (Luke 10:9,11) and the primary fulfilment of the Olivet prophecy in the run up to A.D. 70 (Mark 13:29).

To call them that were bidden- Literally, 'to call the called'. Israel and in a sense all God's people were called from the foundation of the world. The allusion may be to the way in which people were invited to banquets, gave their agreement to attend, and then a servant was sent to actually take them to the banquet. But we should be aware that the language of 'calling the called' doesn't necessarily mean that there is a list of called ones, established from the beginning of the world, and our preaching is a hit and miss affair, sometimes reaching the 'called' and sometimes not, in which case our words were wasted. 'Calling the called' could equally mean that whoever hears the call is therefore and thereby 'called'. The invitation is to "whomsoever will", and the more people we call, the more are called. The urging of men to respond with the encouragement "whomsoever will..." is hardly appropriate if some cannot respond because they were not 'called' from the beginning, were never on the list. And yet in the bigger picture, there clearly is an element of predestination involved with calling; and Paul references this in Romans as the ultimate example of grace. In the final picture, not all have heard the call. Because God's servants didn't take the call to all, and so for whatever reason, some are not called- and in that is

the element of predestination. And yet the parable gives some further insight into this question. The first group of servants 'call the called', but the last group of servants after the burning of Jerusalem are urged to drag in whoever they can find. It's as if in Old Testament times, the appeal was to all within Israel, the called people. But now, all men can be called.

The wedding- An engagement banquet, or the actual wedding? In either case, the principle is established that the Messianic banquet of the Kingdom could have come in Old Testament times; it could have come when the second set of servants [the apostles] made their appeal [in the first century up until the burning of the city in AD70]; and it will come whenever we as the servants of God in this age have finally gathered in enough potential guests. This is the same idea as in the preceding parable, where the harvest was ready, the time had 'drawn near', at the time of every appeal to Israel through the prophets. God's purpose is taught, time and again, to be open-ended and dependant upon Israel's response and our efforts in witness. For *when* the Gospel has gone to all the world, *then* shall the end come (24:14). The whole idea of a royal couple being kept waiting, in fact kept waiting for centuries and a few millenia, is shocking and tragic. We feel sorry for them, just as we in a sense feel sorry for the Father and Son. This unexpected delay in the wedding banquet is developed in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins in chapter 25. Because of it, they all fell asleep when, according to the allusions to the parable in 1 Thess. 5, they should have stayed awake. It was a huge tragedy and shame all round, if we put the parables together.

Would not- The same words in 21:29 of the son who said "I will not" [work in the vineyard] but repented and went to work. The Lord wished to gather Jerusalem's children under His wings to save them from the great fire of destruction coming upon them, but they "would not" (23:37 s.w.). But in what practical way did they not want to come? The same words are used of how the Jews "would not" help their brother with the burden of human failure (23:4), or how the unforgiving debtor "would not" forgive his brother (18:30) and the older brother "would not" go in to the celebration banquet for the returned prodigal (Lk. 15:28). They "would not come" to Jesus in repentance (Jn. 5:40). Their refusal of the invitation to the Messianic banquet, to the Kingdom, was in terms of their attitude to others. Just as if we don't want a part in the church as the body of Christ, we don't want a part in Him.

22:4 *Again-* This and the use of the word "other" later in the sentence develops an impression of the King's continued effort with the guests.

Them which are called- People are called to the Kingdom, and yet also called [s.w.] to repentance (9:13) and called to appear at judgment day (20:8). When we hear the call and respond, we begin our journey towards judgment day. That day, therefore, is not just for the baptized, but for any who heard the call and began the journey. The parable and teaching of Luke

14 show that we are those called, and yet we are also those who call others (Lk. 14:10,13). We are to reflect the grace of how we were called by calling others. The Greek *kaleo*, "call", isn't a passive word when used in the sense of inviting persons. It's from *keleuo*, to command or urge onwards. Our calling of others, and God's calling of us, involves an urging towards response.

Prepared My dinner- The obvious unreality of the story is that the dinner sits on the table, as it were, for centuries. But this is indeed the strangeness of God's openness to us. The time has always been ready, if human response and the effort of His servants has been enough. John's mission had been to "prepare" the way for Messiah (3:3 s.w.), through 'preparing' a people for Him (Lk. 1:17,76 s.w.). Although it had indeed been prepared, Israel didn't want it. A unique place in God's Kingdom has been "prepared" for each of us from the foundation of the world (20:23; 25:34 "Them for whom it has been prepared of My Father"; Jn. 14:2 "to prepare a place for you"; 1 Cor. 2:9 "the things which God has prepared for those who love Him"; Heb. 11:16 "He has prepared for them a city"; 1 Pet. 1:5 our salvation is "prepared" for us). The tragedy of the story is that such a wonderful feast had been "prepared"- the same word is found later in :4 "All things are *ready*" and in :8 "the wedding is *ready*". Perhaps this helps us understand the otherwise enigmatic words of the Lord to the Jews in Jn. 7:6: "Your time is always *ready*" (s.w.)- the time of establishment of the Kingdom, the time of the harvest in the previous parable of the labourers, was always potentially prepared and ready, it just depended upon Israel's acceptance of it.

My oxen and My fatlings are killed- Perhaps a reference to the end of the Mosaic system, or perhaps an intensive plural referring to the one great sacrifice that had been made in the Lord Jesus. "Oxen" or bulls are specifically spoken of as the animals which prefigured the Lord's sacrifice (Heb. 9:13; 10:4 s.w.). "Killed" translates *thuo*, the word for sacrifice. We could also note that the Greek word translated "prepared" is used about 15 times in the Gospels for the preparation of the last Passover, which was typical of the Lord's death.

All things are ready- The same word for "prepared". Absolutely all things were prepared for the Messianic banquet, it really could have come in the first century.

Come unto the marriage- "Come" translates *deute*, which is a summons in the imperative. It's the same word used in "Follow Me" (4:19), "Come unto Me" (11:28; 19:21), "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom" (25:34). The wonder of what has been prepared coupled with the tragedy of it having been refused means that the Father is eager to compel people to accept it. This intense desire of the Father is to be ours as we in our day appeal to men to "come". In no way is God somehow passive and disinterested in human response, even if His apparent silence in the face of the rejection of His Kingdom may appear that way. Behind that apparent silence is

an intense desire for our response. "Come unto", using *eis*, really means 'Come into'. This isn't simply an offer 'for your information', it is a willing desire to compel men to enter into the Kingdom through their response to the Gospel call.

We are on our way to judgment day, and that day is rushing towards us (cp. Lk. 14:31); the hearing of the Gospel is in itself a call to go forth and meet the Lord.

There are ample hints that this parable should also be given some reference to the burning up of Jerusalem in the last days. The prophetic "servants" of :4 who call Israel to repentance are matched by a singular "servant" in the similar parable in Lk. 14:17. There can be no doubt that such differences are designed. 'Elijah' and his latter-day school of prophets will minister the word to Israel, which would explain the use in the parables of "servant" and "servants" - the group of prophets being led by one particular prophet.

22:5 *They made light of it*- The note of tragedy in "But..." mustn't be missed. This is the tragedy of human rejection of the Gospel of the Kingdom- the greatest things are prepared, but they are 'made light of' because the things of this life seem heavier. Israel's making light of the invitation is our warning, for Heb. 2:9 uses the same word here translated "made light": "How shall we escape, if we *neglect* such a great salvation". Paul uses the same word in urging Timothy not to "neglect" the gifts of potential service which he had been given (1 Tim. 4:14).

Went their ways- Albeit masked in translation, this one Greek word *aperchomai* is related to the word *erchomai* used in :3- "They would not *come*". Instead of going to the banquet, they went... to their various concerns. Two ways were therefore placed before them- to go the way to the banquet of the Kingdom, or go the ways of worldly cares. Although again concealed in most translations, this is the connection of thought with the unusual word *diexodos* translated "highways", literally 'the parting of the two ways', in :9. It was there, at the fork between two ways, that the appeal was to be made by the later servants.

One to his farm- Literally 'this one to his farm, this one to his trading'. We are thus invited to imagine these characters. Maybe the Lord was nodding His head towards passers by as He spoke these words. Banquets began in the evening [hence the man thrown out of it was thrown out into darkness, :13], and so this apparent element of unreality makes us interpret the Lord as meaning that *in their minds* they went off to their various secular concerns. For they would hardly be going off to those things in the evening. The farmer was presumably living at his farm when the servant came to take him to the banquet, so this going to his farm must be interpreted psychologically. Time and again we must remember that John's message, which had been

primarily about the Lord and the need for repentance (Acts 19:4) had enjoyed amazing response. But it was all surface level response- even the baptisms. In their hearts, people made light of it and went off in their secular worries and concerns. This has biting relevance to us, who can be fully and positively engaged with the call to the Kingdom as we consider it in reading about it or listening to it preached in church. But that enthusiastic agreement with the message can so quickly and easily be displaced by the cares of this world. The Lord's parable of the sower was initially His commentary upon how the people had responded to John's message about Him and the Kingdom, but the cares of the world and other factors soon choked the growth of that seed.

This one to his trading- Again, trading isn't done in the evening, which was when the banquet would have begun. The only other time the Lord uses this idea of trading or 'merchant-ing' in the Gospels is in speaking of the merchant man who sold up all he had in order to buy the pearl of great price, and thus quit his trading (13:45). The parable is alluding to the way in which invitations were sent out, accepted, and then a servant came to escort the invited person to the banquet. This generation had accepted the invitation in that they had accepted John's preaching. But when it came to actually entering the Kingdom, they were instead dominated by the cares of secular life. And it is exactly this, rather than any logical or intellectual difficulty in accepting the message, which is the real reason people turn down the invitation. "They made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise" would imply that there was a period of crazy addiction to materialism among Jewry between the crucifixion and A.D. 70. This is confirmed by the epistles to the Jewish believers, notably James and Peter; it also finds a counterpart in our present 'last days'.

22:6 *The others took His servants-* "Took" means to lay hands on by force, and has just been used about the Jews' desire to arrest the Lord (21:46 "They sought to *lay hands on* Him"). And it's used in that connection when they did finally 'take' Him to death (26:4,48,50,55,57).

Treated them shamefully- Again, the very word used about the Lord's final sufferings: "He shall be *treated shamefully*" (Lk. 18:32). The point is, that the Lord's final crucifixion sufferings were to be shared by His people as they took His appeal to the Jews. Paul seems to have grasped this, for he uses this same word in precisely this context: "We were *shamefully treated*" by the Jews when preaching the Gospel to them (1 Thess. 2:2; Acts 14:5). Paul saw himself in the parables- just as we should. Paul describes himself as having been "shamefully entreated" when he brought the Gospel to Philippi (1 Thess. 2:2)- using the Greek word used in Mt. 22:6 concerning how the messengers sent to the vineyard were "entreated spitefully". And maybe Paul was consciously aware that the Lord Himself had spoken of how He would be "spitefully entreated" (Lk. 18:32) during His final sufferings. Hence Paul could speak of filling up the measure of Christ's sufferings through what he suffered whilst preaching Christ's Gospel (Col. 1:24).

Killed them- To put to death, the same word used about the Lord's crucifixion (16:21; 17:23; 21:38). The killing or slaying [s.w.] of the Son sent to the vineyard in 21:39 was to be repeated in the slaying of the first century preachers of the Gospel. Even today, our sufferings for preaching the Gospel are a share in the Lord's crucifixion sufferings.

The question arises: Why the extreme treatment of the servants by those invited, and why does the King react so devastatingly in destroying their entire city? Marriages of King's sons were political statements. Often the King's son would be pronounced as heir to the throne when he got married. The guests were invited in order to test their political loyalty to the King and his son. To refuse an invitation to a King's banquet was therefore highly significant- it was tantamount to a declaration of disloyalty. Even worse was to accept it, to proclaim loyalty to him and his son, and yet in practice not follow through with that declaration of loyalty. Israel's widespread acceptance of John, whose message was largely about Jesus (Acts 19:4), had been a declaration of loyalty to God and His Son. To not take it seriously in practice and to in fact turn against His Son was therefore the ultimate betrayal. This explains the King's anger, the wrath of God against Israel as a whole.

The persecution of the prophets connects with the same thing happening in Rev. 11, where the two witnesses make a similar last-minute appeal amidst great opposition. We have commented elsewhere how the true prophets within Jerusalem at the time of the Babylonian invasion represented the Elijah ministry - and they too were persecuted. The servants were "entreated spitefully" (Mt. 22:6), as was our Lord on the cross (Luke 18:32). The righteous fellowship Christ's sufferings during the tribulation. The idea of persecuted servants occurs again in Rev. 11:18; 19:2, both of which passages have an application to latter-day persecution.

22:7- see on 22:11.

When the king heard- When the news came to His ears. This may be just the furniture of the parable, or it may reflect the Old Testament impression given that God has a mechanism whereby He is informed of happenings on earth, e.g. of the wickedness of Sodom or the building of the tower of Babel. That mechanism presumably involves the Angels. "When the king heard thereof" implies that as soon as Israel's rejection of Christ came to God's notice, "he sent forth his armies... and burned up their city". This is similar language to Gen. 6:12; 11:5 and 18:21 concerning God 'noticing' man's wickedness at the time of the flood, Babel and Sodom. The judgments with which He reacted on those occasions were typical of the second coming. As Babylon burnt Jerusalem with fire, so it seems certain from many other prophetic references that literal fire will be used by Israel's enemies to inflict her final punishment. The Arab armies will

therefore be those of God and Christ, as were those of Israel's earlier Arab invaders. They are called 'sanctified' in Joel 3:9 (A.V. mg.), i.e. 'separated unto' God's specific purpose in punishing Israel.

He was angry- "Wrath [s.w.] upon this people" was what happened in AD70 (Lk. 21:23). New Testament references to the wrath of God are often specifically about His wrath with Israel for rejecting His Kingdom and His Son. Of particular interest is Eph. 2:3, where Paul writes of how he had been one of those who were "by nature the children of wrath". I suggest this refers to his being part of the generation of Jews who had rejected the Son of God; but now Paul could rejoice that God has "delivered us from the wrath to come" in AD70 (1 Thess. 1:10). In 1 Thess. 2:16 he specifically defines that "wrath" as God's wrath upon Israel. The fact he speaks of this as a past status which he had now come out of would make it hard to interpret this as any global statement about what it means to be human. I don't think this passage means that the wrath of God is upon every bearer of human nature. God's own Son had human nature but the wrath of God was not upon Him. God's wrath comes upon "the children of disobedience" (Eph. 5:6). To be a child of wrath therefore has no reference to physical birth, but is parallel to being a child of disobedience.

Sent forth- A reference to the common Old Testament concept of the court of Heaven, whereby God is presented as reviewing evidence and sending out His Angels, His "hosts", in response. Those Heavenly hosts have hosts of soldiers on earth which they can move and use as they wish.

His armies- The Roman armies were God's armies, just as the Babylonians had been. Josephus appealed to the Jews in Jerusalem in AD70 in these terms: "It is God, therefore, it is God Himself who is bringing on this fire, to purge that city and temple by means of the Romans, and is going to pluck up this city, which is full of your pollutions" (*The Jewish War* 6.2.1). The Romans being described as "his armies" connects with Dan. 9:26, where they are spoken of as "the people of the prince" - Jesus. We must take the lesson that we can be strongly used by God, but this is no guarantee at all that we are His people.

Destroyed those murderers- Using the word for "destroy" which the Jews had just used in 21:41, saying in response to the parable of the wicked labourers that they should indeed be "destroyed". Out of their own mouths they were to be judged. The 'destruction' of the Jews for persecuting and killing the Lord Jesus and His apostles was in AD70, when their city was burned up. But the same word is that used in John when the Lord taught that those who believed in Him would not "perish" or be destroyed (Jn. 3:15,16; 10:28). Whatever else may be referred to in this teaching, it could also have simply meant in the first context that those Jews who believed in Christ would not be destroyed in the destruction of the Jewish system in AD70. The same word is used by Peter in predicting the perishing / destruction of the Jewish 'heavens and earth' in AD70 (2 Pet. 3:6,9). This destruction, however, was not going to touch those who were in Christ. They would

not "perish" or be destroyed. For in the terms of the parable, they were not the murderers.

Burned up their city- The burning of Jerusalem in AD70. The Roman soldiers who actually did this were directly moved and controlled by God to do so. Stephen used the same word when accusing the Jews of being Christ's "betrayers and murderers" (Acts 7:52). The Romans being described as "his armies" connects with Dan. 9:26, where they are spoken of as "the people of the prince" - Jesus.

22:8 *His servants*- We are meant to imagine how they felt. The previous servants had been at best ignored, others beaten and killed. And now... it was for them to go out with the same message? We too should not fail to see the cost involved in the work of the Gospel, for we stand in direct continuum with the persecuted prophets and preachers who have gone before us. It may even be that by following the Lord's instructions to persuade all men, bad and good, to enter the Kingdom, simply on the basis of them saying 'yes', we will suffer isolation and rejection from our own brethren. And that too would be a sharing in His crucifixion sufferings, and taking our place in the sufferings of the Gospel. The work of the Gospel, if done properly, can never ultimately be 'fun' or purely pleasurable.

The wedding is ready...- This statement seems so obvious it doesn't need to be made. But it is made in order to motivate the servants in their efforts to get at least someone somewhere to say "yes". They were being asked to do something most unusual- to just grab anyone and urge them to come in to a King's banquet without a prior invitation and agreement, as was the norm. This appeal to secular people *without* the prior invitation was so wonderful and unusual that the very unusualness of it would be hard for both preacher and listener to accept. Surely there was a catch somewhere... And so often when we present the things of the Kingdom to people, their honest response is that 'Can that really be... it sounds just too fantastic'. This is the difficulty with the level and depth of grace we are asked to believe in and share. It is so unusual and out of our experience that we find it hard to believe for real.

Were not worthy- John's appeal had been to bring forth fruit "worthy" [s.w.] of repentance (Lk. 3:8). They had initially agreed to this, but hadn't come up with the fruit. Paul surely had this part of the parable in mind when he turned away from preaching to the Jews and went to the Gentiles, because the Jews had "judged [themselves] unworthy [s.w.] of everlasting life" (Acts 13:46).

The parable of the marriage feast highlights the tragedy of Jewish rejection of what could have been theirs. There will be an ever-increasingly vigorous preaching campaign by the "servants", seeing that "they which were bidden were not worthy" (Mt. 22:8) - the Greek perhaps implying not enough numerically. As a result of this preaching, "the wedding was furnished ('filled' - numerically) with guests" (Mt. 22:10). This indicates that in some ways, God does work to a number. Once the required number of converts is made, then the supper can begin. Their appeal

being to "the poor... maimed... halt and... blind" suggests that the marginal and desperate within society will be those who respond- and this is happening right now in the triumphant progress of preaching in our day. The servants are sent "into the highways" (Mt. 22:9), one possible meaning of the Greek is 'a market square'. This must be designed to recall the parable of the labourers standing idle in the market place at the 11th hour (Mt. 20:6,7). The very short probation of those 11th hour workers will match that of the latter-day converts. And again, it was the old and weak who nobody wanted to hire. See on 28:20.

22:9 *Go ye therefore*- Leading up to "go ye therefore and teach all nations".

Highways- See on :5 *Went their ways*. The RV offers: "unto the partings of the highways". The point from which He foresaw us making our appeal was a fork in the road. We are to appeal to men and women with the message that there is no third road; that it truly is a case of believe or perish. The art of preaching seems to be to bring people to perceive that they stand at a fork in their life's journey, they can take the road to the Kingdom or the road of temporary absorption in the things of this life. The point from which He foresaw us making our appeal was a fork in the road. We are to appeal to men and women with the message that there is no third road; that it truly is a case of believe or perish. *Diexodos* can also be understood as the place of crossing the city boundaries, out into the countryside- a possible hint at taking the invitation beyond Jerusalem, for the work of the Gospel was to begin in Jerusalem and spread outwards (Lk. 24:47).

Another possible meaning for the term is 'a market square'. This would then be designed to recall the parable of the labourers standing idle in the market place at the 11th hour (Mt. 20:6,7). In the Septuagint this word *diexodos* describes "the *issues* from death" (Ps. 68:20), the *waters* of death (2 Kings 2:21), "*rivers* of water" (Ps. 1:3), "*watersprings*" (Ps. 107:35). If this usage was in the Lord's mind [and I am unsure it definitely was], then the idea would be that people were to be called from their seeking of water to seeking the water of life eternal; to exchange their secular passions and concerns for a concern about eternity.

As many as- The phrase could possibly imply that there was a specific number that had to be found and invited. That certainly is the teaching of the parable overall. Therefore the more people we invite, the quicker the wedding begins. The repetition of the phrase in :10 suggests that the servants were obedient to the instruction, strange as it was- to scrap the idea of a guest

list and invite people from the street, bad or good, to a royal banquet which was getting cold on the table, without any pre-invitation or agreement to attend having been given by the people.

As you shall find- The Lord Jesus is described as “finding” His people- the lost sheep, lost son, the idle workers in the marketplace (Mt. 20:6; Lk. 15:5,6,8,9); and yet He sends us out to “find” [s.w.] those who are to be invited into His Kingdom, just as the disciples ‘found’ fish when they obeyed the Lord’s commission to fish (Jn. 21:6). We do the Lord’s work for Him in this sense. And yet of course people “find” the narrow way themselves, they “find” the treasure and pearl of the Gospel (Mt. 7:14; 13:44,46); but only because we have gone out and ‘found’ them. The Lord’s finding of us leads to us doing His work in finding others for Him and on His behalf. Thus Jesus “finds” Philip, and Philip’s response is to go and ‘find’ Nathanael (Jn. 1:43,45). And so it must be ours too. Just as the disciples ‘found’ fish when they obeyed the Lord’s commission to fish (Jn. 21:6). We do the Lord’s work for Him in this sense.

It was totally scandalous that the majority of guests refused an invitation by the King (Mt. 22:9; Lk. 14:21-23), and that whilst the dinner was cold on the table, a desperately urgent expedition was sent to get people to come in and eat it. This is the urgency of our Gospel proclamation. And no King or wealthy man would really invite riff-raff off the street into his party; yet this is the wonder of God’s grace in calling us through the Gospel. And such is the tragedy of humanity’s rejection of the Gospel. To reject a royal invitation was tantamount to rejecting a royal command. It was unheard of in the time of Jesus. Yet people just don’t perceive the honour of being invited by the King. Notice too how it is the King Himself who makes all the arrangements- not, as the initial hearers would have expected, a senior steward or his wife. But the King Himself. And this reflects the extraordinary involvement of God Almighty in personally inviting each of us to fellowship with Him, through the call of the Gospel. Likewise that *all* the girls should fall asleep whilst awaiting the bridegroom (Mt. 25:5) is unusual- they must have been a pretty lazy, switched off bunch.

22:10 *Went out-* The same word in Mk. 16:20 "They *went out* and preached everywhere", just as the sower "went out" to sow, with varying response (Lk. 8:5 s.w.).

Gathered together- Just as the net in the sea of nations gathered together fish "of every kind" (Mt. 13:47 s.w.)- here they are called "both bad and good". The suggestion may be that one intention of preaching is to gather people together into one. Hence the language of gathering together. The figure of the Lord's servants gathering together His called ones is exactly the figure of the gathering to the final judgment (s.w. Mt. 13:30; 25:32). By inviting people to Christ we are inviting them to the day of judgment. Knowledge of the Gospel thereby brings responsibility to the day of judgment. The moment we respond, we begin our journey to judgment. The Lord

seems to have developed the thought of this parable in His later teaching in 25:35,38, where the same Greek word translated "gathered together" is translated 'to take in'; the Lord said that those who gathered together or took in a stranger had accepted Him, and those who refused to do so had rejected Him personally. 'Stranger' was understood to refer to a Gentile. The Lord might be saying that our gathering in of the Gentiles, the strangers, the despised, is related to our salvation; and if the early Jewish believers refused to gather in the Gentiles, then the Lord would take that as a personal rejection of Him. Those who refuse to gather in others because they consider them not to know enough or to not be appropriate material may well be under this threat of condemnation by the Lord.

All as many as they found- The specific use of the word "all" here adds nothing, surely, unless the idea is that there is a specific number who must "all" be gathered to the banquet. Rom. 11:25 says this in so many words, in talking of how the 'full number of the Gentiles' must "come in"-*ex-erchomai*. The same word *erchomai* is used in 22:3 about how the invited would not "come".

Both bad and good- This is quite radical for many Christian preachers today. There was *not* to be any thought about whether the persons being brought to the banquet were bad or good. The focus was upon simply persuading them to come in, to say yes to the most unusual invitation. Just as the servants of an earlier parable were told not to worry about dividing the wheat from the weeds, so here, the servants were not to worry about the impressions they had about the worthiness or sincerity of people. Their job was to persuade them to say 'yes' and to come on in. So much outreach today is tacitly concerned with what kind of person is being brought in to the community of believers. And even more concern is expressed about who exactly sits at the Lord's table. But according to this parable, the general public are to be encouraged to say "yes" to the Kingdom invitation, and come in and sit at the banquet table, the breaking of bread. Only then, once they are sitting there, does the Lord come and judge who is bad and good. The implication could possibly be that He comes to inspect us at the breaking of bread, both mystically every time we break bread, and literally in that His coming may be at the breaking of bread.

*Furnished-*When the wedding is "furnished with guests" as a result of the final appeal to absolutely all men, 'all you can see / perceive', then the wedding starts (Mt. 22:9,10 Gk.). "Furnished" translates *pletho*, which carries the sense of being filled up. When the full number of guests are seated, when a certain number of true converts to the Kingdom feast have been made, *then* the King comes in, and the wedding starts. This is what imbues our latter day witness with such a sense of urgency. Every baptism or invitation to the Kingdom could be the last. "They which were bidden were not worthy" (:8) - the Greek could imply not enough numerically. This indicates that in some ways, God does work to a number. Whilst there may be reference here to an appeal to Gentiles, the implication is that it will be to Jews in particular. The servants go "into the streets and lanes of the city" (Lk. 14:21), i.e. Jerusalem.

Guests- Literally, recliners at the table. The word is usually translated like this in its 14 occurrences in the New Testament. In a sense, the banquet had begun- even before the King entered to review the guests. Just as the Kingdom experience, crystallized and epitomized in the breaking of bread, has begun for all who respond. Although this is no guarantee of ultimate acceptance by the King. The contrast between recliners at table and servants is brought out in Lk. 22:27: "For which is greater, he that reclines at table [s.w. "guest"], or he that serves? Is not he that reclines at table?". In the parable, we are asked to identify ourselves with the servants. Our audience are the recliners at table. In the context of preaching, of bringing people in to the banquet, we are to consider our audience greater than us and to approach them with every respect. Our witness to them, therefore, is a serving of them; not a showing off to them of our superior Bible knowledge, the superiority of our positions over theirs.

According to Luke's version of an earlier telling of the parable [with some differences], the King Himself invited beggars into His feast. This also stands out as strange... what kind of king is this? And what fortunate beggars. Immediately, we have the lesson powerfully brought home to us. And why ever would a guest refuse the wedding garment offered to him on entry to the feast (Mt. 22:11)? The element of unreality in the story makes it stand out so clearly. And yet ask people why they are not baptized, why they are refusing the righteous robes of Christ, the call of the Gospel... and it is anything from clear and obvious to them. The scandal of the parable hasn't struck them. And there's another strange element to the story. Whilst the supper is still getting cold, the King sends off a military expedition (Mt. 22:7,8), but this is incidental to his desire to get on with the feast with his guests. Surely the message is that what is all important for the Father and Son is our response to their invitation, our desire to be at that feast, our turning up there- and the punishment of the wicked is not that significant on their agenda, even though it has to be done.

22:11 *Came in to see-* The same words used about the Lord's 'coming in' to Jerusalem and looking around the temple, in His parody of a triumphant entry (21:10,12). This was the immediate context of this parable, and the point was that He had come to judge Israel and found them unworthy.

He saw there- We are set up by the story line to expect that the King will question "the bad" out of the "both bad and good" which have been gathered. But instead He focuses upon the lack of a wedding garment. Banquets functioned on the basis of the guests arriving, accompanied by a servant, who then gave them a wedding garment, which they wore. This man obviously thought that his clothes were good enough, and he didn't need the wedding garment offered. This man would likely have been in what appeared to be "the good" category, the type who was well dressed and apparently appropriate for invitation to a King's banquet. It was exactly those types

who will be ultimately rejected from the Kingdom banquet, because self righteousness, a refusal to be clothed in the white garment of imputed righteousness, is far worse than being an immoral street person.

A wedding garment- Literally 'not clothed with the wedding clothing'. We are to 'put on' [s.w.] Christ; and "as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have *put on* Christ" (Gal. 3:27). But baptism only 'works' if we believe in what it represents- our clothing with His righteousness by the imputation of righteousness to us. Clearly enough, before the coming of the King, those without a wedding garment [obtained through faith and baptism] are sitting in the same place as those who have one. They sit at the same table- the division is only made by the Lord's coming.

22:12 *Friend-* Another element of unreality, because a King would hardly address a street person as "Friend". But this is how close the King of the Universe feels to any who have at least responded to the call, even if they have to be rejected.

The Lord foretells the spiritual culture which He will show even to the rejected, when He mentions how He will call the rejected "friend" (Mt. 22:12), using the same word as He used about Judas (Mt. 26:50). Vine describes it as a word meaning "comrade, companion, a term of kindly address expressing comradeship". If this is how the Lord will address those who have crucified Him afresh- surely there is hope, abundant hope, for us. The suggestion is that there are Judases amongst us, although we can't identify them (and shouldn't try), just as the disciples couldn't. The evil servant who (in Christ's eyes) beat his brethren was a hypocrite, he didn't appear to men to be like that (Mt. 24:48-51); he was only cut asunder, revealed for who he was, at the judgment. He appeared to be an ecclesial elder who loved the flock.

How did you come...- Obviously a rhetorical question, rather like God's question to Adam: "Where are you?". The King knew. The purpose of the day of judgment is to explain to the rejected why they have been rejected- and it is this realization which is itself the punishment, for it will elicit from them weeping and gnashing of teeth in anger with themselves. Jude 12 speaks of false believers as being spots marring the love feast. There will be such persons at the breaking of bread meetings of the believers, but this parable teaches that it is the King who reveals and removes them, at the last day. It is our duty to simply gather men and women into the Kingdom, both bad and good, just as the net gathers both bad and good fish, but they are only separated from each other when the judgment sits at the last day.

Judgment day is not only for our personal education and humbling. It is for the enlightenment of us all as a community, in that there is fair evidence that in some sense the process of judgment will be public, and all the believers will see the true characteristics of those with whom they fellowshiped in this life. Thus the unworthy will be revealed as being without a wedding garment, and the faithful will see him (for the first time) as walking naked and in shame (Mt. 22:11; Rev. 16:15).

Speechless-Other pictures of the rejected describe them as having plenty to say in self-justification ("When did we see you...", 25:44, "You are a hard man", Lk. 19:22). But in this picture, they are speechless. It's possible to put the various pictures of the judgment together and create a chronological impression of them initially knocking on the door pleading for acceptance, justifying themselves, and then being left speechless in the ultimate darkness and loneliness. Or it could be that different ones of the condemned respond in different ways, some with words, some in silence.

22:13 *Servants*- In the Lord's other parables, it's the Angels who carry out the condemnation of the rejected. But in this parable, the prophets, Angels, apostles and Christian preachers are all called "servants", encouraging us to see ourselves as of equal significance and meaning in God's Kingdom plan as the other servants.

Bind him- It is the reapers, who represent the Angels (13:39), who bind the rejected for destruction in 13:30. The 'binding' suggests that the rejected will desperately want to be in the Kingdom, to the point they would even forcibly push their way in. Nobody will be indifferent at the last day; all will want more than anything to be in the Kingdom. And this should be our view now.

Cast him- The Lord uses this picture three times, using the same words for 'casting out' and 'darkness' (8:12; 25:30). The implication is that these people were within the light of the Kingdom banquet, and then are taken out of it into the darkness outside. This is why having a positive feel and sense about our presence amongst God's people is not of itself any guarantee of our final salvation; for some will be ejected from that into the darkness of condemnation.

The language used here for the condemnation of the rejected ['bind... take away... cast away'] is also used about the Lord's final sufferings and death. He too was bound (s.w. 27:2; Jn. 18:24; and the only other Gospel reference to being bound hand and foot is to the dead Lazarus in Jn. 11:44, as the term implied 'death'). 'Taken away' translates the same Greek word used about the 'taking up' of the cross (16:24; 27:32) and the cry 'Away with Him [to the cross]!' in Jn. 19:15. 'Cast away / out' is the same word used to describe how the wicked husbandmen killed and then 'cast out' the Son, representative of the Lord Jesus (21:39); it is also used of how "the prince of this world" was to be 'cast out' at the crucifixion (Jn. 12:31). Whether or not that prince refers to the Lord Jesus is an open question, however. The 'outer darkness' would then connect with the darkness at the crucifixion, and the "weeping" with the weeping for the death and suffering of Christ (s.w. Mk. 16:10; Lk. 23:28; Jn. 16:20). Why this similarity between the language of the Lord's death, and that of condemnation? Surely because on the cross, the Lord was treated as if He were a condemned sinner, even though He personally never sinned. So close was His identity with sinners and their condemnation. He can identify, therefore, even with the rejected; He is not like a human judge, who hands down punishments which he has nowhere near experienced himself. The Lord carefully designed His parables and teachings; their various elements are

clearly intended to dovetail with each other. It is therefore no accident that He uses the same language for His condemnation to death and the condemnation of the wicked at the last day. He consciously identified with them.

Darkness- The rejected are described as being cast into outer darkness. This is even an Old Testament concept: "Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in the blackest darkness" (Prov. 20:20 RV). The rejected will be "pursued into darkness" (Nah. 1:8 RV). It is doubtful whether this darkness is literal, unless there will be a specific geographical location into which they are driven which is totally dark. Mt. 22:13 might imply this by saying that "there", in the darkness into which the rejected are cast, there will be weeping. It perhaps more implies a depression so deep that everything loses its colour. There is no point in existence, no meaning to anything. It could be that "darkness" is to be understood as blindness, which is how it is sometimes used in Scripture. "The eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall have no way to flee. And their hope shall be the giving up of the spirit" (Job 11:20 RV). This is all the language of the final judgment. They will seek death and hope for it, because existence in the state of condemnation is simply unbearable. But remember that outside of Christ, mankind is likewise in such an unbearable state, if only he will perceive it. He is even now in a figurative furnace of fire.

22:14- see on 24:5.

Many are called- When the Lord said that many are called but few chosen, He was actually alluding to a well known saying from 4 Ezra 8:3: "Many have been created, but few shall be saved". He was as it were raising the bar. It was to be a minority of those called, not just a minority of all creation, who were to be saved. In the context of the parable, the servants call many; but only relatively few are chosen, in that few chose to really accept the gift of imputed righteousness in the garment of Christ. Although only one such person is detailed in the parable, this final observation could imply that the majority of those invited will be ejected. The language of 'chosen' is maybe used to emphasize that it is our duty to call people into the banquet; it is not for us to choose who will ultimately be accepted, because that is not our work.