



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Gospel of Matthew

“The Parable of the Marriage Feast,” Matthew 22:1-14

We are reading for our Scriptures this morning Matthew 22: 1-14. So will you listen as I begin with Matthew chapter 22:1 and read through the account of the parable of the marriage feast.

“And Jesus answered and spoke unto them again by parables and said,
“The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who may made a
marriage for his son and sent forth his servants to call them that were
bidden to the wedding and they would not come. Again, he sent forth
other servants, saying, Tell them who are bidden, Behold I have
prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things
are ready; come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went
their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise; and the
remnant took his servants and entreated them shamefully, and slew
them. But when the king heard of it, he was angry and he sent forth
his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.
Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they who
were bidden were not worthy, go therefore into the highways and as

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many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; and he saith unto him, friend, how camest thou in the hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to his servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.”

May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

The subject for this morning is “The Parable of the Marriage Feast.” On Wednesday night we have been studying the Prophecy of Amos together, and in that great prophecy the prophet says that it is God who forms the mountains and creates the wind and declares to man what his thoughts are. He makes the dawn into darkness and he treads on the high places of the earth. How tenderly solicitous it is for a God who is great as that who forms the mountains and creates the wind and declares to men what his thoughts are to stoop to our limited capacities and instruct us by parables, to sit down with us and open up the truths of the mysteries of the kingdom of God by simple illustrative stories.

You might imagine a very learned professor of philosophy who, at his university lectures in the morning on such subjects as Western philosophy, dealing with Thales and Plato, and the neo-platonic philosophers, and then the more modern philosophers of Descartes, Kant and Hegel and so on, and then going home and sitting down with his little child, taking his little child upon his knee, and seeking to instruct him in the elementary facts of human life. Now that would illustrate, it would seem to me, the love

and concern of the great, intelligent man for the life of the little child who sits upon his lap.

In a sense that’s what we have here when this great God who thunders till the mountains shake – if he likes – sits down with us, and in a still small voice and with simple illustrative stories tells us of the important truths of the kingdom of the heavens. I cannot think of any better attitude in the study of the parables of our Lord Jesus than the attitude of Mary who sat at his feet and went on hearing his word.

We’re turning to the parable of the marriage feast which is found in the 22nd chapter of the Gospel of Matthew as the third of the three parables of rejection. In chapter 21, he had spoken of the parable of the two sons who were asked to go to work in the vineyard. One said he would not go, but afterward repented and went. The other said he would go, but did not go, and our Lord Jesus made application of that.

Then we also studied in our last hour, the parable of the householder, the man who was a very wealthy man who planted a vineyard and prepared it for fruit and then went off to a far country expecting his fruit to be given in its season.

This is the third of these great parables of rejection, and each one of them teaches essentially the same story, but they have different emphases. The major lessons that they teach are these. First, the empty profession leads to judgment the man who says, I will go and work but does not go can expect only judgment. The man who, for example, does not respond as an employee of the householder and give him his fruit in his season, he should, too, is exposed to judgment. And here in the 22 chapter, we find the same lesson referred to: a lesson that profession is not enough. One must have reality.

Now the second lesson is probably the more important lesson in the sense that it is the lesson that, I think, arises out of the context of our Lord’s ministry, and it is this: that God’s program for the Nation Israel and the Gentiles shall undergo a dramatic change by virtue of the fact that the Nation Israel, to whom the promises had been given, has now evidently refused the Son at his coming. Now that is taught very plainly for us, I

think, in verse 31 of the first of the parables when the Lord Jesus said, which of the two did the will of his father? They say unto him, the first. Jesus saith unto them, verily I say unto you that the tax collectors and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. So he said in effect that the Gentiles shall precede this generation into the kingdom of God.

Then in the parable of the householder in verse 43, he put it, if anything, more plainly. He said, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruit of it. We interpreted that as a reference to the fact that the generation which was on the earth when the Lord Jesus suffered and died would have taken from them the stewardship of the kingdom of God, and it would be given to the Gentiles. And we have seen, as history has unfolded, that this is a reference to the church which is made up primarily – not exclusively – of the Gentiles down through this age.

Then in verses 9 and 10 of the parable that we are going to look at this morning, he said, go there for into the highways and as many as ye shall find bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good, and the wedding was furnished with guests. In other words, there was a dramatic transformation. Those that have been invited to the feast the, Nation Israel, because of their rejection of the Son did not come, and so he goes out into the highways and selects all, as many as they find, both bad and good, and they come to the feast. That’s his way of telling in a simple illustrative story that there is a tremendous transformation taking place in the program of God at the first coming of the Lord Jesus.

Now the emphasis of these parables changes slightly in the first of the parables, the parable of working in the vineyard, the kingdom, it is evident, involves work for God. In the second, which involves the stewardship of the kingdom, it is evident that the kingdom of God involves a particular relationship of trustee to God. An incident that has great significance for us today, because we, today, the Gentile believers, who form part of

the church of the Lord Jesus having the stewardship of the kingdom are responsible to exercise our stewardship in a way that pleases the great householder who is God.

Now finally, in this last of the three of the parables of rejection, its obvious that the note of joy is the thing that predominates, because we have a marriage feast. And so he is telling us very simply, in these simple little parabolic stories, that the kingdom of the heavens is a time of privilege, its a time of joy, its like a marriage feast with the great king.

Now let me tell the story very briefly and then we want to seek to interpret it, and first let me tell it. This parable which, I believe, consumes the 14 verses that begin chapter 22 is a parable in two parts. The first 9 verses gives us essentially the same ground that is covered by the other two parables, but in verse 10 perhaps verse 9, but verse 10 or 11 through verse 14, we have some new matter. And there is special emphasis directed toward the fact that it is possible for a person to enter into this kingdom in a professing way and not possess, and furthermore further details are given with regard to the ultimate punishment for making profession and having no reality.

Now this story avoids the idea of work. It avoids the idea of duty it avoids the idea of service which the other parables have given us. Joy is the point. It’s a wedding time. Very few weddings are of times of joy and happiness. I had one on Friday night which I performed, it was a time of joy and happiness for everybody perhaps except the groom, until after the ceremony was completed, and then it was joy and happiness for him. Yesterday afternoon, another one. Joy and happiness.

You know, recently, I don’t know whether the people who were involved in this are here—I’m not going to say your names, so don’t worry—but I frequently marry people standing right down below this pulpit here, and I get to see some things that the congregation at a wedding does not see. And not too long ago, I had a marriage in this particular auditorium, and as the bride and the groom made their way out at the recessional, when the groom got out into the hall, the first thing that he did was to pick up the bride, and swing her around in a wedding dress, completely around and take it to

himself and give her a big kiss—much bigger than the one on the platform. [Laughter] No one else saw it, it was just an expression of spontaneous joy on the part of those who had just been united, and I must say I got quite a thrill out of it, because it seems to me that that’s the way a wedding ought to be.

A wedding is a time of joy. Luther said, “The purpose of this feast is to express joy. It’s a time of joy. Weddings are times of joy, of singing, of dancing, of dressing out, of drinking—you might expect Luther to say that; he liked nothing better than good German beer. [Laughter] He said that if we couldn’t find water to baptize in, we would baptize in good German beer, so Luther said that. But he said this is the highest experience that we have of joy expressed in the festive feast of a marriage.

Now there is a bitter and pathetic side to this, of course, when we remember that the Lord Jesus told the simple illustrative story of a marriage feast just before he is to suffer in his passion and die upon the cross. So the pathos of the story, against the background of the context, is very significant.

Well it’s a simple story of a king. Now notice it’s the story of a king—that’s important—and it’s the story of a king and his son. And the king so desired to honor the son that he had a marriage feast for him. That was the custom in those days for invitations to be sent out with the date indefinite, for the date would be made definite later on, so the wedding invitations were sent and the dates were indefinite, but then as the wedding feast approached, special servants were sent out in order to confirm the invitations and to make the dates very definite.

So this king who had this grand object in view for his son, made a marriage feast for him and then sent out his servants in order to confirm the invitations that had been given to those who had been invited. Now you would expect that in a situation like this that if a king should invite people to a marriage feast that they would surely come. I would imagine that there would be no one who would not attend the marriage feast for

the King of England or some other king if we were invited, that we would give every attention to fulfilling this outstanding privilege of an invitation like that.

But the amazing thing about the simple little story is that the king who makes a marriage feast for his son finds that when he sends out the servants to confirm the date, they would not come. Now you might expect the king who is a sovereign – and kings are sovereigns – at that point to not bother with those who had been invited, but this king is different. He sends forth other servants, and he encourages them exhorts them to come. He says, tell them who are invited, I’ve prepared my dinner my oxen and my fatlings are killed. All things are ready; come unto the marriage.

But they made light of it. Some of them said, I want to go out to my farm. Others said, no, I would like to investigate things down at the store. And others were more severe in their rejection of the invitation. They took the servants, they insolently entreated them, the Greek text says, and finally they slew them. They would not come. They made light of the invitations, and finally they slew the servants.

Now you would expect the king to be angry, and that’s what we read. We read that the king became angry. And when he became angry he decided that he would fill his marriage feast for his son because he wanted to do something for his son, and so he said to other servants, I want you to go out into the four corners of the highways of the world, so to speak, go out into the highways and as many as will come invite them to the feast. And the feast was filled.

And then when the king came into the place where the banquet was being held, he looked over that vast audience—for I’m sure it was a vast audience, not only from what we read in the new testament, but from the story itself, it would be a vast audience—he looked over that vast audience and he spotted one man without a wedding garment. You see, this king is no ordinary king. He has something that approaches omniscience. He saw one man in the mist of that vast crowd who didn’t have on the proper wedding garment. He went up to him and said, friend how did you get in? Why

did you come? Here the man, in the presence of the king was speechless, convicted of his denial of the king’s authority and rebellion against his requirements.

And then the king, in order to carry out the fullness of his anger, spoke to some other servants who were standing by – incidentally, the Greek text has the word for servant here in verse 13, is different from the others, and we’ll see why in just a moment – to the attendant he says, bind this man and take him away and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For he said, many are called but few are elected. It is our Lord who speaks of the doctrine of the election here, now.

What is meant by this parable? You know, it is possible for us to interpret the Bible in such a way that we never really get at the meaning of it. John Calvin speaks about people who superstitiously cling to the joining together of syllables, but they disregard the meaning that binds them together. I know lots of exegetes. I know lots of exegetes who are friends of mine, who give me the impression, occasionally, when they study the text of holy Scripture and study it very minutely—and I’m not against that of course at all, having spent about 30 years doing that myself—but there’s a great failing that exegetes have. It is that they stare at the syllables, and do not ever put together the results of their staring and tell us the meaning of what is being said. So, staring at the syllables and blind to the meanings of the words, they do not really come to understand what the word of God is attempting to say to us.

Now we don’t want to miss that. And I want, as I go through the interpretation of this parable, for you to realize that I’m making two levels of interpretation together as I go along because its rather tedious and too pedantic to do it otherwise. One level of interpretation has to do with the historical situation as which our Lord spoke this. He was referring to his precise time in history when he had come to confirm the promises made to the fathers made to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. He had come according to those promises to give them the kingdom.

But there is another level of interpretation in the word of God that we don’t want to miss, and that is the application the general principles, those great, age-long principles that pervade the whole of the word of God. And those principles are part of this meaning. And for example, we shall see when the speechless guest is cast into outer darkness, that the point of this is that if we make a profession and do not have a possession of the reality, we don’t have anything. Profession is not enough. That’s the meaning that lies back of the history involved in this parabolic story designed to interpret the significance of our Lord’s ministry at this point. So we will mingle these two levels of interpretation, and I hope you will be able to distinguish them when we speak about what is historically unfolding and the application that should be made to our situation today.

Now first of all I want you to notice that there is a celebration of a feast in verses 1 and 2. And the joy and rejoicing of sharing in the kingdom is the point in view. And it is the same thing that our Lord is speaking about in chapter 8 and verse 11 when he said, in connection with the healing of the centurion’s servant, and I say unto you that many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of the heavens. So the Lord is telling the simple story of the fact that as a result of the rejection of the Son by the Nation Israel the purpose of God broadens out to include the Gentile world, and many of them shall come and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of the heavens.

Matthew Henry in his commentary says, “A feast is for love and for laughter, for fullness and for fellowship,” and what a beautiful expression that is of this parable, because it is a marriage feast. And a marriage feast is for love, and the simple meaning of all of this is that God has this grand object in view of providing for his sons a group of people – in fact, I think we can say two great groups of peoples – who will enter into such a relationship with him: the Nation Israel and the Gentiles.

The nation and the nations, they shall enter into the relationship with union with him expressed by marriage and designed to celebrate the fact that there is a love relationship that exists between the king and the son and the guests at the wedding feast. A feast is for love. And when we come to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, the relationship is a relationship of love. It is the love of the Father that brings us to the Son, and it is the response of love which I think motivates all of our true service for our great God. It is a time of laughter. Christians speak of joy. What greater joy could a man have than to know that he has been brought into a relationship with this great king this great God who can shake the mountains and turn the dawn into darkness? What greater blessing could there possibly be than to know that we have this relationship with him, and what greater joy could a man possibly have. Good health? That’s nothing in comparison to spiritual good health.

And it is a term for fullness, because the salvation that God provides is a salvation that touches the whole of a man. It does not just touch our minds. It does not just touch our will. It does not just touch our emotions, as many Christians seem to think. It does not just touch our bodies, but Christianity when it truly comes to us, touches the whole of the man. And the body is different, and the mind is different, and the emotions are different and the will is different. We become a totally different man, and there is a fullness of the ministry of Christianity to us that touches every aspect of our life.

It touches the man who is in business, and it touches his business. It touches the housewife, and it touches her relationship to her family, to her husband, and to her neighbors. It’s a time of fullness, and, of course, it’s a time for fellowship.

Now I want you to notice the grand object that this king had in view. He had a son whom he loved. He had a son whom he desired to honor, and he desired to honor the son by the greatest means that he could have had: a marriage feast. For him, it was a grand object, because after all, the son of the king is an important person. You know, in the New Testament, we read that it is the desire of the Father that men should honor the

son. In fact, in John 5, it is stated that the Father has given all judgment into the hands of the Son, that men might honor the Son as they honor the Father

And further, he says if they do not honor the Son, they do not really honor the Father, so he has this grand object of having men honor the son as they honor the king. Now translating that into the meaning, instead of staring at the syllables, what that means is that God has this grand design of having the whole of those who are sinners honor his great Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And further, that they shall honor him as they honor the king, the Father. What a magnificent design that is.

Just recently, a book has been issued by some leading theologians in Britain. It’s a book entitled *The Myth of God Incarnate*. Seven well known British theologians have devoted the book to the promotion of the idea that Jesus Christ was not really God. They say, as a matter of fact, he was promoted to that status by pagan and other influences on early Christians. The myth of God incarnate. What they would like to do is reduce the Son of God to the status of a man, so that men would not honor the Son as they honor the Father. But that is diametrically opposed to the thought of God.

Calvin also has another expression I like. He speaks about men who are apostates and teachers of the truth in their apostasy as men who are drunk with their own speculation. He put it even better. He said, “Drunk with the sweetness of their own speculation.”

Now I know there are people who think this is not really important. After all, is it really important to believe that Jesus Christ is God? Yes, it is. It is no contention over the shadow of an ass. If Jesus Christ is not God, we do not have Christianity. Christianity stands or falls upon the bases of the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. If he is not a very God, then we do not have a redemption, we do not have a divine Savior, we do not have anyone who could be our Savior. We are totally and hopelessly and helplessly lost, all of us, and there is no point in meeting to study things about this ancient book if Jesus Christ

is not the Son of God. I want you to notice that it was the king who clearly represents the Father who made a feast for his Son.

These seven theologians, incidentally, claimed that Jesus Christ never said that he was the Son of God. Could anything be plainer than this little story which he tells about this great king who manifestly refers to the Father, who is able to cast people off into outer darkness, has a son—could anything be plainer than this parable? Here we have a beautiful illustration there of men who stare at the syllables, but who don’t understand the meaning of what is involved.

Now invitations were issued, but the invitation that was originally issued was the invitation given to Abraham through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the promise of the kingdom to the nation. Then the prophet was sent out. They call people on the basis of invitations already given to the fathers, and so I think that in verse 3, when it says, he sent forth his servants, he refers to the prophets who are sent out to confirm the promises made to the Nation Israel.

And then we read in verse 4 of other servants. I am going to suggest to you—I am not certain of the interpretation of every detail of this parable at all—that the second group of servants that were sent out were John and the Lord Jesus, and it is they who said, tell them who are bidden, behold, I have prepared by dinner my oxen and my fatlings are killed, all things are ready. Come to the marriage. John the Baptist went out preaching, come, repent for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand. The Lord Jesus followed, saying, repent for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand. The Lord Jesus sent out his apostles. He told them to preach the kingdom of the heavens is at hand.

And then in verses 8 and 9 when the scene changes, and they are sent out into the highways, I think this reflects the mission of the apostles after the death of the Lord Jesus in the present age where they are sent out to the four corners of the earth: go into all the world and proclaim the good news.

The repudiation of the invitations is very striking. The first group would not, unwilling because of human inability, human inability because of the fall in the Garden of Eden. The second group made light, unconcerned because of their own interests, and finally the third group, more violent, slew the messengers. They were totally opposed to the things of God. A natural man is in a state of enmity against God. The mind of the flesh is at enmity with God, the Apostle Paul says, there is not a man in this auditorium, not a woman in this auditorium, not a child in this auditorium who naturally would respond to the things of the word of God. Every one of us is by nature opposed to the things of God, and the Holy Spirit must work a transformation within our inmost being if we respond.

Well what would you expect a king to do? He was very angry. We read in the 7th verse that he was angry. He sent forth his army. He destroyed those murders and burned up their cities. I cannot help but think that this is a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D., and the scattering of the nations to the four corners of the earth which has taken place and still in progress in the present age.

Commentators, incidentally, stare at these syllables and say, it could not be that, because how can anyone prophesy ahead of time, ahead of 70 A.D., that this has really taken place, so it cannot be the prophecy of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. But anyone with the simplest intelligence can see that what lies back of that statement is the conviction that prophecy is impossible. And the Scriptures make it very plain that prophecy is not only possible, but actual.

So the king repudiates the invitation that he had given to the rebels. In 70 A.D., destroys the city, and sends Israel out unto approximately 1900 years of discipline. He is not through with Israel, we shall see. This parable says nothing about that, but he sends them out and they abide under discipline in the four corners of the earth. Some of them are back in the land – don’t get too excited over that at the present time, because they are back there in unbelief. But it is a striking fact, of course.

Now the king renews his invitation because wishes to have his marriage feast filled. And so he sends his servant out into the highways. The kingdom is now given over to the Gentiles, and the gospel is preached among the Gentiles, Paul tells us incidentally later on, in order to make the Jews jealous, because you see, these promises are really their promises, even now. Those promises that we enjoy were promises that were given to Abraham. We are called the sons of Abraham because we enjoy those blessings, but we enjoy them because God has put the nation under discipline and he desires to bring them to jealousy through our salvation, that the result may be, ultimately his total program for this world.

Well now, he comes into the marriage feast, and he finds there someone who does not belong. The universal call has gone out, incidentally, and the word of God says that they gathered in as many as were found, both bad and good—isn’t that interesting? Both bad and good. Now we all know that everybody is bad, so what he means by bad and good is those that are truly bad, but those that are good are those that are self-righteous; they’re are really bad. People look at them and think they’re good, but the Lord Jesus made it very plain that they were bad. He said that he didn’t come to call the righteous to repentance, but sinners. He didn’t mean that men were righteous, he meant men that were self-righteous and couldn’t recognize his call. So the good and the bad, the immoral and the self-righteous.

And the king comes in with his all-seeing eye. He looks, and incidentally, if there is one professor in the group of the saints who doesn’t have the reality, be sure of this, the great king sees, for he comes he looks at the vast multitude and stops the one sees one who is not properly attired. What does it mean, he doesn’t have the wedding garment? Incidentally, it doesn’t say that his life was not right, it said that he didn’t have the wedding garment. Well of course, we can make the application profession is not enough, nor is a good life. What one must have is the right garment.

Now what is the right garment? Well, I think if we look at the whole of the teaching of the Bible, there can only be one answer to that. The right garment is the righteousness of God made available through faith in Jesus Christ. That’s the right garment. It’s that that Isaiah speaks about when he says, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. My soul shall be joyful in my God, for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation. He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments. What is the robe of righteousness? The robe of righteousness is the righteousness that is available to us by virtue of the saving work of Christ on the cross. And when he went to the cross and there bore the sin of sinners, he made it possible for God to convey a righteousness that is acceptable to him through the blood that was shed. Being justified freely, Paul writes, being declared righteous freely.

So what is this righteousness that we are speaking about? Well, I think it was William Cunningham who said, “The righteousness of God is the righteousness which God’s righteousness requires him to require.” It’s that that we have through the saving work of the Lord Jesus, and when a man believes on the Lord Jesus the old garments of sin and unrighteousness are removed, and God gives us in his wonderful grace the robe of righteousness, the imputed righteousness that comes to sinners when they believe on the Lord Jesus. What a great mistake it is for a defiant rebel to make profession of faith in the Lord Jesus while still un-renewed in heart.

I think incidentally that this robe of righteousness not only has reference to our imputed righteousness but involves, necessarily, an imparted righteousness. That is, if we have this imputed righteousness, there is a manifestation of it in a change of life. But essentially, the key issue was, does a man have the wedding garment? So I say to you this morning, you think that perhaps by joining a church you have righteousness, you think that by making a profession of faith, for example, by meeting with the saints, that you have a righteousness. You think perhaps, that by attending church, you give yourself some kind of acceptance that God honors. You think that by sitting at the Lord’s table

and taking the wine and the bread, that that gives you the righteousness. But righteousness only comes through faith in the Lord Jesus.

Some years ago I was at a Bible conference. I heard a good friend of mine speak. It was in Canada, and on the way up, he had passed through London, Ontario where Bill McCray is at the present time. And he had stopped in the middle of the city at a very formal hotel, but he said, unfortunately, the crowd in my car were Americans, and we were traveling very informally to the Bible conference—he was one of the speakers—and he said, I was dressed in just an ordinary pair of slacks and a sports shirt, and my family was dressed accordingly. But we were very hungry and we couldn’t find anything and we saw this very lovely hotel and we had the money, so we went in.

He said I noticed when I went in I felt a little out of place, but when I came to the dining room, as I went in, I noticed a little sign that said, coats and ties required. But he said, I didn’t pay any attention to it. He said, as I walked in, the head waiter took one look at me, and he said, he didn’t say a word. He just looked at me [laughter] and said, un-uh. He said I didn’t have the proper garments. But he said, the waiter then, after he said [pause, said] come here. So he took him around the corner and there he went into a little closet and he pulled out a tie and a coat, and he said, now put these on. And so he put on the tie, and then he put on the coat, and he took his family in and the head waiter was standing there [gestures followed by laughter] and he said it was the matter of the right garment.

Well in spiritual things, it’s the matter of the right garment. It’s really the righteousness of God through Jesus Christ that gives us acceptance. We don’t have anything of ourselves that can make us acceptable, but it is that which the Lord Jesus has provided.

Well, when the king looks at this man who doesn’t have the right garment he is speechless. He sees the full horror of the insult by refusing—incidentally, there is evidence that in some places garments were provided by kings, but the tradition is not

really too certain and we’ll leave it alone—but he sees obviously the full horror of his insult to the king. And when the king confronts him he is totally speechless. He’s just like Belshazzar in the great feast in the midst of all of their hilarity when they went off and took out the vessels from the temple of God and were drinking their wine and having a great ol’ time at the feast, there came out the shape of a man’s hand and wrote over against the wall the judgment of God upon the kingdom of Belshazzar. And the text of Daniel says that his loins were loosed and his knees smote both one against the other.

This man was speechless. He was brought to the conviction of his sin, but unfortunately at that time, there is no hope, for when conviction then comes, there is no possibility of conversion. And so the king says, take him away. I wonder what you’ll do when you have professed your faith all of these years, what will you do, at the Great White Throne Judgment, when it is pointed out that you did not have any true relationship to the king?

Now we read in the 14th verse, for many are called, many are invited, but few are chosen. Those with the garments, incidentally, did not have any merit in themselves, but the response that they gave to the invitation revealed that they had been chosen, that they were the invited ones.

Now when a man responds to the gospel message of the Lord Jesus, that does not mean that he has any merit. As a matter of fact, his response is the evidence of the fact that God has already worked in his past. Now it’s our Lord who teaches this doctrine; it’s not Lewis Johnson. It’s the Lord who teaches this. The Apostle Paul says, as many as were ordained with eternal life believed. That’s what happens here. The invitations go out, and they go out to many, as a matter of fact, they go out to all, but few are elect and the evidence of the election is the reality of the profession of the truth.

My dear Christian friend, I must stop. Is there no other way for you to sin than to come into the midst of the congregation of the saints and make profession of faith and not have reality? Is there no other way for you to insult the holy God than to sit down at

the Lord’s table and to take the bread and wine when there is no life from God within you. Is there no other way to spite the truth of God than for you to mingle with the saints and make smiles of profession when there is no reality deep within your heart?

How much more terrible it is for the man who makes great profession and has no possession within the most part of his being. So I say to you this morning, may God give you grace to respond to the message of the gospel through the Lord Jesus. Christ had died for sinners. It is possible for us to have a wedding garment that fits out beautifully, makes us completely acceptable for the marriage feast for the kingdom of heavens, and it is ours as God the Holy Spirit brings us to personal faith in him. May the Holy Spirit speak to your hearts today. Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for these simple illustrative stories which reveal the love and concern that Thou dost have for us. We thank Thee Lord that these stories reveal to us great truths concerning things that do matter for our great God in heaven. O God, if there shall be someone in this auditorium who has made a profession, but has not really yet have the assurance of everlasting life, O bring them to Thyself through the Holy Spirit, we pray.

For Jesus sake. Amen.