

Matthew 22

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon presents the conduct of the Jews with respect to the invitations of grace, their rejection of the kingdom, and the judgment of Jerusalem, highlighting the need for a spiritual transformation to enter the kingdom.

Scripture: Matthew 22, Luke 14:15-24, Romans 11:17-24, Galatians 3:27, Ephesians 2:8-9, Revelation 19:7-9

Topics: "Spiritual Readiness", "Grace and Judgment"

Description

John Nelson Darby expounds on Matthew 22, illustrating the rejection of God's invitation to the marriage feast by the Jews and the subsequent inclusion of the Gentiles. He emphasizes that while the invitation was extended to the chosen people, their refusal led to their judgment and the destruction of Jerusalem. The sermon also highlights the necessity of being spiritually clothed in Christ to partake in the kingdom, as mere outward appearances are insufficient. Darby discusses the interactions between Jesus and various Jewish sects, revealing their spiritual blindness and the ultimate authority of Christ as both David's Son and Lord. The message concludes with a call to recognize the grace offered and the responsibilities that come with it.

Transcript

In chapter 22, their conduct with respect to the invitations of grace is presented in its turn. The parable is therefore a similitude of the kingdom of heaven. The purpose of God is to honour His Son by celebrating His marriage. First of all the Jews, already invited, are bidden to the marriage feast. They would not come. This was done during Christ's lifetime. Afterwards, all things being ready, He again sends forth messengers to induce them to come. This is the mission of the apostles to the nation, when the work of redemption had been accomplished. They either despise the message or slay the messengers. [See Footnote #64] The result is the destruction of those wicked men and of their city. This is the destruction that fell upon Jerusalem. On their rejection of the invitation, the destitute, the Gentiles, those who were outside, are brought in to the feast, and the wedding is furnished with guests. Another thing is now presented. It is true, that we have seen the judgment of Jerusalem in this parable, but, as it is a similitude of the kingdom, we have the judgment of that which is within the kingdom also. There must be fitness for the occasion. For a wedding feast there must be a wedding garment. If Christ is to be glorified, everything must be according to His glory. There may be an outward entrance into the kingdom, a profession of Christianity; but he who is not clothed with that which appertains to the feast will be cast out. We must be clothed with Christ Himself. On the other hand, all is prepared-nothing is required. It was not the guest's

part to bring anything; the King provided all. But we must be imbued with the spirit of that which is done. If there is any thought of what was suitable to a wedding feast, the need of a wedding garment to appear in would surely be felt: if not, the honour of the King's Son has been forgotten. The heart was a stranger to it; the man himself shall become so by the judgment of the King when He takes cognizance of the guests who have come in.

Thus also grace has been shewn to Israel, and they are judged for refusing the invitation of the great King to the marriage of His Son. And then the abuse of this grace by those who appear to accept it is also judged. The bringing in of the Gentiles is declared.

Here concludes the history of the judgment of Israel in general, and of the character which the kingdom would assume.

After this (chap. 22:15, et seq.) the different classes of the Jews come forward, each in turn. First, the Pharisees and the Herodians (that is, those who favoured the authority of the Romans, and those who were opposed to it) seek to entangle Jesus in His talk. The blessed Lord answers them with that perfect wisdom that ever displayed itself in all He said and all He did. On their part, it was pure wickedness manifesting a total want of conscience. It was their own sin that had brought them under the Roman yoke—a position contrary indeed to that which should have belonged to the people of God on earth. Apparently therefore Christ must either become an object of suspicion to the authorities, or renounce His claim to be the Messiah and consequently the Deliverer. Who had occasioned this dilemma? It was the fruit of their own sins. The Lord shews them that they had themselves accepted the yoke. The money bore the mark of this: let them render it then to those unto whom it belonged, and let them also—which they were not doing—render unto God the things that were God's. He leaves them under the yoke which they were obliged to confess they had accepted. He reminds them of the rights of God; which they had forgotten. Such might moreover have been Israel's state according to the establishment of power in Nebuchadnezzar, as a "spreading vine of low stature."

The Sadducees come next before Him, and question Him as to the resurrection, thinking to prove its absurdity. Thus, as the condition of the nation had been exhibited in His discourse with the Pharisees, the unbelief of the Sadducees is displayed here. They thought only of the things of this world, seeking to deny the existence of another. But whatever the state of degradation and subjection into which the people had fallen, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, changed not. The promises made to the fathers remained sure, and the fathers were living to enjoy these promises hereafter. It was the word and the power of God which were in question. The Lord maintains them with power and evidence. The Sadducees were silenced.

The lawyers, struck with His reply, ask a question, which gives the Lord occasion to extract from the whole law, that which, in the sight of God, is its essence, presenting thus its perfection, and that which—by whatever means it may be reached—forms the happiness of those that walk in it. Grace alone rises higher.

Here their questioning ceases. All is judged, all is brought to light with respect to the position of the people, and the sects of Israel; and the Lord has laid before them the perfect thoughts of God respecting them, whether on the subject of their condition, of His promises, or of the substance of the law.

It was now the Lord's turn to propose His question in order to bring out His own position. He asks the Pharisees to reconcile the title of Son of David with that of Lord which David himself gave Him, and that in connection with the ascension of this same Christ to sit at the right hand of God until God had made all His

enemies His footstool, and established His throne in Zion. Now this was the whole of Christ's position at that moment. They were unable to answer Him, and no man durst ask Him any more questions. In fact, to understand that Psalm, would have been to understand all the ways of God with respect to His Son at the time they were going to reject Him. This necessarily closed these discourses by shewing the true position of Christ, who, although the Son of David, must ascend on high to receive the kingdom, and, while waiting for it, sit at the right hand of God according to the rights of His glorious Person-David's Lord, as well as David's Son.

There is another point of interest to be remarked here. In these interviews and these discourses with the different classes of the Jews, the Lord brings out the condition of the Jews on all sides with respect to their relations with God, and then the position which He took Himself. He first shews their national position towards God, as under responsibility to Him, according to natural conscience and the privileges belonging to them. The result would be their cutting off, and the bringing in of others into the Lord's vineyard. This is chapter 21:28-46. He then exhibits their condition with regard to the grace of the kingdom, and the introduction of Gentile sinners. Here also the result is the cutting off and the destruction of the city. [See Footnote #65] Afterwards the Herodians and the Pharisees, the friends of the Romans and their enemies, the pretended friends of God, bring out the true position of the Jews with respect to the imperial power of the Gentiles and to God. In His interview with the Sadducees, He shews the certainty of the promises made to the fathers, and the relationship in which God stood to them in respect of life and resurrection. After this He puts the real meaning of the law before the scribes; and then the position which He took, Himself the Son of David, according to Psalms 110, which was linked with His rejection by the leaders of the nation who stood around Him.

Footnotes for Matthew 22

64: Contempt and violence are the two forms of the rejection of the testimony of God, and of the true witness. They hate the one and love the other, or cleave to the one and despise the other.

65: Observe here, that from chapter 21: 28 to the end, we have the responsibility of the nation looked at as in possession of their original privileges, according to which they ought to have borne fruit. Not having done so, another is put in their place. This was not the cause of the judgment which was, and yet is in a more terrible way to be, executed on Jerusalem, and which even then accomplished the destruction of the city. The death of Jesus, the last of those who had been sent to look for fruit, brings judgment on His murderers (Matt. 21: 33-41). The destruction of Jerusalem is the consequence of the rejection of the testimony to the kingdom sent to call them in grace. In the first case, the judgment was upon the husbandmen-the scribes, and chief priests, and leaders of the people. The judgment executed on account of the rejection of the testimony to the kingdom goes much farther (see chap. 22: 7). Some despise the message, others ill-treat the messengers; and, grace being thus rejected, the city is burned up, and its inhabitants cut off. Compare chap. 23: 36, and see the historical prophecy in Luke 21. The distinction is maintained in all three gospels.

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