

13 October 2020

Parable of the Wedding Clothes

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Shalom,

I pray that you are keeping well in these trying times and pray an added measure of God's grace upon you and your loved ones.

The other day I received a Youtube video of someone preaching about the parable of the wedding clothes which is found in Matthew 22:11-13.

Matthew 22:11-13

11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 12 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless. 13 "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' NIV

Yeshua (Jesus) told this parable as part of His teachings on the Kingdom of God. In the preceding verses He talks of how the King had sent out invitations to many people but they refused to come, finally He sent His servants to bring people from all corners i.e. the masses and these came.

When the banquet was about to begin the King came in and looked around at the guests and He found one man who wasn't wearing the right clothes, He had the servants tie the man up and expel him.

We understand that this parable is about people entering the Kingdom of God i.e. salvation. This man tried to get into the kingdom in his own way and was expelled. The preacher concerned explained that the wedding clothes here represented good works of compassion, mercy, helping the poor etc. In fact therefore, he was teaching salvation by works, which is inconsistent with scripture that tells us that salvation is by grace through faith, so that nobody can boast (Ephesians 2:8-9), that they were good enough and deserve to enter heaven.

What that brother failed to do is one of the most elements of good Bible study, he failed to consider the cultural and historical implications of these verses. In the days of Yeshua and before when a man was getting married it was customary for the groom's family to provide special clothes for the guests, this would be a simple garment thrown over their normal clothes. This is so that everyone would be equal at the banquet and the "stars" of the wedding would be the couple. Similarly today in western weddings the bride and groom and their families are responsible for providing the clothes for the bridesmaids and groomsmen. In ancient Israel, the wedding clothes were a gift from the family of the groom.

"The custom in those days was for the one hosting the wedding feast—in this case, the king—to provide garments for the wedding guests. These wedding garments were simple, nondescript robes that all attendees wore. In this way, rank or station

was covered, so everyone at the feast could mingle as equals.” (<https://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Topical.show/RTD/cgg/ID/21206/Providing-Wedding-Garments-for-Guests.htm>)

“For every guest at the feast there had been provided a wedding garment. This garment was a gift from the king.” (https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Christ%27s_Object_Lessons/Without_a_Wedding_Garment)

This then tells us that we can only enter heaven wearing the clothes given to us by the King, which refers to the blood of Yeshua our Messiah. The man’s own clothes which he was wearing represented his own good works whereas the clothes given by the King represented righteousness given as a gift from God, because of the blood of Yeshua.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, **but the gift of God** is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. NIV

No amount of good works we do on earth can gain us entry into the kingdom of God because we are all sinners in fact Isaiah tells us that our righteous works are merely filthy rags in God’s eyes. (Isaiah 64:6) Even the Apostle Paul himself declared that there was nothing good in him (Romans 7). This after he said at the end of Romans 6 that salvation was a **gift** from God.

The writer of Hebrews makes reference to the Day of Atonement when the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies and said this:

Hebrews 9:13-15

3 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, 14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, **cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?** NKJV

The lesson that Yeshua was giving when He told this parable was a simple one; we cannot enter heaven on our own merit, but only by the free gift that He obtained for us by His sacrifice on the cross. If we could work our way into heaven, the cross would be meaningless. His blood is the only way in.