

Text: Matthew 22

Section 1

1 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, 2 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. 3 "And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. 4 "Again he sent out other slaves saying, 'Tell those who have been invited, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.'" 5 "But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, 6 and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. 7 "But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. 8 "Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 9 "Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.' 10 "Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests. 11 "But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, 12 and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And the man was speechless. 13 "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 "For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matthew 22:1-14)

Jesus uses the metaphor of a wedding feast to illustrate the Kingdom of Heaven. The guests that were invited first were the Jews, who received the first covenant and the promises of Messiah, and were the first to hear the message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

1 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, 5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. (Romans 9:1-5)

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16)

However, the Jews, by and large, rejected both the promises and the Messiah. They mistreated and killed God's prophets, and eventually killed the Messiah Himself. God therefore rejected them, and in A.D. 70 the Jewish nation was destroyed and the city of Jerusalem leveled., fulfilling what Jesus spoke in verse 7. Jesus spoke a similar parable against those Jews that rejected Him in Mark 12.

1 And He began to speak to them in parables: "A man PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT, AND DUG A VAT UNDER THE WINE PRESS AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. 2 "At the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order to receive some of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers. 3 "They took him, and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 4 "Again he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. 5 "And he sent another, and that one they killed; and so with many others, beating some and killing others. 6 "He had one more to send, a beloved son; he sent him last of all to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 7 "But those vine-growers said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!' 8 "They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. 9 "What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others. 10 "Have you not even read this Scripture:

**'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,
THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone;**

11 THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD,

AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES'?" 12 And they were seeking to seize Him, and yet they feared the people, for they understood that He spoke the parable against them And so they left Him and went away. (Mark 12:1-12)

Returning to our text, after those invited to the wedding refused to come, the king instructed his servants to go out and invite everyone to the feast, indiscriminately. In like manner, we as Christ's followers have a command to preach the Good News of salvation through His name to all people. Everyone, regardless of nationality, race, gender, language, etc. is invited to call upon the Name of the Lord to receive eternal life.

18And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. **19**"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **20**teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

12For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; **13**for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." (Romans 10:12-13)

There is a problem, though. The king found one at his feast that did not have on a wedding garment. This individual was bound and shamefully banished from the feast. In like manner, many people make a profession of Christianity, but are not truly saved. At the last judgment these individuals will be discovered and cast into Hell like all unbelievers.

15"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. **16**"You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? **17**"So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. **18**"A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. **19**"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **20**"So then, you will know them by their fruits. **21**"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. **22**"Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' **23**"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'" (Matthew 7:15-23)

This brings up the question, then: How is one truly saved? What does it mean to "call on the Name of the Lord" in a way that leads to salvation? Peter answered this when he preached at Pentecost, shortly after Jesus' resurrection.

37Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" **38**Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39**"For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." (Acts 2:37-39)

As I have said many times, to call Jesus Christ Lord is to call Him Master. This must include repentance. He is perfect, sinless, and holy by nature. We are the opposite of those things. To call Him Master and to follow him entails repentance, a complete turning away from the former nature and turning toward Him. Any belief short of this is not saving. In fact, this is no more faith than that possessed by the Devil and his demons.

19You believe that God is one You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. (James 2:19)

We are saved when we repent and believe, confessing Him as Master and Savior. Of course, to follow Jesus perfectly is beyond our abilities. In fact, to follow Him at all is beyond our abilities! Fortunately, He enables us to live for Him and to serve Him. As we seek Him in obedience we "abide" or "stand firm" in Him, and He enables us to "bear fruit" for His Kingdom, even as the Father continues to "prune" evil and wickedness from us.

1"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. **2**"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. **3**"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. **4**"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. **5**"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. **6**"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. **7**"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8**"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. **9**"Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. **10**"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. **11**"These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. (John 15:1-11)

Section 2

*15*Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap Him in what He said. *16*And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any. *17*"Tell us then, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?" *18*But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, "Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? *19*"Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax." And they brought Him a denarius. *20*And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" *21*They said to Him, "Caesar's." Then He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's." *22*And hearing this, they were amazed, and leaving Him, they went away. (Matthew 22:15-22)

Isn't it interesting that the most bitter enemies will come together to attack the One True God! The Pharisees were the most strict and legalistic of the Jewish sects, men who loathed the Roman occupation of Israel. Yet, in an attempt to discredit Jesus, they teamed up with the Herodians, Jews who followed Herod and his halfway version of Judaism, and joined Herod in appeasement of the Romans. They thought that Jesus would either choose to acknowledge Rome at the expense of God, and discredit Himself to the Jews, or denounce Rome entirely in zeal for God, and expose Himself as a traitor to the Emperor. Instead, He cleverly acknowledged both. Civil authorities are established by God, and therefore submission to these, insofar as they remain within their proper boundaries, is proper Christian behavior.

1Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. **2**Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. **3**For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; **4**for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. **5**Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. **6**For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. **7**Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. (Romans 13:1-7)

If, however, civil authorities overstep their bounds and begin to encroach upon the prerogatives of God, we are to defy that government and acknowledge God's supremacy.

27When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, **28**saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." **29**But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. (Acts 5:27-29)

One day, a purely evil civil government will be established on the earth, one that encompasses the entire world and is rooted in idol worship and blasphemy of all kinds. There are, as I hope you all know, people actively working to establish such a government as we speak. This government will demand total obedience and even worship, something the people of God can never give. Even at the cost of our lives, if we live to see this government established we must defy it, lest we lose our very souls.

11Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. **12**He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. **13**He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. **14**And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. **15**And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. **16**And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, **17**and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name. **18**Here is wisdom Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six. (Revelation 13:11-18)

9Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, **10**he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. **11**"And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." (Revelation 14:9-11)

Now, some of you are probably thinking "Micah, why are you bothering with this? Won't we all be raptured before this happens?" I hope so, but I wouldn't count on it. The idea of a "Pre-Tribulation Rapture" is only one of a number of potential scenarios given for the "End Times," and is a very new one—this interpretation is less than two hundred years old. Many credible theologians have posited a "Post-Tribulation Rapture," and some even suggest that many of the events described in Revelation have already taken place (the Second Coming obviously has not, and anyone that suggests it has is a heretic). Who's right? I don't know. I personally think the Scripture has to be picked through and tortured and twisted to arrive at the timeline for a "Pre-Tribulation Rapture" (I know this, I've done the work), but those folks may be right. Still, the weight of theological opinion for most of Church history suggests that we will be present on earth during the Tribulation, and we should all prepare our hearts should we live to see such an awful time take place.

Section 3

*23*On that day some Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) came to Jesus and questioned Him, *24*asking, "Teacher, Moses said, 'IF A MAN DIES HAVING NO CHILDREN, HIS BROTHER AS NEXT OF KIN SHALL MARRY HIS WIFE, AND RAISE UP CHILDREN FOR HIS BROTHER.' *25*"Now there were seven brothers with us; and the first married and died, and having no children

left his wife to his brother; 26so also the second, and the third, down to the seventh. 27"Last of all, the woman died. 28"In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had married her." 29But Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God. 30"For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 31"But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: 32'I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living." 33When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at His teaching. (Matthew 22:23-33)

The Sadducees were a Jewish sect that was essentially materialist. Besides God Himself, they believed that the physical world was all that existed, that Man did not possess an eternal soul that lived on beyond physical death. To maintain this belief, however, they had to deny much of the Old Testament Scriptures. Even Job, who might have even preceded the giving of the Law, was aware not only of the perseverance of the soul, but of the eventual resurrection of the body.

**25"As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives,
And at the last He will take His stand on the earth.
26"Even after my skin is destroyed,
Yet from my flesh I shall see God;
27Whom I myself shall behold,
And whom my eyes will see and not another.
My heart faints within me! (Job 19:25-27)**

The Sadducees got around such issues as this by not recognizing any Scriptures except the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament. Jesus knew this, and wisely crafted an answer to their challenge from the Book of Exodus. The Book of Genesis also speaks about life beyond this world, telling us about Enoch, who was taken to be with God. While this doesn't speak specifically to life after physical death, I do think it is telling that the Word says that God "took" Enoch—if there is nothing for Man beyond the physical world, for God to "take" Enoch would be for Him to annihilate Enoch. Instead, we understand that Enoch was taken, body and soul, to be with God.

24Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him. (Genesis 5:24)

Section 4

34But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. 35One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, 36"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' 38"This is the great and foremost commandment. 39"The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' 40"On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:34-40)

Jesus says that we are to love God first and foremost, and with all of our being. Secondly, we are to love others as ourselves. Then, He wisely says that "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." Take just the Ten Commandments as an example:

1Then God spoke all these words, saying, 2"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3"You shall have no other gods before Me. 4"You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5"You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. 7"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. 8"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9"Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. 11"For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy. 12"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. 13"You shall not murder. 14"You shall not commit adultery. 15"You shall not steal. 16"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 17"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor." (Exodus 20:1-17)

Here we have four commandments (No Other Gods, No Idols, No Taking His Name in Vain, Remember the Sabbath) that speak to our relationship with and service to God, and six more (Honor Father and Mother, No Murder, No Adultery, No Stealing, No False Witness, No Coveting) that speak of our relations with one another. In other words, the first four can be taken to fall under the Great

Commandment, and the last six under the Second Greatest Commandment. The entire Law of Moses can be “reduced” to some extent to one of these two commandments. Therefore, Jesus’ answer was a wise one, indeed.

Section 5

41Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question: 42"What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" They said to Him, "The son of David." 43He said to them, "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying,

44'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD,

"SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,

UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET"?' 45"If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?" 46No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question. (Matthew 22:41-46)

The Pharisees were experts in the Law, and quickly answered Jesus to the effect that Messiah was to be descended from David. They said rightly, for the Scripture plainly said that Messiah would be a descendant of King David.

1Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,

And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.

2The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him,

The spirit of wisdom and understanding,

The spirit of counsel and strength,

The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

3And He will delight in the fear of the LORD,

And He will not judge by what His eyes see,

Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;

4But with righteousness He will judge the poor,

And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;

And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,

And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.

5Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins,

And faithfulness the belt about His waist. (Isaiah 11:1-5)

However, the same Scriptures also plainly stated that Messiah was to be an earthly Incarnation of God Himself (who happened to be physically descended from David).

6For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;

And the government will rest on His shoulders;

And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

7There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,

On the throne of David and over his kingdom,

To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness

From then on and forevermore

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

In an incomprehensibly miraculous way, Jesus is the Eternal God and Creator, yet was born into this world as a descendant of David. He refers to Himself as such in the last chapter of Revelation.

16" I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." 17The Spirit and the bride say, "Come " And let the one who hears say, "Come " And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. 18I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; 19and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book. (Revelation 22:16-19)

I wanted to read this entire passage because of the threat found in verses 18-19. Jesus promised a strict penalty for those that alter the Revelation given to John. In the following passage, He mentions the “unbreakableness” of the Scripture as a whole.

32Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" 33The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God." 34Jesus answered them, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I SAID, YOU ARE GODS'? 35" If

he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), 36do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?' (John 10:32-36)

The Pharisees were experts in the Scriptures, yet they were often guilty of “picking and choosing” which doctrines to believe, teach, and practice. They were content to correctly identify Messiah as the Son of David, yet they conveniently ignored writings that refer to Him as the Incarnate God. We cannot make this same mistake. We have a miraculous Book at our disposal, one that contains the history of God’s workings in the world and perfectly conveys His commands to His followers. We are to read it, study it, memorize it, and obey it completely. To “pick and choose” is to invite error, as the Pharisees did. Therefore, we must make sure to search out the “whole counsel of God” as revealed in Scripture on any given subject, “interpreting Scripture with Scripture” so that we avoid the introduction of error through misinterpretation or erroneous personal opinions. Jesus is Lord, and we are therefore called to obedience. His instructions—His Will—is found in the pages of His Word, so if we truly wish to obey Him as Lord we will consult the Word continually, seeking His guidance in increasing our understanding of it, and act accordingly, in obedience and reverence.