

Lesson Overview

Biblical Passage	Matthew 22:1-14
Supporting Passages	Matthew 21:38-41; Luke 14:16-24
Memory Verse	Matthew 22:9
Table Talk Question	Who can be a part of God's Kingdom?
Biblical Truth	God invites all people, regardless of background, to join His Kingdom according to His conditions.
Context	<p>In Matthew 22, Jesus spoke with the religious leaders. These religious leaders were probably the chief priests and Pharisees. Following His teaching condemning the religious leaders' attitudes and actions (Mt. 21:28-46), Jesus told a parable comparing entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven to that of a wedding feast.</p>
Learning Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will identify the conditions for becoming part of God's Kingdom.• Students will consider ways to invite all types of people to be part of God's Kingdom.
Prayer Suggestions	<p>As you prepare to teach this lesson, pray for those in your group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pray that students will understand God's requirements for entering the Kingdom of Heaven.• Pray that students will gain confidence in their place in the Kingdom of Heaven.• Pray that students will invite people from all walks of life to the King's wedding feast.

Biblical Commentary

Investigation

Jesus used a series of parables in His conversation with the priests and leaders at the Temple. Each parable pointedly addressed one specific characteristic of the Kingdom of God. For example, Jesus used the third parable to show that many who thought that they would be included in God's Kingdom would actually be excluded.

Jesus explained that the Kingdom of God could be compared to a king giving a wedding banquet for his son. When guests who had been previously invited refused to attend the celebration, the king ultimately invited anyone who would come. The clear teaching of the parable is that many of God's chosen people, the Jews, refused to come to Christ. So God invited any who would come—whether Jew or Gentile. Through Christ, the door was opened for all to come to God.

Importance

This passage emphasizes that **Jesus is God and Savior** of all people by revealing that through Christ, God invites all people—regardless of race, nationality, or any other social or cultural barrier—to experience His love and forgiveness through abundant and eternal life in Christ.

This passage also emphasizes the truths that **Salvation is by Faith Alone** and **People are God's Treasure**.

Interpretation

Matthew 22:1-3 This third **parable** gives a glimpse into the Kingdom of Heaven by comparing it to a wedding banquet. A wedding banquet thrown by a king for his son was an elaborate celebration with an exquisite feast. Imagine the celebration a king would give in his son's honor. The event would have been very elaborate. Months of planning would have taken place. In Jesus' parable, people had already been invited to the wedding, and the preparation had been completed. When all was ready, the king sent out the second invitation, letting those who had accepted his invitation know that the banquet was beginning.

The Jews, as most people in the Near East, enjoyed social events and large feasts. For example, three of the major Jewish religious traditions were feasts which people were expected to attend. Feasts were held for personal reasons as well, such as celebrating birthdays and weddings, and at funerals (*NIV Archaeological Study Bible*, p. 1599, footnote 22:2-14). With celebrations going on for days, the invitees would have been waiting in anticipation for the word that the banquet was ready.

Matthew 22:4 As was customary, the king's servants were "**sent . . . to those who had been invited**" on the day of the wedding to issue a second invitation. This second invitation let all those invited know that the wedding

“dinner” was prepared. This invitation showed an urgency in the request--the king was waiting for them to come. In spite of the fact that all knew about the wedding and had agreed to come, the guests simply refused to attend. Jesus’ story of those refusing to come would have been shocking to His listeners.

Like the king and the wedding feast, the Kingdom of Heaven had already invited the Jews to God’s banquet through His Son, the promised Messiah. Notice of Jesus’ coming had been given to the Jews centuries in advance. Yet, when He came, they refused to recognize Jesus as God’s Son. To not attend a wedding was unusual; to refuse to attend at the king’s request was unthinkable.

Matthew 22:5-6 The second invitation included details that should have enticed those who had agreed to come. The word used for “dinner” (*ariston*) can be best understood as “breakfast” (*Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, p. 456), signaling the start of major feasting that would go on through the night. “Fat calves” had been meticulously fed over a period of time to fatten them up in preparation for this celebration, and were a sign of extravagance and wealth for those who had been invited.

Yet, Jesus told of two different responses from those who had received the second invitation but now refused to come. The first group carried on with what they already had on their schedules--one went to his farm and another went to his place of business. They continued on with their lives, untouched by the invitation.

Other invitees not just refused to come, but they “seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them” (v. 6). This odd twist in the parable emphasized the Jews’ refusal to listen to God’s prophets. (See Matthew 23:37 for Jesus’ words about how the prophets were treated by those in Jerusalem.)

Matthew 22:7 Because of the invitees’ intentional disobedience, destruction came. To rebel against the king’s slaves was to rebel against the king himself. As a result, the king displayed his wrath and “burned their city.” The king’s action would have been understood as a typical military response, but it may also have pointed ahead to the destruction Jerusalem would face in A.D. 70 (*NIV Archaeological Study Bible*, p. 1600, footnote 22:7).

Matthew 22:8-10 The king remained persistent; the banquet would take place regardless of who did or did not come because the celebration was about his son. Because of the invitees’ refusal to attend the banquet that was ready, the king sent his servants out to the forks in the main roads (NIV uses “street corners,” which does not adequately express the king’s intent) to extend the invitation to anyone they could find (*Expositor’s*, p. 457).

This action symbolized the inclusion of the Gentiles in God’s Kingdom. They too would be invited to feast at the wedding banquet and enjoy the privileges of Kingdom membership. This offer was new to the Gentiles. God’s original covenant was with Israel, His chosen people. But through Jesus, the offer became universal. Good and evil, rich and poor were all offered a place in God’s Kingdom when they placed their trust in Christ for salvation. Jesus thus proclaimed that the gospel applies to all.

Matthew 22:11-14 It was not enough to have been invited to the celebration. And it was not enough simply to attend. To be the king’s guest at the wedding feast for his son, guests had to have more than just an invitation. They had to be dressed appropriately for the king’s presence; they had to be in wedding garments to show honor to the king.

Protocol required that the guests take their places at the banquet table before the king arrived (*Bible Manners and Customs*, p. 363). According to *NIV Archaeological Study Bible*, guests were greeted by having their feet washed to remove the dust from the journey and given robes that “were worn in his honor and as a token of his regard” (p. 1599, footnote 22:2-14). When the king made his appearance, his attention was immediately drawn to one guest who had chosen not to accept the garment provided. The king questioned how the man had even been admitted to the banquet when he was not suitably dressed. The inappropriately dressed guest was speechless.

Some commentators argue that his silence made him guilty, indicating that he was unwilling to attend on the king's terms. In any case, the man gave no regard to responding properly to the king's invitation.

The king had the man removed from the wedding and thrown into the street, where others who had been invited and refused to come would be "weeping and gnashing of teeth," which referred to the utter sorrow and deep rage felt by those who are cast from God's presence. Although all were invited, some refused to attend, while others refused to appropriately participate.

Implications

Salvation is available to every person who calls on the name of the Lord. All who ask for forgiveness of their sins and desire to live a life of submission and obedience to God's word will be saved. Salvation is not limited to, or withheld from, people of a particular race, religion, or heritage. Despite this biblical truth, many students see themselves unworthy of God's gift of salvation, or have been taught that they need to be "good" or do good things to earn their way to heaven. Students desperately need to hear the truth that it is only through Jesus Christ that they can be saved (Jn. 14:6).

Because of this critical misconception, it is vitally important for all believers, especially students, to be fervent in inviting others to the Son's "wedding feast." In fact, some surveys suggest that 85% of Christians made their decision to accept Christ as Savior and Lord by the time they reached 14 (International Bible Society). Others suggest that children between the ages of 5-13 have a 32% likelihood of accepting Christ, while those between the ages of 14-18 have only a 4% likelihood (Barna). Therefore, students must not assume that someone else will do the inviting for them or that people will presume the invitation is for them even though it has not been personally given. Truly, **Jesus is God and Savior** of all people. He's done His part; now it's up to believers to get the word out.

Teaching Plan

Connect

Review Questions

(5–8 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will answer five review questions from the previous lesson.

Print one copy of the “Review Questions” activity sheet for your use.

After greeting students, use the review questions to test what they can recall from the previous lesson as well as to provide context for today’s lesson.

Master Teacher Option: Dream Wedding

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will work together to create a wedding fit for a prince.

Prepare slips of paper as described below. Also provide a dry erase board and marker.

On separate slips of paper, write these elements necessary for creating a wedding fit for a prince:

- **Bride and groom**
- **Wedding location**
- **Wedding garments**
- **Guest list**
- **Ceremony details**
- **Flowers**
- **Food**
- **Entertainment**
- **Invitations**

Ask: **Which royal weddings have you watched on television or read about in the papers? How would you describe those weddings?** Lead students to focus on the extravagance of a royal wedding. Explain that students will create a wedding fit for a prince by describing different elements of the wedding. Divide students into nine groups and give each group one of the slips of paper naming one element of the wedding. Instruct students to decide what their assigned element of the wedding would include. After one or two minutes, invite each group to share their details, listing key design ideas on the board. Then, ask: **How would it feel to be invited to attend one of these extravagant wedding ceremonies?**

Explain that Jesus used The Parable of the Wedding Banquet to reveal the conditions under which people would be included in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Explore

Master Teacher Key Study: The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

(15-20 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will study Matthew 22:1-4 to identify the conditions for becoming part of God's Kingdom.

Print one copy of the Master Teacher Key Study for your use. Provide a copy of the Student Worksheet and a pen for each student.

Learning Goal: Students will identify the conditions for becoming part of God's Kingdom.

Pass out pens and copies of the Student Worksheet. Then, use the Master Teacher Key Study to teach Matthew 22:1-14.

Transform

Deeper Discussion

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will discuss their willingness to set aside everything to give Christ first place in their lives.

Learning Goal: Students will consider ways to invite all types of people to be part of God's Kingdom.

Jesus told the Parable of the Wedding Banquet to illustrate several truths about the Kingdom of Heaven. Share that many biblical scholars agree that the people first invited to the banquet who later refused to attend represent Israel, who rejected Jesus as the Messiah, and that when the king sent his servants into the streets to invite anyone to attend, this illustrated that God extended the invitation to the Kingdom to all people, including the Gentiles (people outside the nation of Israel). Say: **The application for today's lesson encourages students to consider why and how they can invite people from all walks of life to be part of God's Kingdom.** Lead students to discuss these questions:

- **What reasons have you heard people give for refusing to place their faith in Christ?**
- **God has sent His servants into the world to invite people into the Kingdom of Heaven. What could you do to fulfill that purpose? Which people could you invite?**
- **What do you feel when someone you invite to the Kingdom accepts the invitation?**
- **Why is it important to emphasize that only those with a true faith in Christ will enjoy eternity with Him?**

Share that we still receive God's invitation to His banquet table--to be part of the Kingdom of

Heaven—but we each have to decide how we will respond to His invitation. Say: **And when we accept His invitation, we have the opportunity to share that invitation with others.** Lead students in prayer, asking God to help students learn to use opportunities to share their faith with the confidence needed to do so without hesitation.

Master Teacher Option: Inviting Others

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will discuss the various ways that they can help spread the gospel.

Learning Goal: Students will consider ways to invite all types of people to be part of God’s Kingdom.

Ask: **What are some different ways that you are involved in spreading the gospel?** (*Sharing your beliefs, witnessing, prayer, mission projects, disaster relief, giving financially*) Ask: **Who can you reach through these efforts that you cannot reach on your own?**

Lead students to discuss the witnessing efforts of your Bible study group or church body. Ask: **Are we fulfilling God’s commands to invite everyone to know Him? What more can we do locally and globally?** Lead students to list ways to reach people who need to hear the gospel. Be sure that their ideas include reaching all kinds of people (the good and the bad). Encourage students to consider adopting one or more ideas to turn into ministry opportunities to share the gospel. Close in prayer, asking God to give students the desire to issue His invitation to others.

Take Home Activity

Family Devotion

(10-15 minutes at home, easy set-up)

Distribute copies of the Family Devotion to students and encourage them to share the devotion with their family.

A copy of the Family Devotion will be included in your lesson PDF download.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

(5-8 minutes, easy set-up)

Use these questions to review the content from Lesson 28: "The Rich Young Ruler's Questions"
The correct answer for each question is printed in bold, italic font.

1. What did the rich young man ask Jesus start a conversation with Him?
 - a. "Are you the Son of God?"
 - b. "Dude, where's my car?"
 - c. ***"What good thing must I do to get eternal life?"***
 - d. "Who is my neighbor?"

2. What did Jesus first say the rich young man must do to have eternal life?
 - a. He must pray and receive Christ.
 - b. ***He must obey the commandments.***
 - c. He must repent from sin.
 - d. He must love his neighbor as himself.

3. What was the second thing Jesus said the rich young man must do to have eternal life?
 - a. He must honor his father and mother.
 - b. He must not steal or commit adultery.
 - c. He must not murder.
 - d. ***He must go and sell his possessions, give to the poor, and follow Jesus.***

4. What did the rich young man do when Jesus told him he must give up his possessions and follow Him?
 - a. ***He went away sad.***
 - b. He did as he was told.
 - c. He accused Jesus of being a fraud.
 - d. He threw stones at Jesus.

5. What did Jesus say to His disciples after the rich young man went away?
 - a. "He'll be back."
 - b. ***He said it was hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.***
 - c. He said nothing.
 - d. He compared the man to the Pharisees.

THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING BANQUET

(15-20 minutes, easy set-up)

Use this outline and any of the corresponding activities to share the Biblical Truth with students.

Introduction: Whether people support the British monarchy or not, their royal weddings capture the attention of American viewers. For example, an estimated 17 million Americans watched the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer in 1981. Thirty years later, an estimated 23 million Americans tuned in to watch the wedding of Prince William to Kate Middleton in 2011. Because weddings are familiar in nearly every culture, Jesus used the illustration of a royal wedding to explain the Kingdom of Heaven.

1. Some people will refuse to accept the invitation to the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 22:1-7).

Biblical Background: Jesus told a parable in which the king issued an invitation for people to come to the wedding banquet for his son (vv. 1-4). Although many initially accepted the invitation, they ultimately refused to attend. While some simply went about their daily activities (v. 5), other invitees responded with extreme violence toward the servants the king had sent out with the invitation. In response, the king destroyed them and their city (vv. 6-7).

Illustration: What type of invitation would you consider so important that you would cancel all other obligations to accept it? Some would eagerly accept an invitation to a White House dinner. Others would be enticed by tickets to a championship game. Still others would be most interested in an invitation to a private concert by a favorite artist or tickets for an all-expense paid dream vacation.

Application: Similarly, God has issued each of us a priceless invitation to join Him at His Son's wedding supper, and has given us the option to choose whether or not to attend.

2. Others will joyfully accept the invitation to the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 22:8-10).

Biblical Background: With the wedding banquet ready and no guests present, the king instructed his servants to go out into the streets and invite everyone they could find to attend the banquet (vv. 8-9). People from all parts of the city joyfully accepted the king's invitation and filled the wedding hall (v. 10).

Illustration: By using the Internet to get out their messages, companies offer special invitations, special sales, giveaways, multiple contacts, and more, in their attempt to blanket their market. They want to make sure everyone hears what they offer. God's invitation is for all . . . but He uses us to go to the streets to present His invitation. **How do you issue invitations on God's behalf to the people that you meet? Have you have issued God's invitation to someone who joyfully accepted it, allowing you to experience an earthly salvation celebration!**

Application: God's invitation is for all people . . . but He uses us to go to the streets to continuously present His invitation.

3. People without true faith cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 22:11–14).

Biblical Background: When the king arrived to greet his guests, he saw one guest who had chosen to attend the wedding banquet without accepting the provided wedding clothing. Because of his inappropriate attire, the guest was thrown out of the celebration (vv. 11-13). Although many more were invited to the wedding supper, few responded appropriately (v. 14).

Illustration: In the *Christ* journal, C. Gene Wilkes described the significance of being appropriately clothed for the banquet: “By not making the effort to dress appropriately, the man indicated he did not respect what it meant to say yes to the king’s invitation. Therefore, the king judged him accordingly. Saying yes to the King’s invitation means accepting the responsibility of making adjustments in life to show you are headed to the banquet” (p. 289).

Application: Likewise, believers are accepted to the King’s table after they’ve made their confession that Jesus Christ is Lord of their lives.

Conclusion: Jesus’ parable revealed to the religious authorities that they had no guaranteed place at God’s table. Years of service and following the rules does not guarantee acceptance into the Kingdom. Because Jesus is God and Savior, only those who accept God’s offer of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ will be honored guests at God’s table.

LESSON 29

THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING BANQUET

Biblical Passage: Matthew 22:1-14

Memory Verse: Matthew 22:9

“So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.”

1. Some people will _____ to accept the invitation to the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 22:1–7).
2. Others will _____ accept the invitation to the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 22:8–10).
3. People without _____ cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 22:11–14).

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What reasons have you heard people give for refusing to place their faith in Christ?
- God has sent His servants into the world to invite people into the Kingdom of Heaven. What could you do to fulfill that purpose? Which people could you invite?
- What do you feel when someone you invite to the Kingdom accepts the invitation?
- Why is it important to emphasize that only those with a true faith in Christ will enjoy eternity with Him?

APATHY	BUSY LIVES
PRIOR COMMITMENTS	REBELLION

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT . . .

“When He shall come with trumpet sound, Oh, may I then in Him be found. Dressed in His righteousness alone, Faultless to stand before the throne.”—*Edward Mote*

LESSON 29

CHRISTOS
STUDENT EDITION

THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING BANQUET

Biblical Passage: Matthew 22:1–14

How many times have you pulled for an underdog to win the big game when you were almost sure the team had no chance of winning? For some reason, we seem to be especially thrilled when the weaker team wins the game. Deep down, we all want to root for the underdogs of the world . . . and not just in sports. We all love to see those stories on the news when a person fights against all kinds of opposition and reaches an unattainable goal—like a guy who goes from being homeless to becoming a college graduate. We love rooting for the ones who society considers hopeless. Giving hope to the hopeless is what God does. When the world says, “You aren’t good enough,” God says, “I give hope to the hopeless.”

Read Mathew 22:1-14. In this parable, Jesus explained that He calls the hopeless to be with Him. When the “important people” of the city rejected the call of the king to come join him in celebrating his son’s wedding, the king sought people who would appreciate the opportunity to attend the wedding feast. The “important people” had other things to do and had other priorities. They wanted nothing to do with the king. The king then invited those society would have seen as “outcasts.” When everyone else thought these invitees were unlovable, the king said they are worthy of attending a party with him and his family. God seeks those who recognize the great gift of grace that is being offered to them. He then gives them grace and acceptance. He gives them life. He gives them a relationship with Him. He ushers them into the party—the kingdom of heaven.

If you know Jesus as your Savior, you have moved from being a hopeless outcast to being accepted to the wedding feast hosted by the King of kings. There is great joy in finding this hope. While some have rejected the invitation, the ones who accept the invitation will experience eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven. Have you found the hope offered to you? Have you accepted the invitation to attend the wedding feast?

CONNECTION QUESTIONS:

- Why did the people reject the king’s invitation to the party?
- What did the king do when he realized no one was coming to the wedding feast?
- When the final round of invitations went out, what do you think the emotions of the people receiving these invitations were?
- What can you do this week to show God your thankfulness for the invitation He sent you through His Son, Jesus Christ?