

-It's a bit challenging to come in the middle of a series; our minds are focused in one direction and to shift gears in the interim can throw us off a bit

-So today, and next week, I want to branch off of that which we have been looking at in this series in hopes that we will build upon that which we have been looking at the past couple months

-So, what have we been studying?

-We've been looking at how the Jews requested a sign. Looking now at the signs in John that were for the Jews.

-We see that signs were given to them, as they requested, in hopes that the nation of Israel would repent.

John 4:48 "So Jesus said to him, "Unless you *people* see <sup>[8]</sup>signs and wonders, you *simply* will not believe."

- Why is this important? Why should we know about the offer of the kingdom to the Jews and again the re-offer?

-Simply stated, it's imperative that we understand the full picture-to understand how salvation was given to the Jews prior to the cross and then how they rejected the offer and it was given to a nation who would bear fruits.

-Otherwise, we risk having an improper understanding of the Scriptures, the Gospels in particular. I mean, how many of us have at one point or another read the signs described in the Gospel of John and seen only an application for us, the Gentile nation?

-In reality, as we are learning, the 8 signs in the Gospel of John are written for the eternally saved Jews who had placed their faith in God's provision for sin before the cross.

-Obviously it is this bit regarding a nation who bears fruit of the kingdom that one could say would be more relevant to our lives today, September 18, 2016 and that is what we tend to focus on. However, it could also be said that the full scope of what we are learning with the role Israel plays as well as the Gentile Nations is more relevant to our future, the 7<sup>th</sup> day.

-While we all come to Church for various reasons, I would believe that most are here today to learn how we can grow in our faith in respect to our lives today as well as our lives in that future day.

-So we study the full scope of salvation, for the Jews and the Gentiles and we understand our role in all of this.

-We understand that the offer has been made to the nation that will bear fruit, we realize that we must bear fruit of the Spirit by faithful obedience to the Word in order to realize the goal of our faith.

The purpose of the next two sermons is to tie into what we have been learning but shift the focus from the Jews requesting a sign to how the Gentiles are to bear fruit since the offer of the kingdom has been given to them during this dispensation.

Our main passage today will be found in Matthew 22:1-14; the Parable of the Marriage Feast but before we get there, we need to recall that a parable is something that builds on what has been taught previously. So for us to understand the Parable of the Marriage Feast, we must look at its context and when we do that, we realize that it all starts with a fig tree.

## I. Triumphal Entry and Temple Cleansing

In the chapter preceding our main passage today, that would be Matthew 21, we see the account known as the Triumphal Entry of Christ, where He is welcomed to shouts of Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest by the crowds as He entered the city of Jerusalem.

We then see Christ travel to the temple where He drives out those who are buying and selling in the temple; those who have corrupted the House of the Lord. While he is there, we read this in Matthew 21:14 "And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them."

What have we been studying? That the Jews request a sign? Yet the chief priests and scribes, instead of repenting, doubt Christ and we are told they became indignant.

After his exchange with the chief priests, Christ then leaves the temple and spends the night outside the city.

## II. Encounter with the Fig Tree

We then read in Matthew 21:18-19 <sup>18</sup> Now in the morning, when He was returning to the city, He became hungry. <sup>19</sup> Seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it except leaves only; and He \*said to it, “No longer shall there ever be *any* fruit from you.” And at once the fig tree withered.”

What does a fig tree bring to mind when we see it in Scripture?

Hosea 9:10 “I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your forefathers as the earliest fruit on the fig tree in its first *season*.”

The fig tree points us to Israel. So keep that in mind as we read a similar passage dealing with a fig tree in Luke 13:6-9 “And He *began* telling this parable: “A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any. <sup>7</sup> And he said to the vineyard-keeper, ‘Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree <sup>[d]</sup>without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?’ <sup>8</sup> And he answered and said to him, ‘Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; <sup>9</sup> and if it bears fruit next year, *fine*; but if not, cut it down.’”

In this parable, we see a man with a fig tree that doesn’t produce fruit in his vineyard. For three years, a complete period of time, he has been looking for fruit but has not found any. He wants to cut it down immediately. The vineyard-keeper tells him to give the fig tree one more year, another chance for it to produce fruit. If at that time it has not, then he will cut it down.

This is picturing for us the original offer and again the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel. They had their opportunity to bear fruit but did not produce. They were given an additional period of time at the end of which they would be cut down if they had not produced fruit.

Going back to our passage in Matthew, we see Christ walking back to the city stop along the road as he saw a fig tree. He was hungry but found no fruit on the tree. It had leaves, but no fruit.

Seeing this, He proclaimed there would no longer be any fruit on this tree and after saying this, the tree withered, picturing the state of Israel as they were nearing the end of the offer of the kingdom and had yet to repent as a nation. The time for judgment had come.

This encounter with the fig tree, as random and out of place as it seems it may be, is in fact the key to understanding the following parables, realizing Israel has rejected the offer of the kingdom. Israel had the look of a healthy fig tree with the leaves on its branches, but there was no fruit, no faithful obedience that resulted in righteous acts.

### III. Parable of Two Sons

After this encounter with the fig tree on their way into the city, Christ enters the temple and has an exchange with the chief priests. He then gives them another parable, the parable of two sons.

Matthew 21:28-32

““But what do you think? A man had two <sup>[f]</sup>sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘<sup>[g]</sup>Son, go work today in the vineyard.’ <sup>29</sup> And he answered, ‘I will not’; but afterward he regretted it and went. <sup>30</sup> The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, ‘I *will*, sir’; but he did not go. <sup>31</sup> Which of the two did the will of his father?” They \*said, “The first.” Jesus \*said to them, “Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes <sup>[h]</sup>will get into the kingdom of God before you. <sup>32</sup> For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him; and you, seeing *this*, did not even feel remorse afterward so as to believe him.”

In this parable, we have two sons. One who refused to do what his father asked him to do, but later did obey and work in the vineyard. And a second son who told the father he would obey and go work in the vineyard but decided not to.

This pictures for us Israel’s unwillingness to repent which is the reason Christ cursed the fig tree. The religious leaders of Israel did not believe that which John the Baptist came to prepare and even after the “sinners” as they may be viewed, the tax collectors and prostitutes, believe in what John preached, the religious leaders still did not believe nor did they feel remorse.

This parable calls to mind another parable in Luke 18:9-14

And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: <sup>10</sup> “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup> The Pharisee stood and was praying

this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' <sup>13</sup> But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be <sup>[f]</sup>merciful to me, the sinner!' <sup>14</sup> I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

The religious leaders did not feel they had to repent. They were under the belief that they were doing exactly what they should be doing; that they were righteous. They viewed themselves as being obedient to their Father, when in reality, like our parable of two sons, they were disobedient to their Father.

#### IV. Parable of the Landowner

The parable of the two sons leads directly into the parable of the landowner in Matthew 21:33-41.

<sup>33</sup> "Listen to another parable. There was a <sup>[i]</sup>landowner who PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT AND DUG A WINE PRESS IN IT, AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to <sup>[j]</sup>vine-growers and went on a journey. <sup>34</sup> When the <sup>[k]</sup>harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. <sup>35</sup> The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. <sup>36</sup> Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. <sup>37</sup> But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' <sup>38</sup> But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' <sup>39</sup> They took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. <sup>40</sup> Therefore when the <sup>[l]</sup>owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?" <sup>41</sup> They \*said to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the *proper* seasons."

This parable, building off the previous which showed an unrepentant Israel, unwilling to turn back to their God, pictures for us Israel rejecting all of the prophets and ultimately Christ, who is the heir. Moses and David and Isaiah and all of the prophets had prepared the way so that Israel would know when Christ, their Messiah, had come to save them. Instead, they plot to kill Him. As we know how the history unfolds, with Christ on the

cross, we know this parable pictures the state of Israel as Christ was speaking to them; less than a week away from them crucifying their Messiah. Moving beyond simply not repenting, they now full on rejected Him.

But this should have been expected. We read in Isaiah 5:1-7

Let me sing now for my well-beloved A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on <sup>[a]</sup>a fertile hill. <sup>2</sup> He dug it all around, removed its stones, And planted it with <sup>[b]</sup>the choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it And also hewed out a <sup>[c]</sup>wine vat in it; Then He expected *it* to produce *good* grapes, But it produced *only* <sup>[d]</sup>worthless ones. <sup>3</sup> “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge between Me and My vineyard. <sup>4</sup> “What more was there to do for My vineyard <sup>[e]</sup>that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected *it* to produce *good* grapes did it produce <sup>[f]</sup>worthless ones? <sup>5</sup> “So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground. <sup>6</sup> “I will lay it waste; It will not be pruned or hoed, But briars and thorns will come up. I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it.” <sup>7</sup> For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel And the men of Judah His delightful plant. Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress.

Knowing that Israel as a nation rejected Him, Christ removes the offer of the kingdom from Israel and gives it to a nation that will produce fruit.

Matthew 21:43 <sup>43</sup> “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a <sup>[m]</sup>people, producing the fruit of it.”

## V. Parable of the Marriage Feast

We now arrive to the parable of the marriage feast in Matthew 22:1-14 which is what I want to focus the rest of our time together on this morning. These three parables tend to be seen together but the reason this is the parable I want to focus on is that these 14 verses cover the vast majority of the New Testament. It takes us from God the Father’s dealing with Israel prior to the cross of Christ and leads us to the wedding festivities where Christ redeems the inheritance

“Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, <sup>2</sup>“The kingdom of heaven <sup>[a]</sup>may be compared to <sup>[b]</sup>a king who <sup>[c]</sup>gave a wedding feast for his son. <sup>3</sup> And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. <sup>4</sup> 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.”’ <sup>5</sup> But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own <sup>[d]</sup>farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup> and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. <sup>7</sup> But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. <sup>8</sup> Then he *\*said* to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup> Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find *there*, invite to the wedding feast.’ <sup>10</sup> Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with <sup>[e]</sup>dinner guests. <sup>11</sup> “But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, <sup>12</sup> and he *\*said* to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?’ And the man was speechless. <sup>13</sup> 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.’ <sup>14</sup> For many are <sup>[f]</sup>called, but few *are* chosen.”

Let’s set the stage—who would the king be representative of? (God the Father)

The King’s son? (Christ)

The King’s servants? (All the prophets that came before Christ, as well as John the Baptist who “Prepared the way of the Lord” then the second batch of servants would be the apostles and the final servant would be the Holy Spirit)

Who had been invited to the wedding feast multiple times? (The Nation of Israel)

Who was gathered on the main highways? (Christians from the Gentile Nations—those who answered the call/invitation)

When does the wedding feast take place? (The 7<sup>th</sup> Day; the Millennial Kingdom)

### **Vs 2-3**

<sup>2</sup> “The kingdom of heaven <sup>[a]</sup>may be compared to <sup>[b]</sup>a king who <sup>[c]</sup>gave a wedding feast for his son. <sup>3</sup> And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come.

So we see the servants in verse 3 sent out by the king to call all who had been invited yet they were unwilling to come. All of the prophets had spoken and pointed to the coming kingdom of Christ and that Israel must repent in order to bear fruit of the kingdom. We see John the Baptist prepare the way in Matthew 3:1-2, 8-12

“Now in those days John the Baptist <sup>[a]</sup>came, <sup>[b]</sup>preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven <sup>[c]</sup>is at hand.”.... <sup>8</sup>Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; <sup>9</sup>and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. <sup>10</sup>The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>11</sup>“As for me, I baptize you <sup>[g]</sup>with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you <sup>[h]</sup>with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>12</sup>His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

-The part about the trees makes a little more sense after seeing the parables we looked at earlier; the axe ready to cut the tree down if not fruitful. John the Baptist told the Nation of Israel.

So Israel rejected the first batch of servants, the prophets and John the Baptist.

His message was from God the Father, for the Nation of Israel to repent for the kingdom of heaven was at hand. But instead, the nation simply said, “We have Abraham for our father” thinking that they would be included based on that alone. But as John preached, the axe was ready to cut down every tree not bearing good fruit. If Israel would not repent, they would be cut down and the offer would be taken from them and given to stones if needed in order for God to fulfill His promise to Abraham which we see in Genesis 17:6-8 I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you. <sup>7</sup>I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your <sup>[f]</sup>descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your <sup>[g]</sup>descendants after you. <sup>8</sup>I will give to you and to your <sup>[h]</sup>descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

#### **Vs 4-6**

<sup>4</sup>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.”’ <sup>5</sup>But they paid no attention and went

their way, one to his own <sup>[d]</sup>farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup> and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them.

Then in verse 4 and 5 we see more servants sent out to again bring back those who had been invited to the wedding feast. These servants would be the apostles. This is the re-offer of the kingdom. We see Peter preaching in Acts 2:38 “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.” Again, this message, while true for us, was for the Jews.

In Acts 7:51 we see Stephen’s defense before the High Priest. “You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.”

Clearly Stephen is speaking to the condition of their heart, the heart of the Israelites which had been hardened over generations. We know because immediately following his speech, the council drove him out of the city and stoned him to death. All because they were stiff-necked and unrepentant.

### **Vs 7**

<sup>7</sup> But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire.

We wont dwell on this verse, although it is intriguing. In verse 7 we see the king enraged and destroys their city due to their lack of repentance. In 70AD Jerusalem was sacked and destroyed by Titus of Rome. Jerusalem the city along with the temple, was destroyed as a consequence of the Nation of Israel and their lack of repentance. They took comfort in the temple of their fathers, but they missed the purpose of the temple so God destroyed it.

### **Vs 8-10**

<sup>8</sup> Then he *\*said* to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup> Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find *there*, invite to the wedding feast.’ <sup>10</sup> Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with <sup>[e]</sup>dinner guests.

After the failed re-offer, the king recognized that those who had been invited were no longer worthy to enter the feast. The king then sends his servants to go out to the highways and find as many as they could and invite anyone they found to the wedding which had been prepared.

Here we see the servants of God, again apostles such as Paul and James, as well as ultimately the Holy Spirit, sent out to the Gentile nation to offer them entrance into the wedding feast.

Acts 28:23-31 When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening. <sup>24</sup> Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe. <sup>25</sup> And when they did not agree with one another, they *began* leaving after Paul had spoken one *parting* word, “The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, <sup>26</sup> saying,

‘GO TO THIS PEOPLE AND SAY,  
“<sup>[s]</sup>YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, <sup>[t]</sup>BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND;  
AND <sup>[u]</sup>YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE;  
<sup>27</sup> FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL,  
AND WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR,  
AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES;  
OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT SEE WITH THEIR EYES,  
AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS,  
AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN,  
AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.’”

<sup>28</sup> **Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen.**” <sup>29</sup> <sup>[v]</sup>When he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves.]

<sup>30</sup> And he stayed two full years <sup>[w]</sup>in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, <sup>31</sup> <sup>[x]</sup>preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

The message has now been given to the Gentile Nation, that they may bear fruit of the kingdom.

These new guests are Christians, both good and bad.

This is today, our current situation. The Spirit of God is searching the land for those who will comprise the Bride of Christ as pictured in the antitype of Abraham sending his servant to find a wife at the well for his son Isaac.

The Spirit has gone throughout the world inviting those who would accept the invitation. Some will accept; others will reject. This is the salvation of the spirit.

All Christians will find themselves at the Judgement Seat of Christ, as opposed to the Great White Throne Judgement, where nonbelievers will find themselves. If we did not have a proper understanding of these parables, if we did not have the proper foundation in place regarding the full scope of salvation, it would be tempting for us to think these verses depicting both evil and good “people” at a wedding feast would be both of these judgments in one picture.

But as we know, that is simply not the case.

Only Christians will be found at the Judgment Seat of Christ, where our works will be tested for evil or good.

1 Cor 3:11-15 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup> Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, <sup>[d]</sup>precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup> each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test <sup>[e]</sup>the quality of each man’s work. <sup>14</sup> If any man’s work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Our works done by faith or in the flesh are what determine if we, those with saved spirits, who have been covered with the blood of Christ, are evil or good.

It’s amazing that people have a hard time understanding this. As if just being saved by the blood of Christ wipes out our flesh and automatically makes us “good.” I wish that was the case. And while it does give us hope and freedom to not be enslaved to our sin, we still have moments of weakness.

I don't know about y'all, but I see my spirit and flesh battling each other daily. Opportunities to live by faith and the spirit to be good or opportunities to indulge our fleshly lusts and do evil.

Galatians 5:16-17 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the flesh <sup>[a]</sup>sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you <sup>[b]</sup>please.

We then finish with verses 11-14

### **V11-14**

<sup>11</sup> "But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, <sup>12</sup> and he \*said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And the man was speechless. <sup>13</sup> 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.' <sup>14</sup> For many are <sup>[c]</sup>called, but few *are* chosen."

So again, here we have the king, God the Father encountering the dinner guests, Christians alone.

There are two possible outcomes for these wedding guests, whom we just saw are believers:

Cast into outer darkness

Join the wedding festivities as properly dressed

The crux of these verses is the garments we find ourselves wearing at the wedding feast. Will we be barely covered or will we have washed ourselves, anointed ourselves and clothed ourselves with the proper garment before we meet our bridegroom Christ?

Ruth 3:3 Naomi speaking to Ruth, "Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your *best* clothes, and go down to the threshing floor."

Again, if we did not have a proper understanding of these verses, it would be very tempting to view these verses in a different light. We may be tempted to believe that the evil and good that appear in the wedding feast are “Christians” and “Non-Christians” and those who have been saved will stay in the wedding while those who have not believed in Christ will be banished to Hell.

But we realize the truth of the Scripture that this is not some call to salvation of the spirit, where you must be covered in the blood of Christ to attend the wedding. This is a call to salvation of the soul, where you must be dressed in righteous acts of the saints, done in faithful obedience.

Continuing from our passage in Galatians we just looked at, Galatians 5:19-25 <sup>19</sup> Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, <sup>[j]</sup> factions, <sup>21</sup> envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup> Now those who <sup>[k]</sup> belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> If we live by the Spirit, let us also <sup>[l]</sup> walk by the Spirit.

We are faced with two possible outcomes, option one: be cast into outer darkness for the duration of the wedding feast. Will we indulge the evil deeds of our flesh? immorality, impurity, sensuality....The Scripture clearly states that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Or, option two, will we be properly clothed and enjoy the festivities with our bridegroom? Those who belong to Christ crucify the flesh daily and bear fruit...love, joy, peace and the rest. These will inherit the kingdom of God.

So here we are, with the offer of the kingdom and entrance into the wedding feast in front of us. Christ is knocking on the door of our heart, wanting to dine with us. What will our response be?

As we prepare to close, as I read these remaining verses from Revelation, imagine Christ speaking these words to you, individually right here and right now.

Rev 3:15-21 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. <sup>16</sup> So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will <sup>[1]</sup>spit you out of My mouth. <sup>17</sup> Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, <sup>18</sup> I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and *that* the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. <sup>19</sup> Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. <sup>20</sup> Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. <sup>21</sup> He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

If you are in sin, I beg you, do not be stiff-necked as Israel was at Christ's first coming. Do not be proud; do not believe you are properly clothed when in fact you are poor, blind and naked.

1 John 1:8-9 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We all have sin in our life. But do not live in it. Confess and repent. Buy from Christ gold refined by fire so that we may become rich, clothing ourselves with white garments, which are the righteous acts of the saints so that we may overcome and be allowed to sit with Christ on His throne.

The question I want to leave with us today is what is stopping us from taking hold of our inheritance? What is it that is holding you back? What is it that causes you to be poor, blind and naked? It would behoove us to recognize our nakedness and answer these questions now, instead of being surprised at the Judgment Seat of Christ when we will be cast out of the wedding feast for the Millennial Kingdom of Christ.

Next week, Lord willing, we will delve into this question further.