

## Lesson 80 – THE GARMENT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS    Matthew 22:9-14

**(Matt. 22:9)** – *“GO YE THEREFORE INTO THE HIGHWAYS, AND AS MANY AS YE SHALL FIND, BID TO THE MARRIAGE”* – We have seen in these last set of parables the following truth –

As the way of salvation fully prepared and provided for God’s elect by His grace through and by the Lord Jesus Christ and based on His righteousness imputed alone was rejected by the vast majority of the Jews, God took the Gospel away from them and sent it out to His elect among the Gentiles. In considering this truth, let us remember:

(1) If left to ourselves, none of us would receive and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation (1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 3:10-12). It takes a sovereign and powerful work of the Holy Spirit to give us spiritual life from the dead and bring us to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works (John 1:11-13; 6:44-45).

(2) This was always God’s predestinated plan from the beginning to save His chosen people out of every nation, Jew and Gentile (Gen. 12:1-3; Isa. 49:6; 51:4-5; Acts 26:23).

(3) God still has a people whom He plans to save, both Jew and Gentile, by bringing them to hear and believe the Gospel of His free and sovereign grace in Christ (Rom. 11).

**(Matt. 22:10)** – The marriage of the Son and His bride (the church) will be *“FURNISHED WITH GUESTS.”* The Lord has been, and will always, call His sheep into the fold of His church by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel revealed and received as they believe in Christ. This is how the marriage of His Son is furnished with guests. Although this particular parable speaks of the Gospel being taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles, the guests (which are God’s elect) include both believing Jews and Gentiles. So, this describes the powerful, irresistible, invincible calling of the Holy Spirit to apply the new birth (regeneration and conversion) to all of God’s elect found in every nation (John 16:8-11). Christ gives them spiritual life, knowledge, faith, repentance, and a determination to persevere in the faith, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of their faith (2 Thess. 2:13-14; Heb. 12:2). They are made willing by God to be saved by His grace in Christ Jesus.

Notice that the call of the Gospel goes out to *“BOTH GOOD AND BAD.”* Now, obviously, the Lord is not talking about those who are good and bad in the eyes of God. God says that among fallen humanity there are none good, no, not one (Rom 3:10-12), that we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). Besides, if any were truly good in God’s eyes, they would not need the Gospel nor salvation. The Lord said that He did not come to call the righteous to repentance, but sinners. The “good” here are those who are good in their own eyes (self-righteous) and who appear good outwardly unto men. The “bad” are the openly immoral, such as the publicans and harlots. The message is that both are lost and in need of a righteousness they cannot produce, not even those who men call “good.” Both are in need of salvation by God’s grace.

**(Matt. 22:11-13)** – So, now he comes into the marriage feast, and he finds there someone who does not belong as evidenced by the fact that he *“HAD NOT ON A WEDDING GARMENT.”* This man illustrates the fact that, while on earth, the visible church will not only be occupied by true believers in Christ, but also false professors of Christ. These false professors will eventually be exposed for the frauds that they are. Some will be exposed sooner than others (Matt. 13:18-22). Some may not be exposed until final judgment (Matt. 7:21-23). The key to understanding this part of the parable is to know exactly what the wedding garment is and what it is not. The first thing we need to know is that this wedding garment is NOT the righteous deeds or works of the saints. It is the righteous deeds and works of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people. It is the entire merit of His whole work for His people imputed (accounted) to them for their justification before God (Rom. 4:1-8; 5:21; 2 Cor. 5:19-21).

Christ’s righteousness imputed to His people is often found in Scripture symbolized as a garment or a cloak put upon them by God (Gen. 3:21; Isa. 61:10; Zech. 3:3–4; Rev. 7:14; 19:7-8). This in no way means, as some accuse, that salvation is nothing more than an external matter such as an outward show or a “pasted-on righteousness.” Salvation involves the legal imputation of Christ’s righteousness to His people AND the spiritual regeneration of those same people as the Holy Spirit gives spiritual life and brings them to faith in Christ. But the righteousness of Christ imputed is the GROUND of our salvation, and the work of the Spirit in us is the FRUIT of salvation. When the Spirit brings a sinner to believe in Christ, that is when that sinner gives evidence of having been justified before God based on Christ’s righteousness imputed (Rom. 1:16-17; 10:1-10). This man had not on this garment, this robe of righteousness. It was not imputed to him, and he had no knowledge of it. He had no true faith in it; he had never put on Christ as the Lord his righteousness. He had gotten into a church state without it, though there is no entrance into the kingdom of heaven but by it. All who are found in this state will perish!

**(Matt. 22:14)** – *“FOR MANY ARE CALLED”* refers to the general call of the Gospel to all who hear it. *“BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN”* refers to the irresistible call to God’s chosen (elect) people which they cannot and will not resist as it is the power of God unto salvation to them (Rom. 1:16 -17; 1 Thess. 1:2-6; 2 Thess. 2:13-14). Only the elect of God will receive and believe the Gospel wherein Christ is revealed in the glory of His Person and the power of His finished work of righteousness. And the only way sinners can know of their election of God is when they are brought to know and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their only hope of salvation and righteousness. It is then that they by God-given faith put Him on, as it were, pleading His merits as their only righteousness and salvation (Gal. 3:27; cf. Job 29:14; Isa. 61:10; Luke 15:22; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). Putting on Christ is an act of God-given faith.