

~Other Speakers S-Z: David Servant:

If the parable of the wedding feast teaches us anything, it teaches us that it isn't God who determines who will be in heaven, but rather, it is people themselves. The king in the parable sincerely invited scores of people to his son's wedding feast, but they ignored his invitation. Only those who ultimately responded enjoyed the feast.

Amazingly, some who suppose that God predestines some to be saved (and thus predestines some to be damned) exploit Jesus' words found at the end of this parable to support their strange doctrines, completely ignoring their context. "Many are called, but few are chosen," they quip, "which means that many hear the call of the gospel, but only those who are predestined by God, the 'chosen,' are ultimately saved." Yet the parable that precedes those words completely contradicts such an interpretation.

Notice that the king calls those who have already been invited to the wedding feast, telling them the feast is ready. They were a limited group, and they ignored the call. So the king destroyed them in his wrath and then sent his slaves to invite those who had not been previously invited, the "evil and good" (22:10). This can only represent the Jew's general rejection of Christ, the Jewish holocaust of A.D. 70, and the salvation invitation being extended to all the Gentiles.

In the parable, the "chosen" are those who responded to the invitation. They are chosen because God, like the parable's king, chose to welcome those who responded---even Gentiles, a horrific idea among the Jews of Jesus' day who considered themselves to be solely "God's chosen." God's choices, like all choices, are conditional. He has chosen to save all who repent and believe in Jesus. If you do that, you are among the chosen.

Wealthy wedding hosts in Christ's day provided wedding garments for their guests, and so the man caught without a wedding garment had no excuse. He represents a person who attempts to enter God's kingdom without something the King sees as vital. Perhaps the wedding clothes in the parable represent the same as the wedding clothes at the marriage feast of the Lamb spoken of in Revelation 19:7-9: "And it was given to [the bride] to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." Only the holy will inherit heaven, because only they are the true believers.

Pity the modern Sadducees who, like their ancient counterparts, are consumed with proving their pet doctrines, and whose faulty logic is obvious to everyone but themselves. They make the error of exalting a few scriptures at the expense of many others, and come to incorrect conclusions. Notice that Jesus answered the Sadducees with a balancing scripture they could have read themselves (22:29-32). Similarly, He sent the Pharisees to Scripture to help them understand what they did not, that the Christ was not only the son of David, but God in the flesh (22:41-46). Scripture is where we need to abide as well. Sometimes when I have scrutinized modern "Christian" teaching or practice in light of the Bible, I've been accused of "putting God in a box." I take that as a compliment, since God has put Himself in a box---the Bible box!

The most important lesson today? The two greatest commandments are, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." and, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Those two summarize the moral and ethical teaching of the entire Old Testament. We have no evidence that those two commandments have been removed from the #1 and #2 position. Interestingly, the second-greatest commandment is only mentioned once in the Old Testament, but seven times in the New Testament. These two commandments should be continually emphasized by those who are making disciples, and obeying them ought to be the consuming daily goal of every true follower of Christ. Let's guard ourselves from being sidetracked.