

# OpenTheo

## Wedding, Render Caesar, Resurrection (Part 1)



### **The Life and Teachings of Christ** - Steve Gregg

In this discourse, Steve Gregg unpacks a parable in Matthew 22 about a king who invites guests to his son's wedding banquet, only to be rejected by some. Gregg offers a three-part interpretation of the parable, which he relates to the Resurrection and Christ's second coming. He also explains the clothing metaphor within the parable, emphasizing that it is not about one's own good deeds but rather God's provision. Wrapping up, Gregg touches on the issue of rendering unto Caesar and God, explaining that it is not a matter of a "strange mix" but rather a call to be responsible citizens and obedient to God.

### **Transcript**

Let's turn to Matthew 22. In the material that we've been covering in the last few sessions, Jesus was in a confrontation with the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus, up to this point, has been speaking in parables that were directed against them.

Now, they started it. They lived to regret it, but they started this confrontation. They came up to Jesus and said, by what authority are you doing these things and saying these things, as he was teaching in the temple? And he set them back on their heels immediately by saying, well, you answer this question and I'll answer your question.

They wouldn't answer his question, so he said, well, then I'm not going to answer yours. And then he told the parable of the two sons and the parable of the wicked vinedressers. And these parables both point to, you know, them as culprits, as not obedient to God, despite their public reputation of being men who were obedient to God.

And so we have one more parable here at the beginning of Matthew 22, and that is followed by several confrontations where, in the first instance, the Pharisees and then the Sadducees and then a scribe come to Jesus with testing questions and hoping to nail him, but he beats them out. However, the parable that takes the first 14 verses of chapter 22, we have to take. It says, Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said, the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son.

And he sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding, and they

were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants saying, tell those who are invited, see, I have prepared my dinner. My oxen and fatted cattle are killed and all things are ready.

Come to the wedding. But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and burned up their city.

Then he said to his servants, the wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore, go into the highways and as many as you find, invite to the wedding. So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good.

And the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

Then the king said to the servants, bind him hand and foot, take him away and cast him into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.

All right, there's actually three parts of this parable. The first is the initial invitation that was sent out first of all, apparently to the king's servants of his own domain. They rejected his invitation and that brings us to the second part.

After he wreaks his punishment upon the servants who rejected his invitation, he sends out his messengers to those beyond his domain, out to the highways and byways, out beyond the borders of his kingdom. They were to go out to others that were not previously his servants and invite them to the feast. And because of this activity, the feast was filled with people, which brings us to the third part of the story.

When the king comes to examine the guests and finds one who is not properly attired and one of these guests gets thrown out. And no doubt in the parable, this one guest who's thrown out is representative of a category of persons rather than representing some individual. But some persons who come to the feast do not remain there because they're not qualified to be there.

Now let's talk about the meaning of the parable. The reference to a wedding feast, which is what this is all about, it's about a king who wanted to make a marriage for his son. I must say, it would be interpreted variously by different people.

And I think that there's some, unthinkingly perhaps, who think of this as the marriage supper of the Lamb, a la Revelation chapter 19. In Revelation chapter 19 it says the wedding supper of the Lamb has come and the bride has made herself ready. And it

appears to be the second coming of Christ in Revelation 19.

Now there are other possible interpretations of Revelation chapter 19. It may not be the second coming of Christ, but it certainly has that appearance. At least given my presuppositions and so forth, it looks that way to me.

And therefore, because of that, I used to read this parable when I was younger and hadn't thought it through so much, just when I was doing my casual reading of the Bible. And I assumed that this wedding feast had something to do with the millennium or something to do with something that happens after Jesus comes back and the wedding comes, the wedding supper. And what I found perplexing about it was that somebody was thrown out after they were already there.

And because my presuppositions were such that this wedding was at the second coming of Christ, and those therefore who were brought in were either participants in the millennium or whatever, it made me concerned about whether a person could be lost again, having once made it past that threshold of the second coming of Christ into the saved community to be thrown out later on. I now understand the parable entirely differently, and I think it's quite obvious to many of you what the parable means. The wedding supper is not associated with the second coming of Christ at all.

It's associated with the first coming. Jesus described his own coming in those terms. He said, well, even before Jesus said anything about it, John the Baptist said this.

When John's disciples came to him in John chapter three, they said, John, teacher, did you know that this one that you baptized beyond Jordan, now he's baptizing over there and everybody's going to him instead of to you. Which suggests that perhaps they were a little jealous that John's popularity was waning and Jesus was becoming more well known. And John's answer in John three twenty nine was he who has the bride is the bride groom.

But the friend of the bride groom, that's John, who stands and hears him rejoices greatly because of the bride groom's voice. Now, this statement meant, of course, that John the Baptist was like the matchmaker who served the interest of the bride groom to bring the bride and he together. But once the bride and the groom are together, the bride, the matchmaker, the bride groom's friend no longer needs to be in the picture and he rejoices to see that his job is done.

Now, Jesus, of course, in that statement is the bride groom and the people who are coming to him are his bride. The church is Christ's bride. On another occasion later in Matthew chapter nine, Jesus was approached in verse fourteen by the disciples of John the Baptist who said, Why do the Pharisees fast often and your disciples do not fast? So Matthew nine, fourteen and Jesus answer in verse fifteen is, can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when

the bridegroom will be taken away from them.

Then they will fast. Now, he described the present situation, his disciples and him together there as a time when the bridegroom was with his friends. But he would be taken from them.

I'm not sure exactly how that's been understood, except that it is probable that it's like the bachelor party. Before the bridegroom actually takes his bride full on, he spends time with his friends the night before he gets married. And then, of course, he leaves them to go off to be with his bride.

Now, when Jesus left his disciples, it was when he ascended into heaven and his bride, the church came into existence and Jesus became one with the bride. The wedding takes place somewhere in association with Jesus first coming. In other words, he was on earth with his disciples.

It was like a bridegroom with his friends at the bachelor party. But shortly thereafter, namely, when Jesus ascended into heaven, it would appear he actually entered into his relations with his bride, the church. Paul says something like this in First Corinthians, chapter six.

In First Corinthians, chapter six, in verse 15 and following, it says, Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not. Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For the two, he says, shall become one flesh. But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.

In other words, the sexual union between a man and a woman described in Genesis 2, 24 as being one flesh. Is an analogy of our present relationship with Jesus Christ spiritually. We are joined to the Lord in one spirit with him.

So Paul talks about the Christian in the church as being joined to Christ in the same sense that a woman and a man are joined through sexual union. I mean, obviously, it's an analogy rather than an exact parallel. But the point is that as a man takes his wife and they become one flesh on their wedding night.

So we in becoming Christians have already become one flesh or one spirit with the Lord. So the suggestion is that the church age is the time of the of the wedding or perhaps the time of Jesus ascension and enthronement when he began his kingdom. Should be seen when the wedding took place.

Ever since then, the church has been his wife. There are, of course, variations in that imagery. In fact, in every place, in almost every place where this imagery is used, it's varied upon.

It's not always the same. For example, in those cases, I mentioned where John the Baptist spoke about Jesus as the bridegroom. We see Jesus as the groom and the church.

We Christians are the bride. Likewise, Paul gives that imagery in in Ephesians five. He says that the husband wife relationship is a picture of that between Christ and the church.

However, in this parable, which also talks about a marriage of the king's son in Matthew 21, the church is actually the guests at the wedding. And in another parable, in Matthew 25, the true church is represented as five wise bridesmaids waiting for the bridegroom to come. Now, the marriage metaphor, the marriage imagery is used a lot with reference to the church in Christ.

Although depending on the purpose of the parable or the metaphor, the church is sometimes compared differently, either with the bride herself or with the bridesmaids waiting for the bridegroom to come so they can accompany him or even with guests in the wedding. We shouldn't allow ourselves to get confused by this variation. It's just the different parables there to convey different ideas.

And those ideas are best served by changing the imagery a little bit in some cases. And so we have in this parable in Matthew 21, the church represented as guests at the wedding, whereas in other places, the church is actually the bride at the wedding. We don't need to get too concerned about that.

But the point I want to make is that the bride and the groom coming together, the wedding is associated with the first coming of Christ. Jesus says in verse I'm sorry, I've been saying twenty one. It's chapter twenty two in verse two.

He says the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged the marriage for his son. Well, Jesus had been announcing all along that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, in fact, that it had already come. It was already in their midst.

So he's talking about his own first coming and the results of it as in the analogy of a marriage. However, in this case, he's not focusing on the bride, but on the guests and the king, the father of the son. Of course, we're talking about God now sends out his messengers to invite people to the wedding.

But those who are first invited, first of all, they make excuses, lame excuses. It's not so much that they prefer sinning to come into Christ. They just prefer things ordinary like their oxen and things like that to their business and so on their farm in verses four and five.

And it would appear that this is just saying these people had a nonchalant attitude toward the wedding invitation. They chose not to come. They had things more important than that.

They weren't highly important. I mean, they're important from a worldly point of view. One's business, one's farm is his living.

But when you get an invitation to a wedding, of course, in our society, if you get a wedding invitation, you're at liberty not to come. However, if the invitation comes from a king, then it's like a command to be there. We haven't understood that very well in our culture because we don't have any kings.

We've never had a king. We don't understand that when a king says, please come, it's an ultimatum, not an invitation. You come or out.

And these people didn't take their king seriously or his son. And they insulted him by saying, well, I've got a few weeds to pull out in my garden. I need to work a little bit overtime.

I'm a little behind on my rent this month and I'm going to put in a few hours in my business extra. Tell the king that I just couldn't make it. Other things are more important than the wedding of his son.

Well, you don't tell a king that. And some of them actually got downright abusive of the messengers. This reminds us of the previous parable about the vineyard, how the owner of the vineyard sent his messengers to get the fruit and they got beat up by the tenants.

We see some of that here, too. In verse six, the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully and killed them. Now, these first persons invited to the feast clearly were the Jews.

The invitation went to the Jews first. And only secondarily to the Gentiles. And Jesus represents the Jews who heard the gospel message as being in two or three categories.

One of the categories is his servants that he sent out with the message in verse four. He sent out his servants. Those would be the prophets of the Old Testament.

It would be Jesus himself. It would be the apostles going out to their countrymen and inviting people into the kingdom of God. They were, in other words, the ones obedient to their king.

They were his servants. However, there were two other categories of Jews. There were those who were just not interested.

It says they made light of it in verse five. Now, listen, there's hardly anything more insulting to God than to make light of him. If some proud person, and God is not proud, but he certainly has every reason to expect to be honored and glorified.

But if some proud person is trying to get your hackles up and you just ignore him, it makes him more angry than if you resist him. Because you're making light of him. You're

not taking him seriously.

Now, God isn't proud. But he has reason to expect that his people will take him seriously. And even if they don't want to obey him, then they should take him seriously enough to oppose him.

But when people simply take him lightly, it's showing that they don't really credit him with very much dignity at all. And this makes him angry just about as much as the others who seized his servants and treated them spitefully and killed them. Not all the Jews did that.

Not all the Jews participated in the killing of the prophets or of the apostles, but some did. The rest, by and large, just ignored the message. They took it lightly.

It wasn't important enough for them to interrupt their ordinary lives for. And all of this made the king very angry. And in verse 7, he was furious.

And before he did anything else, he sent out his armies, burned down their city and killed them. That's what happens when you say no to a king. He invites you to his son's wedding.

It's a supreme insult to say, I have something better to do. And so the king burns down their city and kills them. By the way, there are, with reference to the subject of war, there are Christians with different attitudes on this.

Some of them hold to what's called the just war theory. They believe that a person ought to participate, even a Christian ought to participate in war if it can be identified as a just war. Now, they admit that most wars have not been just wars, but they believe that you can find biblical reasons for advocating a just war theory.

And to give you a little bit of the background of this, because you'll encounter it in many places, especially if you're the country you are a citizen of ever goes to war. There will be all kinds of discussion about the morality of war. And that would be especially the case if our shores are ever invaded.

It hasn't happened yet, but that could even happen. And so Christians need to think through the war issue. Of course, you know, I'm a pacifist.

I don't believe that Christians should participate in any war. But most Christians, most evangelicals who do believe in fighting in war, of course, they wouldn't say you should fight in every war. You shouldn't fight in an evil war.

For example, if you're a Christian in Germany under the Third Reich, they don't believe the Christians should have fought on the side of Hitler against us, for example. Because they say Hitler didn't have just cause. He was a tyrant.

He was an aggressor. And in a case like that, Christians should not participate in war. It's an immoral enterprise and Christians shouldn't participate in an immoral enterprise.

But they say that some wars are moral. Some wars our country may have a just cause for participating in. And if so, we should be involved.

We should support it and we should do so with our own bodies and so forth. Now, this is morally supported on the basis of the fact that capital punishment is OK. Now, of course, there are Christians who don't believe in capital punishment either.

We've talked about that on other occasions. We won't take the time to justify it right now. But I believe the Bible, both old and new, indicate that capital punishment is morally OK.

It's almost the only thing that is the moral thing to do in cases of persons doing certain violent crimes. They should be put to death according to the Old and the New Testament. Now, because capital punishment is generally acknowledged by Christians to be all right and morally right, they try to extrapolate from that to war and say, well, certain kinds of wars are nothing more than capital punishment extended to a national scale.

And therefore, the morality of these wars would be the same as the morality of capital punishment. But how do you make war out to be the moral equivalent of capital punishment? I mean, think about it. Capital punishment moves on the assumption that certain things that people do are so criminal, so damaging, so evil that God has ordained that people should be put to death when they do those things.

Therefore, the person who is put to death through capital punishment suffers as an act of justice against himself. He has done a crime worthy of death. When the state puts him to death, justice has been served.

In order for war to resemble that morally, then you would have to have a situation where a war only punishes people who have done things worthy of death. Therefore, there have been from the time of Plato on, and by the way, the just war theory didn't start within Christian church. It started in pre-Christian times when Plato and other Greek philosophers came up with these ideas that a just war theory holds that a just war would have to fit certain criteria.

Among them would be that non-combatants are never killed. And the war cannot be a war of aggression. That is to say, if your country is the aggressive nation going against someone else, you do not have just cause and you shouldn't go.

On the other hand, if it's a defensive war and you've been attacked, then it's just and righteous for you to defend yourself. And these are the criteria that they come up with. A lot of different criteria for the just war theory.



We can't go through them all now. The interesting thing is that Christians picked this up almost out of whole cloth from the pagan philosophers. St. Augustine brought it into the church.

Prior to his time, all Christians were pacifists. But St. Augustine brought the Plato philosophy into the church, the Greek philosophy of this and other things into the church and sort of dressed them up in Christian language and tried to baptize them as Christian doctrine. And since Augustine, who is regarded to be one of the most influential theologians in all of history, who is revered by both Roman Catholics and Protestants alike as the father of modern theology, the idea of just war participation by Christians became normative in the church from about the year 400 on.

Now, after Augustine, there was Thomas Aquinas, a much later Christian philosopher, Roman Catholic, who developed these just war theories even further. And nowadays, most Christians just take them for granted that if a war is just, you should fight in it. But the Christians have always tried to find some biblical basis for this just war theory.

But it isn't to be found. They point out, well, God told the Jews to fight in wars in the Old Testament. Well, that's true.

That's true. He did. But none of the wars in the Old Testament were just wars by the criteria of Plato.

God told them to go and exterminate women and children in Canaan. That doesn't fit the just war guidelines. And the wars to conquer Canaan were wars of aggression.

They weren't defensive wars on the part of the Jews. They were wars of aggression. They don't fit the just war guidelines.

In fact, God gave certain criteria for behavior in wartime in Deuteronomy chapter 20 at some length. And in that place, he does not describe what we call a just war. He describes wars of aggression.

He tells the Jews they can require the city that they come against to surrender. And if they don't, they have to kill every male in the city. This is not with reference to Canaanites, but other wars the Jews may have been in.

Things that don't agree with the just war guidelines. And then even in the New Testament, we have Jesus here representing God as a king, who, when his subjects don't come to his wedding, he sends out his armies and kills them all. Now, no just war theorist of Christian circles would say that is justice.

In fact, I've read about half a dozen books by people who are Christians who advocate the just war theory. And they almost always say, well, Christians are not supposed to endure tyranny. A tyrant is to be opposed, even militarily, if necessary.

Well, according to the definition of tyranny, this king is a tyrant here. He invites people to his son's wedding. People thumb their nose at him.

He goes out and wipes them out and burns down their city and kills them all. That, by any modern standard, would be called tyranny. Now, I don't raise that as an objection to God's behavior, because God is the autocrat of them all.

He is the one who answers to none. He's the supreme and ultimate sovereign. And he has the right to be obeyed and he has the right to punish anyone who doesn't obey him.

But the point I'm making here is that Jesus represents God as a king who has the right to wipe out murder, not murder, but slaughter his subjects if they don't please him. God actually does have that right, although he's very merciful and he's not one who enjoys the death of sinners at all. But what I'm saying is this does not represent God as an advocate of just war guidelines.

When God declares war, it's all out. But you see, when God declares war, it's always just in this respect, that God doesn't declare war against any people except those who deserve to die. The problem with modern wars is the only way we determine who deserves to die is by the question of whether they're our political enemies or not.

In which case, for instance, in World War II, if the Germans are our political enemies, then all the people of Dresden deserve to die. So we firebomb the whole city and wipe out the whole population in a gruesome massacre. In a war where Japan is our enemy, we can go bomb Hiroshima with a nuclear bomb, wipe out millions of people who are non-combatants.

This is not just war behavior. But we have defined enemies in terms of those who define themselves as our enemies. They fired the first shot, they drew first blood, now we can retaliate with any force we want.

That's not the way that we should, as Christians, be determining whether we should participate in war or not. The only war that a Christian should participate in is one that God authorizes. That's the only ones the Jews were allowed to participate in.

The Jews didn't go out and fight wars whenever they had a hankering to do it. They didn't even have authorization to fight wars on occasions when they were under attack, necessarily. In Jeremiah, we read that the Babylonians were at the gate, and Jeremiah was saying, Don't fight them, surrender.

God says if you fight them, you'll lose. If you surrender, you'll live. So the question has got to be, the question is not, are we under attack? The question is, is there any word from the Lord? Is fighting in this war something God wants us to do or not? Fortunately, we have God's final word about all such matters in His Son, Jesus Christ.

He spoke in times past in diverse manners through the prophets to our fathers, but in His last days, He's spoken through His Son. And Jesus has made it very clear, it seems to me, that fighting in war is not going to be the will of God for any of His disciples forever after His pronouncements in the Sermon on the Mount about loving your enemies and doing good to those who persecute you and don't resist the evil man in those ways. Anyway, what I'm saying to you is that this is another case that shows the bankruptcy of the just war theory, which is an attempt to wed human philosophy with Christianity.

And by the way, the vast majority of Christians that you'll talk to do subscribe to the just war theory today. But face them with something like this. Here's a case where Jesus is describing God's own behavior, and He's like a king who wipes out His citizens for no better reason but they refused His wedding invitation.

Most people in a like situation today would call that tyranny. America was founded by a revolt against less tyranny than that. I don't read anything in history that the king of England, prior to the declaration of independence in this country, that the king of England was wiping out whole cities just because they didn't come to feast that he wanted to have.

I guess it should raise questions in the minds of those who think that the just war theory has a biblical basis. I don't see it at all. Obviously, there's a totally different kind of warfare we're called to be in.

So, in the first seven verses, we have the invitation goes out to the first group of people, they represent the Jews. They reject the invitation, the king's angry with them, burns up their city, wipes them out. We know when that happens.

Verse 8 then begins the second part of the parable. Then he said to his servants, the wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore, go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite them to the wedding.

So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together, all whom they found, both bad and good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. Well, after the first ones invited are excluded, those who were not within the domain of the king are invited. Go out to the highways, those international routes where travelers are out and just say, listen, you want a feast? There's a king over here who's got a feast going, you're welcome to come in.

You can participate in it even though you were not his subjects. And this represents, obviously, the gospel going out to the Gentiles, those who were not God's people formerly. He says, okay, my people wouldn't come, I'll bring in the ones who will, the Gentiles.

And the feast was furnished with guests, filled with guests, because great numbers of

Gentiles came in. Verses 8 through 10 represent the missionary call to the Gentiles and the influx of Gentiles into the church during the present age. Then we have verse 11, beginning the third part of the parable.

But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, bind him hand and foot and take him away and cast him into outer darkness.

There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for many are called, but few are chosen. Now, this third part has to do with a day of cleansing or reckoning with those who have responded to the invitation. Now, this either refers to an ongoing thing that goes on throughout the church age, or more likely, it refers to what's going to happen when Jesus returns.

When Jesus returns, that's the king coming to see his guests, he comes to see what he's got there. His servants have gone out and invited wholesale anybody they could find to come into the feast, and there's been a great in-gathering. But not all of the people who have responded overtly or outwardly have really the qualifications to participate.

Now, this suggests that through the missionary call of the church, through the evangelistic efforts of the believers, there will be a great number of people brought into the church who don't really belong there. At least some will be. It doesn't really suggest how many there were.

There's only one man representing that class in this parable. But there will be some, at least, who have come into the church who really, in the final analysis, will not be recognized by the king when he comes as belonging there. They'll be thrown out into outer darkness, he says in verse 14, because many are called and few are chosen.

That means that through the missionary call of the church in these 2,000 years, many people have been called in and have come in, but not all of them are elect. Not all of them are the chosen ones. Now, the difference between the chosen and the called in this particular parable is represented by the lack of a wedding garment, in the case of one who was called but not chosen.

There's been much speculation about the wedding garment. It seems obvious that when you come to a king's son's wedding, you don't just come in your Levi's. Now, I go to weddings in my Levi's, but I've never gone to the wedding of a prince before, and I seriously doubt that I wear my Levi's if I was invited to the wedding of somebody as important as a king or a king's son.

Furthermore, since most citizens wouldn't have the kind of money to buy the kind of garments, because in biblical times, garments were one of the most expensive

commodities a person could have. In fact, many times, instead of currency, people would barter with garments, because a garment was worth a great deal. If a person had two or three changes of garments in his entire wardrobe, he was a rich man.

Therefore, you would not expect the average citizen to go out and buy a garment just for this occasion that was fit for a king's wedding. For one thing, they probably couldn't just go out and buy an ordinary garment any time they wanted to, much less one of the quality they would need to go to the king's wedding. And it is said that in those days, on an occasion like this, the king himself would provide the garments for the guests.

Any guest who came would be entitled to a garment. He would be provided with a garment. As he approached the festivities, he would go to the king's clothiers first, and they'd fit him out with proper garments, because the average person couldn't afford to buy them himself.

Now, I don't know to what degree this comment I've just made is based on historical information and how much on assumption. Commentators have made this statement before, and I don't know how much they know about the situation, or whether it's just reasoning that this must have been the case. In any case, this is what is generally believed to be the case with this story, that these people, they were fitted out with appropriate garments for the wedding by the king himself, which means that for there to be a person present who didn't have one left him excuseless.

He had as much access to an appropriate wedding garment as anybody else did. He just didn't bother to get one. And the fact that he didn't bother to get one is an evidence that he was a little bit like some of those people who were first invited.

He took it lightly. He didn't think it was all that important. He didn't seek to honor the king with the right kind of apparel.

And it must have also meant that he felt that his own clothing was quite good enough. The king should accept it. Even though it was quite clear that everybody was expected to be in a certain kind of apparel, and everybody else was wearing it, this guy just felt like, my clothes are good enough.

Who cares? You know, the king just ought to accept me the way I am. But when the king confronted him, obviously the guy had no excuse. He was speechless.

Now, what does the wedding garment represent? Well, there's many things in the Bible that may help us answer that question. Probably the one most directly applying to the situation would be in Revelation 19, which is where an announcement is made about the wedding supper of the Lamb. And it says in Revelation 19, 7 through 9, Let us be glad and rejoice and give him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his wife has made herself ready.

And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, Write, Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true sayings of God.

Now, we don't have exactly a parallel here between this passage in Revelation and the present parable we're considering. Because what Revelation talks about is not the guest's garments, but the bride's garments. The bride is given the garment of white linen to wear.

Whereas in the parable we're considering in Matthew 22, it's the guest's garments that are at issue. However, the guests in the parable are the church, and the bride in Revelation is also the church. Therefore, I think it's fair enough to assume that the bride's garment is parallel in meaning to the guest's garment in the parable.

And we are told here that the fine linen, clean and white, which was given to the bride to wear, are the righteous deeds, the righteous acts of the saints. In other words, righteous behavior, good behavior, good works, a good life. Now, this idea of being clothed with good works or clothed with a good life is found also in Paul's writings, as you must be familiar by now from Ephesians and Colossians, where Paul talks about putting off the old man and putting on the new man.

As if a certain kind of behavior was our former clothing, then we take that off and we put on a new kind of clothing, which are righteous deeds, the new man. We don't have time to look at Paul's treatment of that. It should be fairly fresh in your minds, having studied recently Ephesians and Colossians.

But we know the language. The language of Paul is that we put off the old man and his deeds, and we put on the new man and his deeds. And therefore, the clothing that we want to be found in when we stand before God is the righteous deeds of the saints, which are provided by God himself.

It's not our own works, although we are the ones who perform the works. The works are actually prepared, ready for us, just like the garments were provided by the king to his guests, or the bride's garment is given to her in Revelation 19. She doesn't buy it, she doesn't earn it, she doesn't make it.

It's given to her, but she has to wear it. She doesn't provide it for herself, but she has to wear it. Likewise, we don't provide our own righteousness, but we have to wear it.

We work out our salvation, it's God who works in us to will and to do His good pleasure. God does the work on the heart, but we have to live it out. We have to live the good works that He foreordained that we should walk in.

That's what it says in Ephesians 2 and verse 10, that we are His workmanship, created in

Christ Jesus for good works that He has foreordained that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2, 10. So good works, or a righteous life, would appear to be the best answer to what the wedding garments are in the parable.

It certainly is what the wedding garment of the bride is in Revelation, and as I say, I think there's a parallel here. So here we have a case where a number of people have responded to the gospel invitation. They've come in, but a day of reckoning comes.

I take this to be representative of the second coming of Christ, the day of judgment. And then these guests are examined to see what they're wearing. And some of them are wearing good works.

Others are not wearing good works. They've come with their own works. They are not provided with the righteousness of Christ, nor have they lived out lives that reflect possession of the righteousness of Christ.

They've come and done their own thing, basically, and rejected that which the king required and provided for them. And that's what this guest represents. And therefore, though many people are called to the wedding, and many of them participate in the service of the church, only a few, relatively few, Jesus said, are chosen or elect.

The elect are known by their work, or in the parable, by what they're wearing. So on the day of judgment, a person's works will be examined. Jesus said that in a great number of places.

Back in Matthew chapter 16, for example, it says in verse 27, For the Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he will reward each according to his works. Matthew 16, 27. In the parable of the sheep and the goats, in Matthew 25, beginning at verse 31.

Matthew 25, 31, through the end of that chapter. And you know the story. The sheep are separated from the goats, and the sheep are commended for what? What they did.

And the goats are condemned for what? What they didn't do, or what they failed to do. The righteous deeds of the saints classify one group as sheep. The lack of those righteous deeds, the lack of that wedding garment, classifies them as goats.

So it would appear that the best understanding of this part of the parable is that on the day of judgment, God sorts out among the guests and says, Now this person doesn't deserve to be here. This person has not attired himself properly. Now I realize that our salvation is by grace, and I have to make this point all the time.

Whenever we talk about good works, there's always the danger someone's going to think we're talking about salvation by works. We don't believe in salvation as a result or product of works, but we do believe that good works are necessary to the Christian life,

but they are provided by God. God has foreordained that we should walk in them, and he has created us in Christ Jesus unto them.

And he has purified for himself a people zealous for good works, it says in Titus. So the good works that we perform are not really our own. We wear the garment, but God provides it.

That's why Jesus said, Let your light so shine before men that men may see your good works and glorify your Father. They don't glorify you. They glorify your Father.

Why? Because the good works are not really your own. If somebody compliments you on your clothing, and says, well, that's a beautiful dress you're wearing, or that's a wonderful piece of jewelry you're wearing. Well, in one sense, they're complimenting your taste because you chose to wear it or to buy it.

But obviously, the real compliment goes to the manufacturer or the designer. And if you live out your good works to be seen by men, as Jesus said, Let your light so shine before men that men may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. That's Matthew 5.16. It's obvious that to see your good works, to see what you're wearing, is ultimately to bring glory to him who designed and provided you with those good works.

Your Father, which is in heaven. So that's the parable. There's three parts.

The first part tells about the Jews rejecting the gospel and God's punishment of them for that. The second part talks about the church age in which Gentiles in large numbers are brought in and the wedding is full of guests. And then the third part is about the judgment, where not all the guests are allowed to stay.

Not all the guests are acknowledged as being worthy to be part of that. Some are shown to be chosen and others are shown not to be chosen, even though both categories have been called and have come in. Okay? Very interesting parable.

Now, let's go on to the next section here of Matthew 22, verses 15 through 22. Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God in truth.

Nor do you care about anyone, and you do not regard the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what do you think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness and said, Why do you test me, you hypocrite? Show me the tax money. So they brought him a denarius, and he said to them, Whose image and inscription is on this, or is this? And they said to him, Caesar's.

And he said to them, Render, therefore, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. When they had heard these words, they marveled and left



him and went their way. Now, this is the first of a series of confrontations that Jesus has with different religious persons who are trying to trap Jesus.

Jesus had enemies of various kinds. The Pharisees hated him for one reason. The chief priests hated him for another.

The Sadducees disagreed with him on another point. The Herodians, generally speaking, disagreed with him because they were loyal to Herod, and Jesus obviously wasn't. Jesus even called Herod that fox and showed contempt for Herod.

Different people had different reasons for objecting to Jesus, but they were all beginning to gang up on him here. Jesus first is confronted by this group of Pharisees and Herodians. Now, this mixture is a rather strange mix.

It's like oil and water because, generally speaking, the Pharisees and the Herodians were adversaries of each other. The Pharisees resented the Roman presence, the Roman rule over their people, and they were very nationalistic and very much non-compromised in most respects with Rome. The Pharisees didn't go as far as the Zealots did, generally speaking, in rejecting Roman rule, but they didn't like it at all.

They objected to it. Now, the Sadducees, on the other hand, and the Herodians were complicit with the Romans. They went along with the Romans.

The Sadducees were more politically willing to compromise for positions of power, and that's why many of them were positioned in the priesthood by the Roman authority. And the Herodians had gone so far as to become servants of Herod, a Roman appointee. Herod was a Roman ruler, ethnarch or tetrarch, who had been set up by the Roman authority over the Jews.

And the Herodians were those servants of Herod's who obviously were agreeable with him. Therefore, the Pharisees and the Herodians were of two very different political parties. But they both objected to Jesus, and therefore they decided to join forces against him.

And the particular question that this combined attack presented to him was one where if he sided with the Pharisees and their view on the subject, he would get in trouble with the Herodians. And if he sided with the Herodians in their view of the subject, he'd get in trouble with the Pharisees and those that were like them. The issue had to do with paying taxes to Caesar.

If Jesus said yes, the Pharisees and people like that, and most Jews really, he would have fallen out of favor with them. If he said no, then the Romans and the Herodians who were on their side would be able to bring a case against him. So here is the trap that they've laid.

These two parties that are not friendly with each other at all decide that they can join ranks to try to get rid of this troublemaker. Now, it's interesting also that it says the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle him in his talk, and they sent him their disciples. The Pharisees, we don't know which generation of Pharisees we're talking about here, but these junior disciples of the Pharisees, maybe they weren't full Pharisees yet, or they were in training to be Pharisees.

But it's interesting, while the Pharisees had locked horns with Jesus on many occasions throughout his ministry, in synagogues and other places, even in feasts at their own homes where they had Jesus, and they had confronted him and resisted him to his faith, I guess they figured that in order to make this look good and make it look like their motives were pure, they couldn't confront him themselves because he'd be suspicious. So they sent some younger disciples of theirs and told them what to say. But presumably they sent some of their disciples so that Jesus wouldn't recognize them as belonging to the Pharisees.

After all, if Jesus recognized the ones asking him as those who were his enemies, he would suspect a trap. And what it says they wanted to do is entangle him. In verse 15, the word entangle is a word that refers to trapping an animal.

They wanted to trap him. They wanted to fool him. And you can see from verse 16 how they came with flatteries, knowing as we do what their actual intention was.

Their flatteries are so foul and offensive to us that it's obvious that it would have turned Jesus off and did turn him off because he saw their hypocrisy in it. But they must have hoped that he might believe them to be true men in their flatteries. Everything they said about him is true.

They said that he is true. That's truth. That he teaches the way of God in truth, that's...