

The Elements of a Great Party

Isaiah 25:6-8 HCSB The LORD of Hosts will prepare a feast for all the peoples on this mountain--a feast of aged wine, choice meat, finely aged wine. (7) On this mountain *He* will destroy the *burial* shroud, the shroud over all the peoples, the sheet covering all the nations; (8) He will destroy death forever. The Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from every face and remove His people's disgrace from the whole earth, for the LORD has spoken.

Introduction

We are here tonight to celebrate God's greatest gift of love – His Only Begotten Son. In the Son we are offered the gift of salvation from our sins. We are offered freedom from guilt, freedom from having to earn our way into heaven, freedom from the power of sin, and freedom from a fear of death.

On several occasions the Bible discusses God invitation to salvation in terms of a great feast.

- Matthew 22:1-14 (HCSB) 1 Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables: 2 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. 3 He sent out his slaves to summon those invited to the banquet, but they didn't want to come. 4 Again, he sent out other slaves, and said, 'Tell those who are invited, "Look, I've prepared my dinner; my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet."' 5 "But they paid no attention and went away, one to his own farm, another to his business. 6 And the others seized his slaves, treated them outrageously and killed them. 7 The king was enraged, so he sent out his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned down their city. 8 "Then he told his slaves, 'The banquet is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 9 Therefore, go to where the roads exit the city and invite everyone you find to the banquet.' 10 So those slaves went out on the roads and gathered everyone they found, both evil and good. The wedding banquet was filled with guests.

In Matthew 22:1-14 the Lord God is described as sending out slaves with invitations to a feast for His Son. Not only were the invitations rejected, but the slaves were seized, outrageously mistreated and killed. After killing those who rejected His Son and mistreated His servants, He sent another invitation to the "low-lives." If you are unclear as to who that is – that's us Gentiles. The ones He invited first were the Jews. But One way or the other, God saw to it that His banquet hall was filled to the brim for His Son's party.

- Luke 14:15-24 (HCSB) 15 When one of those who reclined at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, "Blessed is the one who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" 16 Then He told him: "A man was giving a large banquet and invited many. 17 At the time of the banquet, he sent his slave to tell those who were invited, 'Come, because everything is now ready.' 18 "But without exception they all began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. I ask you to excuse me.' 19 "Another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm going to try them out. I ask you to excuse me.' 20 And another said, 'I just got married, and therefore I'm unable to come.' 21 "So the slave came back and reported these things to his master. Then in anger, the master of the house told his slave, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the city, and bring in here the poor, maimed, blind, and lame!' 22 " 'Master,' the slave said, 'what you ordered has been done, and there's still room.' 23 "Then the master told the slave, 'Go out into the highways and lanes and make them come in, so that my house may be filled. 24 For I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will enjoy my banquet!'"

In Luke 14:15-24 Jesus again described salvation as a great feast. In this one, the invitation was refused with various ridiculous excuses. Who buys a field before seeing it? Who invests in five yoke of oxen without first trying them out? Since when is a recent marriage an adequate reason to not party? Don't we usually use weddings as an excuse TO party?

But once again, God reacted by extending His invitation to the poor, maimed, blind and lame. Apparently He considers no one untouchable. No one is too low on the social totem pole to neglect inviting. I am particularly appreciative of the invitation to the lame!

- Isaiah 25:6-8 (HCSB) The Lord of Hosts will prepare a feast for all the peoples on this mountain – a feast of aged wine, choice meat, finely aged wine. On this mountain He will destroy the burial shroud, the shroud over all the peoples, the sheet covering all the nations; He will destroy death forever. The Lord God will wipe away the tears from every face and remove His people's disgrace.

Isaiah prophetically speaks of Jesus' arrival on earth and the subsequent invitation to enter God's kingdom feast. Let's take a quick look at the elements of a great party.

1. The Feast

A. Wine - God provides the delicious and intoxicating wine of perfect peace, deep joy and steadfast hope. Jesus referred elsewhere¹ to salvation as a new wine that will burst any old conventional container. Those of us who have accepted Christ as our Savior can attest to the salvation message bubbling up inside so that we cannot contain it. We must share the joy with those around us. By the way, the context of that parable was again a party! No wonder the Pharisees accused Jesus of being a glutton and a drunkard!²

B. Meat - He offers the sustaining meat of:

- Justification – which means having our sin account paid off.
- Adoption – which means we have the opportunity to actually become a part of the family.
- Eternal love – which means that once we are part of His family, He will never reject us.
- Union with Christ – which means we can have an intimate, passionate relationship with the Lord of lords and King of kings.
- Resurrection – which means we have hope of life after death.
- Eternal life – which means we have the peace of mind, knowing that God will never renege on His promise of salvation. The sealing of the Holy Spirit assures us of our salvation.

2. The banquet hall

- Isaiah 25:7 (HCSB) On this mountain He will destroy the burial shroud, the shroud over all the peoples, the sheet covering all the nations; He will destroy death forever.

The mountain Isaiah is prophetically referring to is Mount Calvary, sometimes called Golgotha. That is the mountain upon which Jesus suffered and died in order to pay for the penalty of our sins. It is there that Jesus gained the victory for us. It is there that by subjecting Himself in obedience, even to the point of dying on a criminal's cross that He gained the right to be referred to as "King of kings and Lord of lords."³

In the book of Revelation, chapter 21 we are told that when Jesus finally gains the ascendancy His bride will come to Him and at that point the New Jerusalem will descend from heaven and take its place on Mount Zion. I believe that that will be the location of the

¹ Matthew 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37-39

² Matthew 11:18-19; Luke 7:33-34

³ Philipians 2:5-11

great banquet hall where we will celebrate the coronation of the child whose birth we celebrate tonight.

3. The host

The Lord Himself prepares the feast, and He provides us with the garments of righteousness.

Job made the mistake of thinking that he could dress himself.

- Job 29:14 (HCSB) I clothed myself in righteousness, and it enveloped me; my just decisions were like a robe and a turban.

It wasn't until he came face to face with the Lord of the Feast that he realized how inadequate his righteousness was. As Isaiah put it...

- Isaiah 64:6 (HCSB) All of us have become like something unclean, and all our righteous acts are like a polluted garment; all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities carry us away like the wind.

We need the Lord to not only feed us, prepare the hall for us but also to give us the appropriate clothes! To come to His party dressed according to what WE believe is appropriate is to invite dire consequences!

- Matthew 22:11-14 (HCSB) **But when the king came in to view the guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed for a wedding. 12 So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless. 13 "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him up hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'** 14 "For many are invited, but few are chosen."

4. The guests

All people are invited. No one is excluded by God. If they are left outside in the darkness it is because they have excluded themselves by either their outright rebellion as we saw in Matthew or by their apathy as we saw in Luke.

- John 6:37 The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.

Many odd people will attend this great feast – people you or I may never expect to be there. But the door is never closed in the face of anyone who wishes to enter.