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**Wedding - The
Wedding Garment
Was Never About
Good Behavior**



By Dan Maines

The Wedding Garment Was Never About Good Behavior

Introduction

† Jesus' parable of the wedding feast has often been taught as though the wedding garment represented our personal goodness or moral performance. But that's not what the Scriptures reveal. The garment represented the righteousness God Himself provided under the New Covenant, not something man could produce by his own efforts. When we compare Scripture with Scripture, the imagery becomes remarkably clear.

Matthew 22:1-10

Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who held a wedding feast for his son. And he sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. Again he sent other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened cattle are all butchered and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast!"' But they paid no attention and went their separate ways, one to his own farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his slaves and treated them abusively, and then killed them. Now the king was angry, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. So go to the main roads, and invite whomever you find there to the wedding feast.' Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests.

† Jesus wasn't describing the end of the physical world. He was describing the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant Kingdom. (Hebrews 8:13)

† Those first invited represented covenant Israel, who rejected both the prophets and ultimately God's Son. (Matthew 23:29-39)

† Verse 7 is one of Jesus' clearest prophecies of Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70. The King's armies destroyed their city exactly as Jesus foretold. (Luke 21:20-22)

† Only after Israel rejected the invitation did the call go out to all nations, fulfilling God's promise to bless the Gentiles through Christ. (Isaiah 49:6; Acts 13:46-48)

Matthew 22:11-13

"But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' And the man was speechless. Then the king said to

the servants, 'Tie his hands and feet, and throw him into the outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth in that place.'

† The issue was never that the man failed to behave well enough. The king immediately noticed that he had rejected the garment prepared for the occasion. (Isaiah 61:10; Romans 3:22)

† The man's silence showed he had no defense. He couldn't claim ignorance because the garment had been made available to every invited guest. (Matthew 22:8-10)

† This parable isn't teaching salvation by works. It teaches that entrance into God's Kingdom required accepting the righteousness God provided through Christ rather than trusting in one's own standing under the Old Covenant. (Philippians 3:8-9; Galatians 2:16)

† The wedding feast wasn't describing heaven thousands of years later. Throughout Scripture, God portrayed His covenant relationship with His people as a marriage. Jesus announced that the promised Messianic wedding had arrived through Him. (Isaiah 54:5; Hosea 2:19-20; Ephesians 5:25-32)

† The outer darkness represented exclusion from the blessings of Christ's New Covenant Kingdom. Those who rejected the Messiah remained outside while the Kingdom was taken from them and given to a people producing its fruit. (Matthew 8:11-12; Matthew 21:43)

Isaiah 61:10

I will rejoice greatly in the LORD,
My soul will be joyful in my God;
For He has clothed me with garments of salvation,
He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness,
As a groom puts on a turban,
And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

† Long before Jesus told this parable, Isaiah identified the garment as something God Himself provides.

† The robe wasn't earned, it was given. God's righteousness has always been His gift, never man's achievement. (Romans

4:5-8)

† Jesus drew directly from this prophetic picture so His Jewish audience would recognize that the promised salvation had arrived in Him. (Luke 4:17-21)

Zechariah 3:1-5

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right to accuse him. And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a log snatched from the fire?" Now Joshua was clothed in filthy garments and was standing before the angel. And he responded and said to those who were standing before him, saying, "Remove the filthy garments from him." Again he said to him, "See, I have taken your guilt away from you and will clothe you with festive robes." Then I said, "Have them put a clean headband on his head." So they put the clean headband on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of the LORD was standing by.

† Joshua stood before God in filthy garments that represented uncleanness and guilt.

† God didn't tell Joshua to clean himself. God removed the filthy garments and clothed him with clean garments.

† This beautiful picture foreshadowed the righteousness God would later provide through Christ rather than through the works of the Law.

Isaiah 64:6

For all of us have become like one who is unclean,
And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;
And all of us wither like a leaf,
And our wrongdoings, like the wind, take us away.

† Our own righteousness could never make us acceptable before God.

† Isaiah contrasts man's polluted garments with the robe of righteousness God provides. (Isaiah 61:10)

† The wedding garment was never something man could weave

for himself. It had to come from the King.

Romans 3:21-22

But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, but it is the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction,

† Paul declares that God's righteousness is apart from the Law.

† The wedding garment points to this very righteousness that comes through faith in Christ rather than through covenant law keeping.

† Those who attempted to appear before God clothed in their own righteousness were rejecting the garment God had graciously provided. (Romans 10:3-4)

Philippians 3:8-9

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them mere rubbish, so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,

† Paul abandoned confidence in his covenant status under the Law.

† He desired only the righteousness that comes from God through Christ.

† This perfectly explains the man without the wedding garment. He attempted to stand before the King clothed in something other than God's provision.

Romans 10:1-4

Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the

righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

† Paul describes the very attitude Jesus exposed in the wedding garment parable.

† Israel attempted to establish its own righteousness instead of accepting the righteousness God provided through Christ.

† The man without the wedding garment pictures this covenant reality. He stood before the King clothed in his own righteousness instead of God's.

Galatians 3:26-27

For you are all sons and daughters of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

† Paul uses clothing language to describe salvation.

† Believers don't merely imitate Christ, they are clothed with Him.

† This perfectly explains the wedding garment. The garment ultimately points to being found in Christ Himself. (Romans 13:14)

Revelation 19:7-8

Let's rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has prepared herself." It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

† Even here the clothing is first described as something that was given to the bride.

† The righteous acts flow from those who have already been clothed by God's grace.

† The marriage imagery reaches its fulfillment in Christ and His covenant people, showing the complete transition from the Old Covenant to the New. (Ephesians 5:25-27; Hebrews 8:13)

Historical References

† Isaiah established the prophetic imagery of God clothing His people with garments of salvation centuries before Christ.

(Isaiah 61:10)

† Jewish wedding customs commonly included garments supplied by the host for honored guests, making Jesus' illustration immediately understandable to His audience.

† The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 marked the complete removal of the Old Covenant system, leaving only the righteousness found in Christ for entrance into God's everlasting Kingdom. (Hebrews 8:13; Matthew 22:7)

† Isaiah, Zechariah, and the prophets consistently used garments to symbolize righteousness, cleansing, and covenant acceptance, preparing Israel to understand Jesus' parable.

† The marriage feast imagery fulfilled centuries of prophetic promises that God would establish an everlasting covenant with His people through the Messiah. (Isaiah 54:5; Hosea 2:19-20)

How It Applies To Us Today

† Our confidence isn't found in personal merit but in the righteousness God has provided through Christ.

† We don't attempt to improve our standing before God through religious performance because we've already been clothed with His righteousness.

† Every believer can rest in the finished work of Christ, knowing that acceptance before God has always depended upon His provision, never our perfection.

Q & A Appendix

Q: What did the wedding garment represent?

A: It represented the righteousness God provides through Christ, not human goodness or works. (Isaiah 61:10; Romans 3:21-22; Philippians 3:8-9)

Q: Why was the man cast out?

A: Because he rejected God's provision and attempted to stand before the King without the righteousness God supplied. (Matthew 22:11-13; Romans 10:3-4)

Q: Does this parable teach salvation by works?

A: No. It teaches that God's righteousness is received through faith in Christ rather than through the works of the Law.

(Romans 3:21-22; Galatians 2:16)

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Matthew 22:11-13, Isaiah 61:10, Romans 3:21-22, Philippians 3:8-9, Revelation 19:7-8

† Isaiah, Matthew, Paul the Apostle, John the Apostle, First-century Jewish wedding customs

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