

## Speechless – Now or at the Judgment?

Matthew 22:1-14

By Randy Wages

1/16/11

Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

### I. Introduction:

The inspiration for today's message began with my reading of an excellent bulletin article recently written by a dear friend of ours, Pastor Gary Shepard. The title of the article was "And he was speechless." This is a direct quote from our Lord found in Matthew 22 as he related the Parable of the Marriage Feast. It describes the response of a character in the parable, a man, who was asked why he came to the wedding, not having a wedding garment. And in verse 12, we read, "And he was speechless."

As the article set forth, and as was further impressed upon me in my subsequent study of this parable, it is a scriptural truth that sooner or later, all shall be brought to that position – of standing before God speechless. That's not in question. But here is an important question– Will you stand speechless before God now or at the judgment? That's the title of this message: "Speechless – Now or at the Judgment."

So today we will consider The Parable of the Marriage Feast as recorded for us in Matthew 22, verses 1-14, where we read...

### II. Matthew 22:1-2: *"And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, <sup>2</sup>The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,..."*

A. Notice that Christ makes it clear from the beginning that this parable (an earthly story that teaches a spiritual lesson) pertains to the kingdom of heaven –the eternal kingdom of heaven which saved sinners shall inherit and inhabit due to their union with Christ, a union that the scripture likens to a marriage union between Christ, the bridegroom, and His bride, the church. In Rev. 19:7 John writes of the voice he heard that was saying, *"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.* This speaking of Christ, the "Lamb of God" as John the Baptist described Him, who would offer Himself as the perfect, unblemished sacrificial Lamb to die to pay the sin debt owed to God's justice on behalf of all those given to Him by the Father – those made one with Him by God's electing grace. And then John writes further in verse 9, *"And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."*

- B. So with that, we know what is being represented in the parable. We know that the king in the parable is God the Father which made a marriage for His Son – the Lord Jesus Christ.
- C. And notice from verse 2 that it was a marriage made “for His son.” That’s what salvation is all about – God making a marriage for His Son whereby He is honored and has all of the preeminence. All things, including the eternal salvation of sinners, are to honor Him.

Continuing now in verse 3 we read...

III. Matthew 22:3: “***And <the king> sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.***”

- A. Now his “servants” refers to prophets or preachers who issue forth the general call of the Gospel – the Gospel that is to be preached to every creature as Christ so commanded. But notice at the end of verse 3, we see that the problem lies not in any deficiency in the general call or command to sinners to believe, but in the truth that “they would not come!”
- B. Who is invited to come? In Rev. 22:17 we read, “***And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.***”
- C. Recall that our Lord said in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:6: “***Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.***”
- D. So what is the problem? By nature none of us will come. By nature we are not thirsty for this water of life. We do not naturally hunger and thirst after righteousness.

IV. Matthew 22:4: Continuing with the parable back in Matt. 22:4 we read, “***Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.***”

- A. As I’ve suggested, on this side of the cross, it can be said that all without exception, both Jew and Gentile are among those invited, called here the “bidden” ones, but in the context of this parable, this more specifically is what God in Isa. 48:12 refers to as “Israel my called.” The nation Israel, unlike any other nation, was uniquely given the Gospel in the law and the prophets and Christ initially came unto them with the Gospel. The Gospel...
- B. ...that declares that everything they needed was provided. The blood has been shed, “all things are ready.” This is akin to Christ on the cross saying “It is finished.” I read where in that day, it was customary for even the garment they would wear at the wedding to be provided for them and so it would be quite an insult to come and try to bring your own or provide anything to contribute to the feast of the king. One didn’t dare to add anything to the king’s provision! Think on that – how by nature we all look to something we might offer as if the most precious blood of the Lamb of God was insufficient. No – all things are ready.

C. The gospel sets forth all that God requires and all that we need – and it declares that it has already been bought, paid for, provided and freely given in Christ. So they are commanded to come to this marriage; but notice their response in verses 5 and 6...

V. Matthew 22:5-6: ***“But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: <sup>6</sup>And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.”***

Here we have set forth 2 ways in which Christ and His gospel are rejected:

A. ***“they made light of it.”*** This would represent those who simply “don’t see the big deal” with the distinctions of the gospel from the way of salvation that seems right to them. (Elaborate).

B. And then in verse 6, we see an example of how those who take their religion seriously are more prone to being offended and to lash out in opposition to the true Gospel. In the immediate context of the parable, this is to be applied to the religious leaders of the nation Israel – the Pharisees, the scribes, and the chief priests. The gospel of grace in and by Christ alone was in stark opposition to their religion of works – so much so that they (the religious) persecuted the prophets.

VI. Matthew 22:7: Now, as the parable continues, in verse 7, we read, ***“But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.”***

Now, most gospel commentators agree that this refers to the destruction of Israel in AD 70 when God sent the Roman army into Jerusalem and destroyed both the city and the nation.

VII. Matthew 22:8: Continuing in verse 8, we read that the king...***“Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.”***

What makes a sinner worthy? You know that is a critical question that the gospel of grace answers. Those sinners who are worthy shall inherit the kingdom of God as the bride of Christ and these who are commanded to come but would not are here declared to be NOT worthy. As the gospel and this parable itself shall teach us, the song of the saints in glory shall be “Worthy is the Lamb.” You see, the only worthiness a sinner has is in Him, based on His provision, having the very merits of His finished work made to be theirs.

VIII. Matthew 22:9-10: Well, we see in verses 9 and 10 that other guests were invited to the feast, all in accordance with God’s eternal design and purpose. Verse 9 reads that the king then commanded, ***“Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. <sup>10</sup>So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.”***

- A. This refers to the calling of the Gentiles. In a parallel passage to this one, beginning in Luke 14:21 we read, ***“So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.”***<sup>22</sup> ***And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.”***<sup>23</sup> ***And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.***
- B. I found the descriptions of these Gentiles to be interesting in both accounts:
1. In Matthew these Gentile believers who were invited to the marriage were called “both bad and good.” Now we know from Romans 3 that there is none righteous, no not one. There is none that doeth good. So, I believe we are to understand this as those that would appear good among men. And so is the case with those God calls unto Himself. Some are sincere, religious, moral men and women while others may be irreligious, perhaps immoral so as to be viewed as “bad.”
  2. But the common denominator, whether good or bad, shows up in Luke’s version where he describes them as ***“...the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.”*** No matter how good we may be esteemed in the eyes of the world, those who thirst after Christ’s righteousness are brought to see their desperate need for it. As Christ said elsewhere, the well need not a physician. Only those who see themselves as poor (spiritually bankrupt), maimed (those without strength to save themselves), and the halt (those who have strived but were halted along their religious road, finding the way that seemed right to no longer suffice; and then the blind. We know that all by nature are blind, but those who come to the wedding have been brought to understand the darkness from which they have been delivered.
- C. And then notice also in Luke’s version, in verse 23, the king’s instructions was to ***“...compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”*** Back in verse 21, it was said “there is still room,” but just as here he says ***“...compel them to come, that my house may be filled,”*** we know that once all of God’s sheep have been irresistibly drawn or compelled, there will be no vacancies left. There will be room for every one of God’s elect, but heaven will be filled. As our Lord said in John 6:37, ***“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”*** If you come to the Christ of the Bible – you’ll not be cast out for there is room for those who come to Him, robed in His righteousness.
- D. Consistent with this truth, we see back in Matthew 22 at the end of verse 10, that ***“...the wedding was furnished with guests....”***
1. The purpose of God does not depend upon man. Though the Jews for the most part rejected God's Son, as Romans 11:5 puts it, God had a remnant according to the election of grace who gladly embraced Him. And verse 6 there goes on to say “...if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace...” Emphasizing that the 2 (grace and works) are mutually exclusive – they do not coexist.

2. Now by nature we presume that surely the ones who responded positively to the call of the gospel are somehow better or as a result, found more commendable unto God. But that is contrary to the truth of salvation by grace – for such notions have us imagining that there is something meritorious done by or through the sinner (perhaps in his or her response) that would commend them unto God. And friends, that is the false religion of works no matter what others may call it.

IX. Matthew 22: 11-12: Now as we move into verse 11 of the parable, the wedding has been furnished with guests but we read of an intruder present. It reads: “***And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: <sup>12</sup>And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.***”

A. Here we have a wonderful picture of what really matters – of the standard of final judgment. Here in the parable, there was a man who didn’t belong. He presumed to be included but he lacked the wedding garment. He was dressed – but not for this occasion.

1. I’m not the sharpest tack when it comes to wedding etiquette, but I have learned that in many circles, an after 6 pm wedding typically calls for formal wear (black tie or tuxedo) unless it’s a garden wedding or indicated otherwise by the invitation. And even that rule of thumb seems to vary a bit depending upon on the customs in different cities or regions of the country. But on occasions in the past, particularly at 6 pm weddings, I have found myself in the minority and somewhat self-conscious about being either over dressed or under dressed. If in doubt, I always figured it would be better to be over dressed if in error – at least until the time I attended a wedding where I was the only one there wearing a tux other than the groom and groomsman. But I went to the wedding, thinking I had on the proper attire.
2. Fortunately such a faux pas didn’t scar me for life. But when it comes to that which this wedding represents, there are eternal implications. This parable is representative of the marriage between Christ and His church. And the wedding garment is descriptive of that which is necessary for acceptance before God. We must not just be clothed in the attire of our choice by nature – but we must have furnished for us the wedding garment if we’re to stand accepted in the presence of a holy and righteous God.
3. And thankfully, we don’t have to wonder or speculate about that what is meant here – about what sort of wedding garment we must have.

B. Consider with me these passages that shed light on this:

1. Isaiah 61:10: ***I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.***

2. Rev. 19:7-9: I read a bit of this earlier, but consider it again: *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. <sup>8</sup>And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. <sup>9</sup>And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.*

- C. Now for most weddings I've attended, I usually dress 1 of 2 ways. I either wear a suit (or a coat and tie) or else a tuxedo. Coincidentally, I believe that every sinner approaches the judgment before God clothed in 1 of 2 ways. Like the man who didn't belong in this parable, all of us by nature initially will dare to stand before a thrice holy God dressed in our own self-righteousness. Sadly, most persist therein and plunge headlong into judgment thinking they will be just fine. And when I speak of this robe of self-righteousness, I recognize that most so dressed don't see it that way. But make no mistake, if what distinguishes you as acceptable before God is anything other than or in addition to the one righteousness of God in Christ, and that made yours by God's free and gracious imputation or accounting of it to you, then you will not be accepted.
- D. In Romans 10, when Paul prays for his lost, fellow Israelites that they might be saved, he says of them in verse 2, "*For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.* <sup>3</sup>*For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.* <sup>4</sup>*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*" The sense of this is that being ignorant of or un-submitted to the perfect satisfaction to God's justice that Christ alone made in His obedience unto death (the righteousness of God) – and being unaware of the necessity of having that accounted to you so as to be compelled to flee to Him alone for all of my salvation – well by default, that is to be going about to establish your own righteousness, whether you recognize it or not. For Christ alone is the end or finishing of the law to everyone that believeth. If you don't find your fitness solely in Christ and His finished work of righteousness, then you may think you're dressed up just fine – but that is not the faith of everyone that believeth God's Gospel – His way of salvation.
- E. So we may be dressed in our 'Sunday's best,' so to speak, but here's what God says about our attire in Isa. 64:6, "*...all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags...*" And to approach God so attired is to be cast out from His presence for all eternity as we'll see in verse 13 of this parable. We must have a wedding garment that we can't buy, earn, furnish, or acquire for ourselves. And that garment is the righteousness of God that our Lord and Savior established for His wedding guests on the cross – the merit of His obedience unto death that God graciously has imputed or charged to these objects of His everlasting love.

F. Notice now in verse 12 of our text, that the king turns to this intruder and in essence says “Friend, why did you come here without a wedding garment?” I get the sense that it is as if a party host walks up to an uninvited party crasher, and sarcastically says, “Excuse me <quote> ‘invited’ guest what are you doing here?”

G. And notice the response. “He was speechless.” I’ll come back to this in closing but as...

X. Matthew 22:13-14: ...the parable ends, we read in verse 13, “***Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*** <sup>14</sup>***For many are called, but few are chosen.***” As verse 14 makes clear, the general call of the gospel goes out to many but few are chosen. It is a truth that God’s electing grace makes the difference. They are a chosen people. And if you’re among the many who have a real problem with confessing this truth of God’s sovereignty in salvation, (that salvation is not at all conditioned on you the sinner), then I pray God will open your eyes to the implication. If salvation isn’t truly all of God’s doing for His people and a product of His mercy and grace alone, then what is left for you to plead but some difference that you, the sinner, must make? And that’s to dare enter into in to the wedding feast of the King of Kings clothed in the unacceptable, filthy rags of your own self-righteousness – bringing your provision in the place of or to add to that of the King’s?

XI. Closing:

Well, as the end of verse 12 puts it, at the judgment, such will be speechless! We know from Matthew 7:21-23 that Christ said that many will approach Him to enter in pleading their own works. As those preachers portrayed there indicated, it will include even those who did these things (many wonderful works, prophesying or preaching in the name of Jesus, even given the power to cast out demons and that in His name. They would call themselves Christians. And our Lord said unto them in verse 23, “***I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.***” In other words that which they were banking on was not equitable or equal to the perfect righteousness that a holy and just God requires.

Like me, some of you may have heard the hypothetical question posed, “If God asked you, why should I let you in to my heaven, what would be your reply?” And you know, countless, self-righteous sinners shall leave this short lifetime thinking they are dressed up just fine, only to discover too late that what they think qualifies them for heaven falls tragically far short of the perfect righteousness that God says in Acts 17 and elsewhere we shall be judged by.

Now with that said, this parable teaches there will be a time, a final judgment, where even these will be brought to recognize their tragic, sinful, stubborn, rebellious mistake in having placed something they do (some decision they make, their faith, their repentance, their baptism whatever) in rivalry with that which it took – the precious blood of the Savior, the provision of the King.

Well as I noted earlier, I was impressed by this truth that all men, sooner or later, are brought to this state – speechless. The question is will you be rendered speechless now or at the judgment. This final judgment will not determine anyone’s destination. It is a declarative judgment. It will only declare what is so. Those God saves, He renders speechless in their respective lifetimes. They are speechless in the sense – they cease from speaking of that which proceeds from them as contributing even one iota to the ground of their acceptance before God. Their mouths are stopped!

As Romans 3, verses 19 and following puts it, “*Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, <speechless> and all the world may become guilty before God. <sup>20</sup>Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. <sup>21</sup>But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; <sup>22</sup>Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe:”*

As the aforementioned bulletin article puts it, true believers are rendered “...speechless at the realization that there is no way in which they can in their own strength produce this righteousness. All their <laboring>, all their religious activities, all their ceremonies and rituals, all their good works and morality... none will produce this righteousness for they are all defiled with sin. We are left speechless because God has provided a perfect righteousness in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a free gift of the grace of God. God gives it and He will accept it and it alone! This covering or robe of righteousness which is illustrated by the wedding garment is received by <genuine, God-given> faith.”

Hebrews 9:27 reminds us that “...*it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:*”

How about you? Will you be rendered speechless now or at the judgment? As Gary’s article stated, “Let me be speechless now, trusting my Advocate, the Lord Jesus Christ, to plead His righteousness on my behalf both now and then.”

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God’s grace found in the only infallible source, God’s word itself – the Bible.