

# Indifference

**Indifference is defined by Funk & Wagnall's dictionary as someone lacking concern, or someone rendering something as unimportant or insignificant.**

If someone is indifferent to something, they will demonstrate it by having little or no interest. They will show little concern for certain events.



The closest word in the Greek language to our English word "indifference," is the term "ἀπειθέω." It is a compound word:  $\alpha$  meaning "no," and  $\piειθέω$ , "to believe." *Apeitheo* equals "no belief."

The indifference displayed by the people in our passage is simply a form of unbelief. They believe the quest for the kingdom of heaven is not worth pursuing. Any further thought on the subject is unnecessary. They believe it doesn't make any difference how one sees the Scriptures. It doesn't make any difference if they are more or less religious. It doesn't make any difference if they see Jesus as the Messiah or as a mere man. It doesn't make any difference if they believe the Word of God or not. It just doesn't make any difference.

In the world of chemistry, indifference refers to two chemicals having no reaction when mixed together. They are inert, they are indifferent to one another. The same is true in the world of physics, the term indifference is used to describe two electrical magnetic properties having no effect on one another. When placed together there is no response. There is no reaction.

Some of us have observed people who are indifferent to their job. They occupy space. They lack interest in their work. Applied force is necessary to get them moving. They may demonstrate their indifference by absenteeism or poor-quality control. However, when it comes to their hobbies, their indifference is transformed into abounding energy and enthusiasm.

Indifference does not mean they openly oppose something. It is not hate, or even dislike. Rather, they do not see the need to put any more effort

into something they consider to be dull, of little value or of low priority. Other jobs; other interests have more value. In these cases our actions reveal what we truly hold precious and love.

This parable speaks of men who are indifferent to the message of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus ends this parable by saying, “for many are called<sup>1</sup>, but few are chosen.” Let me say this another way, “For many are invited *to enter the kingdom, but because of indifference few are chosen.*”

The kingdom of heaven is not filled with those indifferent to the gospel, nor is it filled with those who reject biblical truth. Both fail to see their need and are left behind.

In Matthew 22:1-10 we find Jesus giving a prophetic parable. Two times it depicts Israel’s indifference to the kingdom. The first points to Israel’s past indifference, the second references Israel’s resistance to the news of the kingdom. The final time it depicts God’s extending His offer of eternal life through Jesus Christ to the world.

<sup>1</sup>κλητός<sup>ρ</sup>, ή, όν: pertaining to having been invited (Louw & Nida, p. 125).

**1. At what point in Jesus’ ministry is He giving this parable? (see Matthew 24:1, 3; 26:1-2)**

**ANSWER:**

Matt. 24:1 — “And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.”

Matt. 24:3 — “And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”

Matt. 26:1 — “And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, <sup>2</sup>Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.”

Two to three days before His crucifixion.

**2. What is the marriage banquet likened to? To what is Jesus referring? — Matthew 22:1-2**

**ANSWER:**

“The focus of the parable is on the wedding banquet of the Son. The reference is naturally to the Messianic banquet, which is not only mentioned in the New Testament (Rev. 19) but also in the Rabbinic Literature. At the end of the age, the Jewish tradition held, all the people of God —Israel— would enjoy a Messianic banquet in their transition from this life to the life to come. However, we must be careful to understand that the details of the banquet cannot be pressed too much further since this is a parable. The overarching point of this story is the indifference displayed by the people to the kingdom.

Thus, the banquet is the celebration of those who enter the kingdom, and the exclusion is the judgment of God for those who reject the invitation of grace. Jesus uses the same idea to warn people not to refuse the invitation, and not to be found unprepared for the coming of the

Bridegroom. By continually refusing the offer of grace they are refusing to share in the banquet, and in the world to come.

Jesus made it clear that the only way anyone would ever see the kingdom of heaven was by Him. The story makes it clear that there is no reason, none at all, for people to reject a gracious invitation from the King to come to the wedding feast and enjoy all good things. The only reason they reject the invitation is that they do not believe the King, or they do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God. But since this is a call from the King, from God Himself, the people are not free to take it or leave it, even if they think they can be non-committal. To reject the invitation of God to share in the Kingdom is folly — it is to choose death; or, to reject the offer of grace is to reject God's only provision for eternal life.

*The above contains excerpts from <http://www.christianleadershipcenter.org/bbs1.htm>*

**3. Identify the people in the parable. — Matthew 22:1-14**

- a. The king \_\_\_\_\_
- b. The son \_\_\_\_\_
- c. The invited guests (vs. 3, 4-7, 9) \_\_\_\_\_
- d. The servants (v. 2, 4-6, 8-9, 13) \_\_\_\_\_

**ANSWER:**

The King is our heavenly Father. The Son is the Lord Jesus Christ. The invitation to the Messianic banquet does not seem to be isolated to one period of time. The language is broad and spans both the Old and New Testament. Therefore the servants very: Moses and the prophets — *Matt 22:2*; Christ, the disciples and the first century saints — *Matt 22:4-6*; all believers sent out to share the gospel — *Matt 22:8-9*; and finally the angels — *Matt 22:13*. The invited guests also very: Past Israel — *Matt 22:3*; Israel during Jesus' day to 70 AD — *Matt 22:4-7*, and finally those invited through out the Church Age — *Matt 22:9*.

**4. Why is the bride not mentioned? Who would be the bride?**

**ANSWER:**

The focus is on the indifference display toward God's gracious invitation to the Messianic banquet. The rejecting of this offer of grace has serious consequences. Furthermore, the bride of Revelation 19 — i.e. the Church; and the wife, Israel [her marriage — *Jeremiah 3:14*, her divorce — *Jeremiah 3:8*; *Hosea 2:2* and her reunion with Jehovah — *Jeremiah 31:31-33*; *Hosea 2:14*] are different. However, both saved Israel and the true Church will attend the Messianic banquet which is held during the millennial reign.

**5. Identify the three calls issued in this parable.**

**ANSWER:**

Three times a call is issued in this passage, and it fell on indifferent ears.

**The first call is to Israel — Matthew 22:3**

Here, the Father sends His servants to bid certain people to His wedding feast. It was an exclusive group of people. The call first goes to the people of Israel. A people God called His own. In reality, God sent His prophets to them. He called Abraham, Isaac and Jacob out to be His own. He sent Moses and his prophets to lead this group of people. It is this group of people God invites to the wedding feast. But they would not come.

Matthew 22:3 – “And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

Many were indifferent to His call. Look at Israel’s history in the book of Samuel, Kings, Chronicles and the Prophets. They were indifferent to spiritual things. They were too wrapped up in earthly endeavors than to be bothered with the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

**The second call is prophetic.** It begins with Jesus’ ministry and ends with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 — Matthew 22:4-7

“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.’ But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.”

This is a more aggressive call to His people. Notice that the message is more elaborate and the timing is urgent. Things are prepared, the food is ready, the marriage ceremony is about to begin. The call again was for Israel. Everything is ready. This part of the parable is speaking of Israel’s present response to Jesus.

Prophetically speaking, the Lord is referring to His coming sacrificial death and resurrection. By faith in Him we receive forgiveness and new life. His message was “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Enter into my kingdom! His atoning work on the cross is necessary for the forgiveness of sins. The blessings and access to the Father comes from the work of the cross, and the power of the Holy Spirit to strengthen each person that turned to the Son.

The call went forth even before the earth shook and the stone of Christ’s tomb was rolled away and the angels declared, “He is risen.” The call went forth to Israel when the Holy Spirit fell on the 120 who waited in Jerusalem and declared the good news to all Israel in every language. The table is set – Forgiveness will be provided. The wedding garments are being handed out. The abundance of blessing is waiting at the table.

This is why Jesus said,

“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.” – Matthew 22:4

But His people were indifferent – Matthew 22:5

“But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise”

They treated it carelessly. They made light of it. They went their way, to a farm or to their shop or to other things they felt were more important. I’m too busy was their excuse. I have a lot to do.

Notice, a remnant stayed behind and treated the messengers poorly and killed them (most likely a reference to the religious leaders). The people were indifferent and went home, but a group

remained behind and killed the messengers. They killed Stephen. They killed James and other disciples. For forty years the Father waited for Israel to receive His call, but they refused. Their resistance enraged the King – verse 7.

“But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.”

His armies, led by Titus, Son of the Emperor Vespasian, in AD 69-79 leveled the city of Jerusalem. God hates indifference.

### **The third call is to the Gentiles — Matthew 22:8-10.**

“Then saith he to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. <sup>9</sup> 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.”

Notice the change in the wording: In Matt. 22:3 they were invited to the wedding. In Matt. 22:4, the dinner is ready, and in Matt. 22:8, the wedding is ready. Progression in time it is late. Now everything is ready.

### **6. What is the significance of the man without the wedding garment? — Matthew 22:11-13**

#### **ANSWER:**

“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” — Matt. 22:11-13.

Both good and bad were invited. In the ancient royal wedding, clothing was provided for their guests. Many could not afford good clothes. So at the gate of the wedding banquet robes of white were handed out to the guests. Inside the banquet hall there was one man wearing his own garment. Apparently, he was richer than most and better than most that came.

When offered the robe at the gate he said no, I’ve already got one. At the wedding feast the king walks through the banquet hall greeting his guests. When He discovered the man without the proper clothing he stops and asks, “Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?” The man “was speechless.”

“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.’”

Since this parable begins with the statement, “the kingdom of heaven is like,” and we established that the kingdom of heaven is a reference to the future millennial kingdom. Then, the parable is pointing out the necessity of righteousness to enter the kingdom of heaven.

“For he (*the Father*) hath **made** him (*Jesus*) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be **made the righteousness** of God in him (*Jesus*). This righteousness is only found at the cross.

The sad part of the story is this man was indifferent to the call to repent and receive Christ. He felt his deeds were good enough. Maybe even better than most. In that day, there will be some who thought they belonged in the kingdom. Because of it, they failed to receive the true garments of righteousness handed out at the cross of Christ — the entrance to the kingdom. Indifferent to the messages of the gospel, proud of their own deeds, many will miss the mark.