

## 10. The Wedding Feast & The Great Feast

Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: “**The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son.** He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’

But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. **He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.**

Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

**For many are invited (or called), but few are chosen.”**

(Matthew 22:1-14 NIV)

This parable of the Wedding Feast (or Banquet) is closely paralleled by the parable of the Great Feast in Luke 14, which is why we shall consider both of these together. The main theme in the Wedding Feast is, of course, wedding festivities. As we shall see shortly, the Great Feast doesn’t mention anything about a wedding, but the emphasis of both parables is the same – that of the celebratory feast that is the Kingdom of God.

Throughout the Old Testament, God’s people, Israel, were figured as the bride and wife of God, where the covenant relationship was viewed as a marriage, and God eventually had to divorce Israel because she was unfaithful to the covenant established at Sinai (e.g. Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 3:1-2, 6-8, 14, 20). There was also the underlying idea that the coming manifestation of the kingdom of God would be like a wedding banquet for the Messiah and His people, where the newly betrothed Israel of God would finally be married to her Bridegroom forever (cf. Hosea 2:2, 14-16, 19-20, 23; 4:10; 3:1; Isaiah 25:6-8).

This theme is not developed much in the OT, it is only there through various inferences and typology. In the NT, though, the betrothal & wedding theme of the kingdom of heaven is clearly revealed; and it is also shown to be the marriage of a *new Israel bride based on a New Covenant* (cf. Romans 7:2-6; 2 Corinthians 11:2; John 3:29-30; Matthew 9:15; Revelation 21:2, 9-11; also Jeremiah 31:31-32).

The vision of Revelation makes it abundantly clear that the marriage of the Lamb to his new bride occurs after the unfaithful prostitute/wife, Babylon the Great, is

punished and destroyed (see in particular Revelation chapters 17-19). As we shall highlight, this is depicting the destruction of the Old Covenant Temple system of the Jews, followed by the full establishing of the New Covenant kingdom of God in the Messiah.

### First Century Jewish Weddings

Before we consider this parable in detail, we need some background information on Jewish weddings at the time of Christ. There were *three main stages* to getting married in the ancient Near East. We shall see that Jesus incorporated all three stages into his teaching to illustrate spiritual truth about Himself and His Bride and the kingdom of the heavens.<sup>1</sup>

**1. The Arrangement.** Firstly, while the couple were still usually quite young, the parents, especially the father, would arrange the marriage and sometimes they would be assisted by a 'matchmaker.' When they had settled the matter, the groom's family would pay a dowry or bride price to the bride's family as a kind of security for the bride – a purchase price to seal the deal, if you will.

**2. The Betrothal or Engagement.** Then came the official betrothal ceremony. This was usually held at the bride's parent's house in the company of family and friends. The couple would exchange vows (and sometimes rings) and the groom would usually give his bride some gifts. This betrothal was legally binding and it could only be annulled through divorce or death (cp. Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38; 2:4-5 concerning Joseph and Mary). During the following year or two, the groom would begin to prepare a place for himself and his bride by usually building an extension onto his father's house.

**3. The Wedding Festivities.** The final stage was the actual wedding festivities, which, for a virgin marrying for the first time (as opposed to a widow remarrying), would last seven days (cp. Genesis 29:26-28 concerning Leah's bridal week). At the appointed time, the bridegroom would make his way to the bride's house with his friends. This would usually occur at night to give the element of surprise, but the bride didn't know exactly when her bridegroom would arrive. So she had to be prepared, ready and waiting for him, attended by her bridesmaids, who were usually young maidens or virgins, holding burning torches or lamps so that they could receive and welcome the bridegroom when he arrived.

The bridegroom would then take his bride, accompanied by all the friends and attendants, to either his father's house or a large hall nearby. Then the weeklong festivities would begin. It would be during this week, in their private chamber at night, that the bride and groom would physically consummate their marriage. Then the bride/wife would remove her veil to reveal her face to everyone.

### The Fulfilment

Now for those who are familiar with the teaching of the NT, particularly that of Jesus and Paul, you will probably already recognise many amazing and beautiful parallels emerging in the above three stages in relation to what is contained in the NT concerning Christ's relationship to his people. Here are some of those parallels.

Firstly, God as Father chose His Son's Bride well in advance and He paid the bride-price through His own Sacrifice to purchase His precious Pearl, and He gave His Bride (the Israel of God) a heavenly deposit (the Holy Spirit) as security (Ephesians 1:3-14; Matthew 13:45).

Secondly, through His First Appearing (to His bride's home) and the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost, the Son (Jesus Christ) was officially betrothed to His Virgin Bride, showering her with gifts (gifts and blessings of the Spirit) (Ephesians 4:7-8; 2 Corinthians 11:2-3).

Thirdly, through His Second Appearing to them, Jesus would return for His Bride (who was to be ready and waiting for Him for she didn't know exactly when He would arrive) to consummate the marriage, at which time the Wedding Festivities would begin. The Bride would then be in intimate union with her Bridegroom for the whole figurative week of the spiritual kingdom (the number seven symbolising spiritual completion or fulfilment). This was also the time that she would be unveiled to the guests (the peoples of the world) as the Wife of the Lamb (which Paul calls 'the unveiling of the sons of God'; cf. Romans 8:19; Revelation 21:2-5, 9-10).

Nevertheless, Paul also revealed that the spiritual intimacy between Christ and His bride was already a fact, in spirit, before the wedding was to take place. His people were already His spiritual body at one with her Husband.

After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church (Gk. *ekklesia*)— for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery—**but I am talking about Christ and the church.**

(Ephesians 5:29-32 NIV)

Yet the ultimate manifestation in the kingdom was still in the future. As with many themes in the NT, there is an already/yet to come aspect to these things; that is, there were some things that were considered, by faith, as already being true, yet there was still a greater fullness yet to come.

Also, after the betrothal, during his absence, the Bridegroom (Christ) was preparing and building a place for His Bride, which is an extension of His Father's house (God's House, the true Temple of God with many rooms or abodes). As Jesus promised his original apostles,

"In my Father's house are many rooms (*or abodes; dwelling places*); if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.**"

(John 14:2-3 NIV)

And to those of the nations who believed in Christ, Paul wrote the following.

In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. **And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.**

(Ephesians 2:21-22 NIV)

Many other details that could be mentioned are portrayed in some of the other parables that we shall be considering in the next few chapters.

### A First Century Fulfilment

If we are to understand the NT teaching accurately, then we need to bear in mind that these things have a special and unique application to the early first-century church; that is, it was initially written to them and not specifically to future generations. They were the ones who experienced Christ in his First Appearing, and it was to them that he promised to return at the time of Jerusalem's destruction. The kingdom of God was to be fully established in their lifetime, along with the coming and presence of the Son of Man. All of this was in accord with the visions of Daniel, and the teaching of the prophets, and of Jesus himself (cf. Acts 3:19-26).

It was *that* generation of Israel (with the Gentile believers added) who witnessed the fulfilment of specific prophecies. They alone were the *firstfruit company* who were regenerated and blessed with the arrival of the Holy Spirit; and they were uniquely the *firstborn sons* of God. They were also distinctly named the new bride of Christ because all of these types, shadows and allegories were to be fulfilled by them in that generation.

Now, this does not mean that these spiritual truths and principles cannot be applied to Christ's people since that time, because by extension, many of these things do of course apply, for all believers in Christ belong to the same kingdom, the New Jerusalem, which *is* the bride and wife of the Lamb. It is the same God & the same Lord; the same Gospel of the Kingdom & the same Spirit (though not operating in the same manner as in the 1<sup>st</sup> century era); and the same promise of eternal life in the heavenly kingdom. And there isn't any new apostolic revelation beyond what is written in the NT. Nevertheless, all the subsequent generations of believers since the Day of the Lord in 70 AD fit in to the overall picture in a different sense.

For instance, we are not now the firstfruits; we are part of a greater harvest instead. And we are invited to a wedding that is already underway! Christ's spiritual kingdom has already been established in its fullness; therefore we are not waiting for the eschatological events to occur in the same way that the first-century generation of Christians were waiting for their fulfilment. We belong to 'the generations of the age of the ages', the New Creation age, as members of the nations who are bringing their honour and glory into the New Jerusalem kingdom of the heavens (cf. Ephesians 3:21; Revelation 21:24-27).

So, now that we have this background information, let us consider the details of the parable of the Wedding Feast and its fulfilment.

### The Wedding Feast is the Kingdom

God, the Father, is the King who is preparing wedding festivities for His Son, Jesus. The people of Israel were the original guests who were invited to the Wedding Feast, that is, the soon-coming kingdom of God. This is the reason why

Jesus primarily ministered to the Jews in the land of Palestine, and it is also why the apostles, particularly Paul, proclaimed the gospel to the Jew first, and thereafter the Gentiles, in the era of transition from 30-70 AD (e.g. Romans 1:16; Acts 13:44-46; Matthew 10:5-6; 15:24).

John the Baptist, as the special friend of the Bridegroom, had already paved the way for Jesus being the Messiah, and he clearly knew that Jesus was also the Bridegroom of the new Israel. Here are his words recorded in the gospel of John.

**"The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less."**

(John 3:29-30 NIV)

Jesus later confirmed that he was the messianic Bridegroom. Some of John's disciples were having difficulty with the fact that Jesus' disciples were not fasting like they were. As the religious practice of fasting had to do with sober things involving judgment & mourning, their fasting was probably due to their belief in the coming wrath taught by John. They therefore wondered why Jesus' disciples weren't fasting also. Jesus replied by showing that his followers were guests & friends of the Bridegroom, and it was not then the time to mourn & fast while He was with them.

Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?"

Jesus answered, **"How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast."**

(Matthew 9:14-15 NIV)

Even though Jesus told His followers here that there was to be a time of fasting that would come, after He would be taken away from them for a time, it is evident that this would not prevent the Wedding Feast from going ahead in the near future. In the meantime, there was a job for them to do. Nevertheless, Jesus had identified Himself as the Bridegroom who was about to be betrothed to a bride. In fact, He was revealing in this that He was Yahweh who was about to remarry the new Israel (cf. Hosea 2:16-23; Isaiah 62:1-5; Romans 7:4; 2 Corinthians 11:2).

During the ministry of Jesus, and also afterwards, God sent out His servants, His prophets and apostles, to summon those of Israel who had been originally invited to the Feast, to come to the wedding for everything was now ready. But on the whole, the majority did not want to come to the Feast when it was time. They all made various excuses and refused to go. Some of them even persecuted God's servants and killed them.

It is a sad fact that that generation of Jews were the main persecutors of Jesus and His disciples, shown throughout the book of Acts. This enraged God the King, so in His righteous indignation, He sent His army to destroy those murderers and to burn down their city.

This is a clear prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in the War of 66-70 AD – and take note that the Romans are viewed as being God’s army to bring judgment on the Jewish people for their sins. Some time later, Jesus made it very clear that this judgment would befall the Jews because of their murders – particularly that of murdering the Son of God, which filled up the measure of the sins of their fathers.

As we have already observed earlier, this was to bring wrath, tribulation and days of vengeance upon the people for a three-and-a-half year period that would culminate with Jerusalem’s burning by the Romans, along with the destruction of the Temple in the ultimate Day of the Lord. And this would be in fulfilment of all that had been written in the Hebrew Scriptures, and to therefore bring an end to the times of the Gentiles upon God’s old covenant city. (For further study, see my article *The Olivet Discourse and the Second Advent*). This is confirmed in the following passage from Jesus’ Olivet Discourse.

“But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. This will result in your being witnesses to them... **When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near.** Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. **For this is the time of punishment (literally ‘days of vengeance’) in fulfilment of all that has been written.** How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! **There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people.** They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”

(Luke 21:12-24 NIV)

### The Adulteress City and its Destruction

The historical details passed down to us from the Jewish historian, Josephus, in his book *The Jewish War*, shows us the awful state of the Jewish nation at that time and how they brought this destruction upon themselves through their own wickedness and violence, and their unfaithfulness to the Covenant of Yahweh. Let us hear these solemn words of Jesus, which he spoke to the Jewish religious leaders in the temple courts during his last day of public ministry in Jerusalem.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. **Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!**”

“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell (Gk. *Gehenna*)? Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. **And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth,** from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you

murdered between the temple and the altar. **I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation.**"

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. **Look, your house is left to you desolate.** For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

(Matthew 23:29-39 NIV)

As incredible as it sounds, Jesus was declaring that the righteous judgment of Yahweh upon that generation of Israel would involve them being held responsible for all the murders of God's righteous people (i.e. martyrs) reaching right back to the days of Adam and Abel, that is, to the very beginnings of God's covenant dealings with humanity. The reason Jesus began this particular epoch of time with the murder of Abel, and then ended it with the murder of Zechariah in the temple courts, was because this period encompassed the whole scope of the Hebrew Bible of that day, which began with Genesis (i.e. the Torah) and ended with 2 Chronicles (cf. 2 Chronicles 24:20-22).<sup>2</sup>

The very same indictment that Jesus brought against the Jews of his day (take note of Matthew 23 quoted above) is brought against "Mystery Babylon the great" in the vision of Revelation, the 'great city' that is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where the Lord was crucified – *which is very evidently representing earthly Jerusalem and its old covenant temple system.* This 'city' was in covenant relationship with God, originally a faithful city, the city of the Great King, who ruled over the kings of the earth; a 'city' that had become an unfaithful wife. The Harlot/Adulteress wife was to be judged and destroyed according to the Law – only then could the marriage of the new bride (New Covenant Israel) take place.

Here are the key texts that reveal these things in the vision of Revelation, which then leads to the theme of the Wedding Supper of the Lamb.

Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city—which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where also their Lord was crucified.

(Revelation 11:8 NIV)

"The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to hand over to the beast their royal authority, until God's words are fulfilled. **The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.**"

(Revelation 17:16-18 NIV)

"Come out of her, my people,  
so that you will not share in her sins,  
so that you will not receive any of her plagues;  
for her sins are piled up to heaven,  
and God has remembered her crimes.  
Give back to her as she has given;  
pay her back double for what she has done.

Pour her a double portion from her own cup.  
Give her as much torment and grief  
as the glory and luxury she gave herself.  
In her heart she boasts,  
‘I sit enthroned as queen.  
I am not a widow;  
I will never mourn.’

**Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her:  
death, mourning and famine.  
She will be consumed by fire,  
for mighty is the Lord God who judges her...”**

“Rejoice over her, you heavens!  
Rejoice, you people of God!  
Rejoice, apostles and prophets!

**For God has judged her  
with the judgment she imposed on you...”**

**In her was found the blood of prophets and of God’s holy people,  
of all who have been slaughtered on the earth.”**

(Revelation 18:4-8, 20, 24 NIV)

After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting:

“Hallelujah!  
Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,  
for true and just are his judgments.  
**He has condemned the great prostitute  
who corrupted the earth by her adulteries.  
He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”**

And again they shouted:

“Hallelujah!  
The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.”

“Hallelujah!  
For our Lord God Almighty reigns.  
Let us rejoice and be glad  
and give him glory!  
**For the wedding of the Lamb has come,  
and his bride has made herself ready.**  
Fine linen, bright and clean,  
was given her to wear.”

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people.)

Then the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to **the wedding supper of the Lamb!**” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”

(Revelation 19:1-3, 6-9 NIV)



## White Linen Wedding Clothes

Returning to the parable, the Jews of that generation had rejected their special invitation to enter the kingdom of God, showing by this that they did not deserve to come to the Feast, so the King then sent out His servants, the apostles and prophets, to invite anyone anywhere, whether good or wicked, to the Feast. They did so and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

This was ultimately fulfilled in the ministry of the apostles, especially the apostle Paul, as he was uniquely chosen to be the apostle to the nations. Through his ministry, many 'good and wicked' people from *all nations* believed, repented and became followers of Christ and, therefore, were invited to the Wedding Feast of the Kingdom. They became a part of the elect remnant that would fill the hall with guests. This invitation is still going out to all the nations of the world and many are being called to accept it. Nevertheless, the parable doesn't end there.

Jesus goes on to say that when the King comes to see the guests, He finds a man there without any wedding clothes! When asked how he got in without wedding clothes, the man says nothing. The King then orders that this intruder be tied up and thrown outside into the darkness to be excluded from the celebrations.

The last words of Jesus concerning this parable in verses 13-14 appear to be added after, and therefore, they probably don't belong to the actual parable narrative itself. That is, they are not the words of the king in the parable, but Jesus' additional words of teaching in relation to the parable as recorded by the Gospel writer. It reads,

"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, yet few are chosen."

Nevertheless, the truth remains the same either way. This guest is thrown out of the wedding party! Now in first century Palestine, invited guests were often given white wedding clothes (linen garments), particularly by wealthy hosts, as they arrived for the wedding festivities. So anyone not wearing these garments would stand out from the rest. In the parable, the man was actually an intruder who had gate crashed the party, so he hadn't been given his white linen wedding garment. This is why the King had him bound and thrown out into the darkness of the night and excluded from the wedding celebration.

Now a search through the Bible will reveal some interesting details about white linen garments. Firstly, it brings to mind the linen tunics that the Levitical priests had to wear when they were ministering at the Tabernacle or Temple (Exodus 28:39-41). The blood spattered garments, as a result of the animal sacrifices, were a constant reminder of the people's sins and God's provision for forgiveness. Yet God promised that their garments would become white as snow, symbolising the eradication of sin.

"Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD.  
"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."

(Isaiah 1:18 NIV; also Psalm 51:7)

The pure whiteness of these garments symbolises the absolute righteousness and purity of God, as well as the Glory of God. Christ Himself, as the one who reflects the Glory of God, can shine as white as snow (Revelation 1:14; Matthew 17:2).

Yet the NT teaches that the chosen followers of Christ are a royal priesthood; they are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, **and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father**—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

(Revelation 1:5b-6 NIV)

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

(1 Peter 2:9 NIV)

But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. **This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.** There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...

(Romans 3:21-23 NIV)

God made him who had no sin to be sin (*or sin offering*) for us, **so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

(2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV)

Then in Revelation 19:7-9, quoted earlier, we are told the following in relation to the Appearing and Presence of Christ.

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! **For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen**, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

Then the angel said to me, “Write: **‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’**” And he added, “These are the true words of God.” (NIV)

Take note of the following in relation to the full manifestation of the Kingdom of God at Christ’s Return:

1. The Wedding of the Lamb has come
2. His Bride has made herself ready
3. Fine linen, bright and clean, is given to the Bride
4. Happy are those who are invited to the Wedding Feast

This confirms that the Kingdom of the Heavens *is* the Wedding Feast, particularly in its fullness at the Parousia of Christ in the Day of the Lord. His Bride and Wife are His called, chosen and faithful followers, who are termed Overcomers and the Sons

of God, particularly those of that first century generation who were prepared for His Return through their faithful and righteous acts manifested in and through much tribulation.

And the fine white linen that is given to the Bride is said to be '*the righteous acts of the saints* (or holy ones).' Not only have his followers been given the righteousness of God in Christ, we also have to *walk* in the righteous acts of Christ. Only then can we confirm that we belong to the called and chosen ones of God as those of the New Jerusalem – and, in the words of the parable, as those who are invited to the wedding, clothed with the wedding garments.

For those who try to get in to the Kingdom (or be saved) without wedding clothes (that is, *not* clothed with the righteousness of God in Christ) will not succeed. There is no way of sneaking into this party. Instead they will be thrown out into spiritual darkness, where there will be weeping and bitter gnashing of teeth. (For further information on "weeping and gnashing of teeth", see the parable of *The Wheat and the Darnel*). We must bear in mind that '*Many* are called (or invited)' to share in the kingdom blessings, but only '*the few* are chosen.' These chosen ones are guaranteed salvation, for they belong to the kingdom of God as the sons & daughters of the Living God. (For further details, see the parable of *The Sower*).

It goes without saying that these chosen ones are also those who have been invited to the Feast, and they have accepted the invitation of the blessing of salvation. These are the 'invited ones' of Revelation 19:9 who are blessed because they have been graciously invited to share in the Happy Day of the Kingdom of God – the Great Wedding Feast of the Son. And this wedding celebration is still going on today in the kingdom of the heavens, and more are joining in day by day.

Let us now consider a parallel parable that confirms these very things from a slightly different angle.

### The Parable of the Great Feast

Here is the parable of The Great Feast, which teaches us the same basic truths as the Wedding Feast.

When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God." Jesus replied: "A certain man **was preparing a great banquet** and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'

"But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

"The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' " 'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'

“Then the master told his servant, ‘**Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.**’ ”

(Luke 14:15-24 NIV)

In this instance, the Feast has nothing to do with a wedding; nevertheless, the overall meaning is the same. It is self-evident that there are many parallels in these two parables. Basically, they are both declaring the same truth, with slightly differing nuances, but essentially they are the same.

Take note that in both of these parables, those of Israel were the original guests who had already received the special invitation to come to the feast. Yet when the time came for the feast to begin (which was the era of the Messiah’s kingdom) these guests, who had previously accepted the invitation, now refused to come, making lots of excuses instead. They had become so pre-occupied with worldly things, including their religious duties, that they were not interested in coming to the feast.

So, they lost out on their special privileged invitation and they would not be allowed to attend the feast at all or get a taste of the banquet. Instead, numerous others were invited at the last minute and they all came to the feast, and these included the 'sinners' within the land and nation of Israel, along with the so-called 'dregs of society', the poor, the disabled, the sick and the idolatrous Gentiles.

These things were clearly played out in the events of the 1st century, as recorded in the NT, through the ministry of Jesus & the apostles. Nevertheless, these principles can also be applied to the Christian Church since 70 AD. Like Israel of old, those who claim to believe in Christ Jesus are the *outward* people of God, as those who have received the special invitation of the Gospel - but only the true Chosen Ones will ultimately come to the feast, while all the religious hypocrites will ultimately be shut out, due to their unfaithfulness, disloyalty and worldly excuses. In the meantime, there is a great ingathering of 'unworthy sinners' and 'dregs of society' who are filling the hall of the Great Feast -- which is already underway.

### Identity Crisis

It is worth bringing up an interesting point here. Some teach that the wedding guests in the first parable cannot be the believers of the Body of Christ because (so it is reasoned) they are not viewed as the bride herself, but only as the guests. The same is often said of the parable of The Ten Virgins, which we shall look at next. Some say that the virgins must represent a different group for they are not viewed as the bride!

It is true that in Revelation 19:7-9, quoted earlier, the guests *appear* to be distinct from the Bride, yet, it is evident from this parable that both the bride *and* the guests are representing, in figure, the chosen ones of God. The main emphasis in these parables is the invitation and its acceptance in relation to those of first century Israel who were uniquely the bride and the firstfruits.

The chosen people of Christ are symbolised as Guests of a Feast (whether a wedding feast or a normal feast, as in the second parable above). This special

Assembly of the Sons of God are also figured elsewhere as Wise Virgins; Wise Servants; Sheep of the Good Shepherd; Wheat; Good Fruit; Sons of God, etc, etc. The figures and motifs vary depending on the context of the particular parable, nevertheless, ultimately they all refer to the same group – that is, those who belong to the kingdom of God. I've touched on some of these things already in this book.

In the same way, John the Baptist was not only the friend of the Bridegroom (Christ) in his special role of being the forerunner and messenger of the Messiah; he also belonged to the kingdom because he was a true son of Abraham who belongs to the New Jerusalem – and this heavenly Jerusalem is said to be THE BRIDE AND WIFE OF THE LAMB (Revelation 21:9-14). This is confirmed in Hebrews 12:22-24.

But you have come **to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem**, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, **to the church of the firstborn**, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, **to the spirits of righteous men made perfect**, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.  
(NIV)

The Church (or Assembly) of the Firstborn is the Body/Bride of Christ; headed up by the Chief Priest and Mediator, Jesus Himself; which also includes *the spirits of the righteous ones* who died prior to the coming of Christ (i.e. OT followers of Yahweh; all the prophets, including John the Baptist). All these would be resurrected and transformed into the New Humanity in Christ as dwellers and inheritors of the New Jerusalem, at Christ's imminent Parousia within that generation (cf. Hebrews 11:39-40; 10:25). The real issue here is about the timing & application of God's unfolding plan of things in the first century, and not the core identity of God's chosen ones.

### The Feast & the Kingdom

Anyhow, before we get sidetracked too much, let's return to the subject of the Great Feast. As we have seen, this Great Feast represents the Kingdom of God manifested in all its glory. Jesus had already referred to this Feast a number of times previously. For example,

"There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.

(Luke 13:28-29 NIV)

This is a condensed version of the above parables. The elect of Israel are represented in Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets, while the rest of God's people are represented as those who have come from east, west, north and south (i.e. all nations); and the kingdom of God itself is equated with the Great Feast.

Now it is possible that spiritual food and drink will play its part in the glories of the kingdom celebration, as even Jesus ate and drank after His resurrection (Luke 24:36-42; John 21:1-15). He also said to His disciples on that fateful night of His betrayal and trial that He would again drink the fruit of the vine and eat the

Passover when it would find complete fulfilment in the kingdom (Luke 22:15-18).<sup>3</sup> He also promised the twelve apostles,

“And **I confer on you a kingdom**, just as my Father conferred one on me, **so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom** and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

(Luke 22:29-30 NIV)

These things ultimately have a heavenly application in the Kingdom of the Heavens, that is, in the spiritual dimension of God’s world, for Christ’s kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). Nevertheless, in Romans 14 Paul gives us the basic principle for spiritual living, a truth that surpasses all of the material things of earth.

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit...

(Romans 14:17 NIV)

### The Feast of Tabernacles

Before we finish this particular study, let us consider something else that relates to our present subject – namely, the Feasts of Yahweh. There were seven Feasts or Festivals that God originally gave to Israel through Moses. These Feasts were observed over a seven-month period, from spring through to autumn, and they were intimately tied in to the agricultural year. Three of these Feasts (namely, **Passover**, **Pentecost** and **Tabernacles**) were considered the major feasts, and every male Israelite had to attend these three feasts every year at the Tabernacle/Temple (see Leviticus 23:4-44; Exodus 23:14-17; Deuteronomy 16:1-17).

Yet these seven Feasts are a type or figure or allegory of the Plan of God concerning His Messiah. I aim to cover this topic in detail in a later chapter entitled *The Hidden Prophecies of the Seven Feasts*, but for now, here’s just a brief overview.

Leviticus 23 supplies us with the details of the seven Feasts, (also supplemented by Exodus 23 and Deuteronomy 16).

“ These are the LORD’s appointed feasts, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times: The LORD’s **Passover** begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. On the fifteenth day of that month the LORD’s **Feast of Unleavened Bread** begins; for seven days you must eat bread made without yeast...

The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of *the first grain you harvest*. He is to wave the sheaf before the LORD so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath...

“ From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering (*i.e. Firstfruits*), count off seven full weeks. Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new

grain to the LORD (*i.e.* **Pentecost**). From wherever you live, bring two loaves made of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour, baked with yeast, as a wave offering of firstfruits to the LORD...

The LORD said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites: 'On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts (*i.e.* **Trumpets**). Do no regular work, but present an offering made to the LORD by fire...'

The LORD said to Moses, "The tenth day of this seventh month is the **Day of Atonement**. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves, and present an offering made to the LORD by fire...

The LORD said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites: 'On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the LORD's **Feast of Tabernacles** begins, and it lasts for seven days...

" 'So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the LORD for seven days; the first day is a day of rest, and the eighth day also is a day of rest. On the first day you are to take choice fruit from the trees, and palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars, and rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days."

(Leviticus 23:4-6, 9-11, 15-17, 23-25, 26-27, 33-34, 39-40 NIV; emphasis in brackets mine)

Beginning in the spring, Passover came first on the 14<sup>th</sup> Nisan, followed by Unleavened Bread on the 15<sup>th</sup>, which lasted for seven days. During this week, on the day after the Sabbath, the Feast of Weeks began with Firstfruits, which then ended seven weeks later, on the day after the Sabbath, the fiftieth day, the Day of Pentecost. Firstfruits celebrated the firstfruits of **the barley harvest**, and Pentecost celebrated the firstfruits of **the wheat harvest**.

After this, there followed a period of *about four months* covering the summer. Then in *the seventh month* of Tishrei, the final three feasts were observed: Trumpets on the 1<sup>st</sup> (a special New Moon Festival ushering in the 7<sup>th</sup> month); Day of Atonement on the 10<sup>th</sup>; and Tabernacles on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

The Feast of Tabernacles or Ingathering was considered the greatest Feast at the end of the sacred year, and it lasted for seven days, with a special *eighth day* to close the Feast. It was the final great Harvest, particularly of the olives and the grapes.

These original seven Feasts of Yahweh were prophetic of the Messiah and His work leading to the consummation of the kingdom at the end of the old covenant age. *All seven feasts would find their fulfilment within one generation before the Law Covenant had passed away in accordance with Daniel's 70 Weeks, at the time when the city of Jerusalem and its temple would be desolated* (Daniel 9:24-27). The following reveals their foundational meaning. The number **seven** figures prominently in the details of the Feasts, because seven symbolises spiritual completion or fulfilment. With God, ALL things are brought to a complete and satisfactory consummation within His great Plan and Purpose.

**Passover** portrays the Messiah's Ransom Sacrifice as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of Israel and the world. This was fulfilled on 14<sup>th</sup> Nisan 33 A.D. when Jesus was crucified. He died about mid-afternoon as the Passover lambs were being sacrificed in the Temple.

**Unleavened Bread** symbolises the sin-removing, sanctifying work of Messiah Jesus, which was fulfilled during Passover week of 33 A.D.

**Firstfruits** symbolises the Resurrection of Christ from the dead as the Firstfruit of a New Humanity – an Immortal, Incorruptible New Creation. This was fulfilled on Nisan 16<sup>th</sup> 33 A.D. when God raised Jesus from the dead. This took place on the day after the Sabbath, the first day of the week (Sunday). This was also known as the eighth day. The number eight symbolises New Beginnings or New Creation.

**Pentecost** symbolises the next firstfruits of the New Humanity who are, at this stage, still in sinful, mortal bodies, though they have been given a 'down-payment' as a guarantee – the promised Holy Spirit. This was fulfilled at Pentecost 33 A.D. at the coming of the Holy Spirit on the disciples of Christ while they were in the Temple Courts. Like the feast of Firstfruits before it, Pentecost also occurred on the eighth day, the day after the weekly Sabbath.

The *four summer months* symbolised the intervening four decades (AD 30's, 40's, 50's and 60's) in which the good news of the kingdom was proclaimed in the whole world.

**Trumpets** and **Atonement** were fulfilled during the events of the Day of the Lord, the Second Appearing of Christ to that generation, in 70 AD.

**Tabernacles** symbolised the coming of the Kingdom of God in all its fullness at the time of Harvest at the conclusion of the age.

### Tabernacles & The Harvest

Now the OT clearly uses the final great Harvest Feast of Tabernacles as the symbol for the coming Kingdom of God. This is especially evident in the dedication of the Temple at the time of Solomon found in 1 Kings 8; and in the special celebration at Jerusalem during the return from the Babylonian Exile under Ezra and Nehemiah, found in Nehemiah 8.

All the men of Israel came together to King Solomon **at the time of the festival in the month of Ethanim (i.e. Tishrei), the seventh month...** So Solomon observed the festival at that time, and all Israel with him—a vast assembly, people from Lebo Hamath to the Wadi of Egypt. They celebrated it before the LORD our God for seven days and seven days more, fourteen days in all. On the following day he sent the people away. They blessed the king and then went home, joyful and glad in heart for all the good things the LORD had done for his servant David and his people Israel.

(1 Kings 8:2, 65-66 NIV)

The whole company that had returned from exile built booths and lived in them. **From the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated it like this. And their joy was very great.**



Day after day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. They celebrated the feast for seven days, and on the eighth day, in accordance with the regulation, there was an assembly.

(Nehemiah 8:17-18 NIV)

To those with spiritual eyes, it is clear that Tabernacles = The Feast = The Kingdom. The celebration of this Feast was *greater* at the time of Ezra than at the time of Solomon, and in fact, it had not been celebrated that way since the time of Joshua. This hinted at the fact that, when the kingdom would be established in glory at the Messiah's Appearing, the exiled remnant of the Israel of God would be delivered and they would celebrate the Feast in the kingdom with their Messiah – Jesus (or Yehoshua or Joshua; these are variations of the same Hebrew name meaning 'Yahweh is Saviour. For the feast motif, see Luke 13: 28-29 quoted earlier).

Nevertheless, Solomon's kingdom was a type of Christ's Kingdom, and Solomon celebrated this feast for 2 x 7 days, which speaks of the greater glory of the fullness of Christ's Kingdom as a double portion of the blessings of the firstborn sons. The prophet Isaiah also spoke about the great feast of the kingdom of God that would occur on mount Zion (that is, heavenly mount Zion, the mountain of the Lord, the new Jerusalem; cf. John 4:19-24; Hebrews 12:22-29; Revelation 14:1-5). **This feast would occur at a time when death itself would be destroyed (i.e. the resurrection).**

#### The Messianic Feast & The Remnant

**On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare  
a feast of rich food for all peoples,  
a banquet** of aged wine—  
the best of meats and the finest of wines.

**On this mountain he will destroy  
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,  
the sheet that covers all nations;  
he will swallow up death forever.**  
The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears  
from all faces;  
he will remove his people's disgrace  
from all the earth.  
The LORD has spoken.

In that day they will say,

"Surely this is our God;  
we trusted in him, and he saved us.  
This is the LORD, we trusted in him;  
let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."

(Isaiah 25:6-9 NIV)

As is evident from the above passage in Isaiah, in the day when death would be defeated at the messianic feast, the salvation of Israel would also be accomplished. This theme of the salvation of the remnant of Israel is also interwoven throughout

the NT. This ultimate re-gathering and restoration of the true Israel of God was very much associated with the great Day of the Lord, the Parousia of Christ (Matthew 19:28-29; 24:30-35; Acts 3:17-26). In Romans 9:27-29 & 11:26-27 Paul viewed the salvation of all Israel (i.e. the total sum of the elect remnant) as occurring at the Second Appearing of Christ from the heavenly mount Zion.

Revelation chapter 7 pictures the salvation of the remnant, the true Israel of God, from two different perspectives. In verses 1-8 the focus is on the chosen remnant of the Jews in the first century AD, especially those who dwelt in the land of Palestine, which was about to be judged, hence their need to be divinely sealed for protection. This first century Jewish remnant is symbolically represented as 144,000 Israelites who are sealed on their foreheads as servants of God. This was the first century generation equivalent to the remnant of grace in Elijah's generation numbering 7000, spoken of by Paul in Romans 11:1-7.

Then in verses 9-17 of Revelation 7 we have the following.

After this I looked, and **there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.** They were wearing white robes and **were holding palm branches in their hands.** <sup>10</sup> And they cried out in a loud voice:

"Salvation belongs to our God,  
who sits on the throne,  
and to the Lamb."

<sup>11</sup> All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, <sup>12</sup> saying:

"Amen!  
Praise and glory  
and wisdom and thanks and honor  
and power and strength  
be to our God for ever and ever.  
Amen!"

<sup>13</sup> Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?"

<sup>14</sup> I answered, "Sir, you know."

And he said, "**These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**" <sup>15</sup> Therefore,

"they are before the throne of God  
and serve him day and night in his temple;  
and he who sits on the throne  
will shelter them with his presence.

<sup>16</sup> 'Never again will they hunger;  
never again will they thirst.  
The sun will not beat down on them,'

nor any scorching heat.  
<sup>17</sup> For the Lamb at the center of the throne  
will be their shepherd;  
'he will lead them to springs of living water.'  
'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'" (NIV)

This 'great multitude that no one could count' is seen as being the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant, where Abraham was promised that his descendants would become as numerous as the stars in the sky and the dust of the Earth (Genesis 13:16; 15:4-5; Galatians 3:8). The fulfilled blessings of Revelation 7:15-17 are in fact echoes of Isaiah 49:10 & 21; 61:6-11; and 25:8.

The mention of **palm branches** being waved in Revelation 7:9 is also highly significant, as this forms a connection to the feast of Tabernacles. In relation to this feast, it was commanded that palm fronds and other leafy branches were to be used as part of the celebration of harvest and the feast of Ingathering (Leviticus 23:40). There is of course another connection here to what became known as Palm Sunday when Jesus rode into Jerusalem for his triumphal entry on the donkey. Many of the people welcoming him to the holy city took palm branches to either wave them or place them on the road before him (John 12:12-15; Matthew 21:7-10).

This waving of the palm branches at the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem was in anticipation of the coming kingdom, and in spirit it was a fulfilment of the feast of Tabernacles, for the King was present and the kingdom was drawing near. Nevertheless, the time for the full arriving of the kingdom in power in the great Day of the Lord would not occur immediately, for Christ had to suffer and die and be resurrected first -- to fulfil all what the prophets had written about Him in relation to His First Appearing (cf. Luke 17:20-22; 19:11; 21:9; 18:31-34).

The events of his First Appearing were to fulfil the feasts of Passover, Firstfruits and Pentecost; while the fulfilment of the remaining 'seventh month feasts' of Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles, was to await his Second Appearing within that generation, which would occur at the time of the great Harvest at the end of the Old Covenant age.

### The Harvests

Now it is extremely interesting to note that these seven Feasts are intimately tied in with the *three major harvest periods*. Passover/Unleavened Bread/Firstfruits occurred at the beginning of the **Barley harvest**; Pentecost occurred at the beginning of the **Wheat harvest**; and Tabernacles occurred at the time of the **Grape harvest** in particular, though it was also the final Great Harvest of all the crops at the end of the year. (We have considered these things somewhat already in the parables of *The Wheat and the Darnel* and *The Vineyard Farmers (or Tenants)*).

In view of this, some of Jesus' teaching is extremely fascinating concerning what He said about the various harvests, particularly that of the great Harvest, which was the soon-approaching end of the age.

"The field is the world... **The harvest is the end of the age...**"

(Matthew 13:38 & 39 NIV)

Also, take note of the following words of Jesus.

Don't you have a saying, '**It's still four months until harvest**'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! *They are ripe for harvest.* Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."

(John 4:35-38 NIV)

Then he said to his disciples, "**The harvest is plentiful** but the workers are few. Ask **the Lord of the harvest**, therefore, to send out workers into *his harvest field.*"

(Matthew 9:37-38 NIV)

Jesus was saying something very significant here in relation to the symbolic meaning of the Feasts. When you follow the chronology of the early chapters of John's account, the events of John Chapter 4 would've occurred a few weeks after the first Passover/Unleavened Bread of Jesus' ministry. This would've been around the month of May, during which time the barley was still being harvested, and the wheat was nearing its time of harvest, which began after the firstfruit offering at Pentecost. This meant that there were **yet four months until the great harvest time of Tabernacles in September/October time.**

What Jesus was saying here is that the apostles and early disciples were not to primarily focus on the impending harvest at the end of the age (Tabernacles), for they already had a job to do as reapers of a present harvest (Firstfruits/Pentecost). Jesus had prophesied earlier, in Matthew 9 quoted above, that the harvest is plentiful in His grain field, which is the field of the world, but more reapers or harvesters were needed to gather the crop – a fruitful crop destined for eternal life at the Great Harvest at the conclusion of the age. The common NT principle of 'the already & the not yet' (or more accurately the 'already & yet to come') is to be observed here (e.g. John 4:23; 5:25).

The spreading of the Gospel of God's Son needs chosen believers to sow the seed and to reap the harvest in the field of the world, while in the process, these servants of Christ will be getting wages and gathering fruit for eternal life in the kingdom of God. So, Jesus was saying that there was a harvest already occurring, but there was still the great Harvest of Tabernacles soon to arrive in the Day of the Lord. This is made evident in the vision of Revelation, which is ultimately a vision of the then-impending Day of the Lord.

I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one "like a son of man" with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because **the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.**" So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and *the earth was harvested.*

(Revelation 14:14-16 NIV)

This was symbolically describing the great Harvest of believers at the end of the age in relation to the Feast of Tabernacles, in which the chosen ones of Israel would inherit the kingdom of God at the coming of the Son of Man, the great Cloud-Rider (that is, Yahweh Himself). Take note that this is describing a **grain harvest** of the earth or world (that is, God's field) for the harvest is literally *dried* (ref. The Wheat & the Darnel).

Then what follows in verses 17-20 is the graphic, yet figurative, depiction of the wrath of God being poured out upon the earth (or more accurately, the *land* (Greek. *ge*) of Israel), where the stubborn unbelievers are being viewed as red grapes being trampled and crushed in a winepress – and Christ is the One who treads this winepress (Revelation 19:15). As we have seen earlier, this also has a relation to the feast of Tabernacles and the great Harvest. Scripture sometimes speaks of sin and wickedness becoming ripe for judgment. Take the following appropriate example from the prophet Joel.

“Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side. Swing the sickle, **for the harvest is ripe**. Come, **trample the grapes, for the winepress is full** and the vats overflow— *so great is their wickedness!*” Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the **day of the LORD** is near in the valley of decision.

(Joel 3:12-14 NIV)

Hence, Revelation 14:18 says that these grapes were “dead ripe!” For not only was there going to be a Harvest of Righteousness and Glory for the Overcomers in Christ, but there was also going to be a Harvest of Judgment and Condemnation for the stubborn unbelievers and hypocrites. Yet both of these ‘judgment events’ would occur at the same time, in the Harvest of Tabernacles, the time of the Great Ingathering in the Day of the Lord. Anyhow, there is so much more that could be said, but this will suffice for now.

It must be noted that there is an on-going harvest occurring right now amongst the nations of the world, which the spiritual Body of Christ is involved in. Nevertheless, we also are waiting to join the Great Wedding Feast, and the wonderful Feast of Tabernacles – which is the glory and power of the Kingdom of God in all its fullness in a New Creation. In the meantime, each of us must run the race, so don't give up the Faith. Walk the path of Righteousness and Truth in the Grace of God... and be prepared to do some sowing and reaping for the Kingdom of Heaven that you may be richly rewarded (2 Peter 1:10-11).

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Space (and time) forbids a detailed analysis of this topic here, so only a brief overview is given for the purpose of understanding the basic meanings of the parables. For a much more detailed consideration of this subject, accompanied by references of Biblical & historical sources, see for example *The Ultimate Wedding: Ancient Jewish Marriage Traditions & Their Fulfillment in Jesus the Messiah* by William Risk at <http://ldolphin.org/risk/ult.shtml> - accessed 12/05/2014. It needs to be noted that the writer of this article views the fulfilment of the Marriage Feast from the traditional futurist perspective, i.e. it's still awaiting its fulfilment. As shown in this book, I no longer hold to that view.

<sup>2</sup> There has been plenty of speculation and debate about the fact that the Zechariah of Matthew 23:35 (see also Luke 11:51) is called "the son of Berekiah" (or Barachiah), which appears to identify him as the later prophet Zechariah (Zechariah 1:1). There isn't any evidence that the post-exilic prophet Zechariah was murdered in the temple courts. The Zechariah of 2 Chronicles 24 was called "the son of Jehoiada". On the surface of things it would seem as though the writers may have got confused over which Zechariah was meant. On the other hand, there could be another explanation that is waiting to be discovered. (Source: F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (Doubleday, 1980) pp. 148-149).

<sup>3</sup> Although this issue could fill another article in itself, here are a few thoughts. There *are* instances in Scripture of spirit beings (i.e. angels) eating and drinking. Take for example the account in Genesis 18 & 19 where the three 'men' who appeared to Abraham and Sarah, one of whom was clearly Yahweh himself as 'the angel of the Lord' (this being a pre-incarnate theophany of Christ Jesus himself as the Word and Image of God), ate and drank due to Abraham's hospitality. Later, two of these angelic visitors spent the night in Lot's home in Sodom where they also ate and drank (cf. Genesis 18:1-8; 19:1-3). It's most likely that it was these events that prompted the NT writer of Hebrews to encourage the Jewish Christians to be hospitable to travellers, '*for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it*' (Hebrews 13:2 NIV).

After his resurrection, Jesus himself also ate and drank with his disciples when he appeared to them on a number of occasions (although it could be argued that the outward flesh & blood (or bone) form of Christ's resurrected body was later transformed at his ascension into a fully manifested spiritual body; Luke 24:36-43; John 21:1-15; 2 Corinthians 5:16-17). And as we've just seen, Scripture reveals that certain spirit beings have the ability to temporarily take on human form. Therefore it would seem that the resurrected, transformed, immortal, human spiritual body, which is like Christ's glorious body (and is also similar to the spiritual bodies of angels; cf. Luke 20:35-36), is able to eat and drink, though it is not dependant on food or water for sustenance, and evidently functions very differently to a body of flesh and blood. In fact, flesh and blood cannot inherit the heavenly kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:50). It is also interesting to note that the miraculous food, the manna, which was eaten by the Israelites in the desert wanderings, is called 'angel's food' & 'the bread of heaven' in Psalm 78:23-25.

As we have seen, Jesus often spoke of the coming kingdom of God as being like a feast, particularly the celebratory feast of a wedding (cf. Matthew 8:11-12; 22:1-14; 25:10; Luke 14:15-24; also Revelation 19:7-9). And he also told his apostles at 'the last supper' that he would not eat the Passover again until it found fulfilment in the kingdom of God; and that he would not drink the fruit of the vine again until the coming of the kingdom (cf. Luke 22:14-18). There are indications that this could've been referring to actual food and drink, but it is most likely to be understood as symbolising the joyful blessings and fellowship that would be enjoyed at the establishing of the kingdom within history. Be that as it may, all things are possible with God!

Nevertheless, Paul wrote that '*the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*' (Romans 14:17). He also seemed to suggest in 1 Corinthians 6:13 that 'the stomach and food' would be destroyed by God, although granted this was spoken in the context of sexual immorality! Ultimately, sexual relations will not be needed (or desired) in the resurrection (cf. Luke 20:34-36). So bang goes all of those false beliefs of there being sex in the afterlife!