



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

68 – Difficult Timing

Announcements:

5/16 @6:30 -

Women's

Bible Study

5/17 @7:00 -

Prayer

5/18 @6:30 -

Grace Group

5/21 @8:30 -

Sunday School

5/22 @6:30 -

Men's Discipleship

- Question 10

ICE BREAKER: Do you remember your first time at GBC? What stands out?

READ: Matthew 22:1-9

On Sunday I referred to this first half of the parable as a picture of the start of the church, but in all honesty that was sort of a cop out. Because here at the heart of the parable is a question of difficult timing. Based on the content and the pictures, It is fairly clear that What Jesus has in mind is what we call the marriage supper of the Lamb, it is the church arrayed in glory. Ultimately, it is the gathering of God's people to worship the Lamb and the fulfillment of all the promises given to us. But *when* this is all talking place is a question that is much more difficult to pin down, and so that is the question that I would like to turn our attention to this evening. At the heart of the debate lies this thought that we must keep in mind: what and when exactly is the transition from the invited guests to whomever in verse 9 take place?

The first option is that Jesus is looking ahead really just to the end of the week. It is possible that Jesus is looking ahead to his crucifixion and in particular the phrase that he will utter there on the cross: "It is finished". Theologically speaking, what is finished there is that the wrath of God was completely satisfied for all those who are in Christ, the time of war is over, Christ now rules and reigns victoriously. But practically speaking, how do we unpack all of that? Does this mean that the "time" of the Pharisees was now over? Well, "yes and no" would be the answer here. Though the crucifixion is the central point in all of history (theologically speaking, we have no way to ever know chronologically where it falls on the timeline until Christ returns!), we know that there is still a lot more to come before all that Christ seems to envision here will take place. In particular the resurrection and the day of Pentecost come to mind. That is why it is a "no". But certainly at the death of Christ everything changed. It was then that the veil was torn in two, it was then that the payment for all sins was made, and we should not overlook these precious truths!

DISCUSS: What benefits do we see in understanding that Jesus is talking about his death here (and resurrection and the giving of the Holy Spirit to be fair to this view)? What problems might there be with this view?

The next view goes a little further out, 40 or so more years to be exact. Many people see this as a prophetic foretelling of the destruction of the temple in AD 70. For a quick history lesson in 66 AD there began a strong revolt of the Jews against the Roman empire. The sort of culmination of this war was the siege of Jerusalem in AD 70. Here the whole city of Jerusalem was basically destroyed and the historian Josephus makes the claim that over 1 million people died. Importantly, part of the "whole city" that was destroyed was the temple. For this was the center of all religion and really of the whole Jewish people. Thus in AD 70 everything the Pharisees feared Jesus would do (take away their positions and importance, incite a rebellion, lead to their downfall) happened. While theologically speaking we said above the time of the Pharisees ended with the birth of the church, practically speaking this is the date when their time fully ended!

DISCUSS: What are the reasons to think the destruction of the temple is what Jesus is talking about there? What weaknesses do you see?

The third view is to assume Jesus is talking about what we would call the full inter-advental period. In other words, the entire time between his first and second coming. Why? A few reasons. The first is that the marriage supper of the lamb that we are looking forward to is an event in Revelation, it is still to come. The church is currently arrayed in glory, the body of Christ with him operating as the head, but yet everything is still broken. So the second thought then is that this is the time of the already and the not-yet, so the transition is *still* happening. There is still time for all to repent. In verse 10 we read that "the wedding hall was filled with guests" and we know that it is not full yet - and that every day more come to the saving knowledge of who Jesus is and the church is being built. So this process is an ongoing one!

DISCUSS: Again, what are the benefits and shortcomings of this view?

As always when we talk about a subject with a few different (good!) options, I like to make sure I share my thoughts. First I will note that there is a reason that I did not bring this up on Sunday! We went from what were in my estimation two very easy parables to one that is really tough. For me the answer is a bit of a wishy-washy "I think they all are valid interpretations". They each have strengths and weaknesses and I am not sure that it is wise to be dogmatic on any one reading, for ultimately the heart of the parable - that we need to repent and join the kingdom, clothed in the righteousness of Christ - comes through no matter what!