

The Messianic Banquet

- I. Background:
 - A. The Jewish religion has evolved through the years in response to the world circumstances that the Jewish people faced.
 - 1. In Bible classes are taught about some of those influences. For instance, the development of the psalms, or the audience and dating of books like Daniel.
 - 2. The message of the various Old and New Testament books is in direct response to the world situation of the recipients and their spiritual needs at the time.
 - B. As God brings Israel out of Egypt (1300 BC), they are a powerless and ignorant slave population. They have never been a national power and don't know how to become one. God rescues them in order to make them into the type of people he wants them to be.
 - C. The Wilderness wanderings is a time in which leadership is developed. The people learn how to develop a tribal government and support themselves.
 - D. By the time they arrive at the Promised Land, God has come a long way in developing them into the people he wanted them to be.
 - E. The time of the conquest of Canaan is their time to develop as a nation. They are no longer nomads, but for the first time they are a nation with land, farms, and national concerns
 - F. The Kingship of David (1010-970 BC) and Solomon mark the height of Israel's development as a nation. David unites them under one king. They become an army to be feared. They are no longer pawns of Egypt, Syria, or Babylon. They are a nation of their own.
 - G. But it is downhill from there.
 - 1. The northern and southern kingdoms, Israel and Judah, split.
 - 2. There is a succession of bad kings who forsake God to serve themselves.
 - 3. The priesthood and temple worship falls into disrepute.
 - H. God's punishment is foreign occupation and exile.
 - 1. Fall of Samaria and Israel 722 BC to Assyria
 - 2. Fall of Jerusalem and deportations in 597 & 586 BC to Babylon.
 - 3. Israel had gone from being slaves in Egypt to slaves in Babylon. It took 300 years for them to become a great nation, they had roughly 100 years of that peak, and then 300 years later they ceased to exist.
 - I. While in Babylonian captivity, many new developments arose in Judaism.
 - 1. Synagogue: no longer had the temple, synagogue to teach and pass on the faith.
 - 2. Many of their writings: to preserve the heritage.
 - 3. Messianic hope, Messiahism.

II. Messianic hope, Messiahism

- A. Israel's kings never measured up to what was expected from them, even David.
 1. The king had yet to come who would save, rule with justice, and establish true peace.
 2. So there were numerous expectations of God again intervening in the Jewish situation, again freeing the people as he had from Egypt, again renewing the covenant that was made at Sinai, again establishing the worship, and finally Israel becoming what God had always hoped.
 3. This long expected leader had many names: Son of God, Emmanuel, Prince of Peace, root of the stump of Jesse, the servant, the Messiah.
- B. Captive Israel did not know who this person would be, but they expected him none-the-less.
 1. Some writings present him as a king.
 2. Some present him as a prophet.
 3. Some see him as a military leader.
 4. Peter says, (1 Peter 1:10-12 NCV) *The prophets searched carefully and tried to learn about this salvation. They prophesied about the grace that was coming to you. ¹¹ The Spirit of Messiah was in the prophets, telling in advance about the sufferings of Messiah and about the glory that would follow those sufferings. The prophets tried to learn about what the Spirit was showing them, when those things would happen, and what the world would be like at that time. ¹² It was shown them that their service was not for themselves but for you, when they told about the truths you have now heard. Those who preached the Good News to you told you those things with the help of the Holy Spirit who was sent from heaven—things into which angels desire to look.!*
 5. Everyone saw him as one who would re-establish the Jewish nation and rule them as the true Kingdom of God.
- C. You have read about this Messiah in Daniel and Ezekiel. The prophets talk about him. The people seek him with longing expectation.
- D. You can understand how that messianic hope was increased when Cyrus took Babylon and allowed the Jews to return and Zechariah to rebuild the Temple in 520 BC.
- E. Then Egypt took Israel and ruled from 332 to about 200.
- F. Then the Seleucid dynasty, Persia, began to rule.
- G. A high point was the Maccabean revolt in 166, and for a few brief years, it looked like Israel would again become a power. Their hopes were high. The rebel band handed Antiochus a crushing defeat, and marched triumphantly into Jerusalem, bottled the Seleucid garrison up in the citadel, and proceeded to cleanse the temple from the pagan altars.
- H. In 164 the Temple was dedicated, and the Feast of Hanukkah has been celebrated ever since in commemoration.
- I. It would not be long before Rome would conquer Palestine, but the Messianic hope was kindled ever stronger. It was time.

- J. There was an expectation for the new king, the liberator, the man of God to come and establish the kingdom as God has willed.
- III. One of the pictures that Israel frequently painted of that victorious day is what we call the Messianic Banquet or the wedding feast.
- A. The idea is simple. The Messiah would come and rebuild Israel. The scattered Jews of the world would be drawn back to their country and they would all sit down to a great meal of celebration.
1. Problems would fade away.
 2. There would be no more hunger or thirst. The banquet would be characterized by an unlimited amount of wine and bread for all.
- B. The Passage we read this morning from Isaiah describes that hope for the Messiah.
1. (Isa 25:1-9 NRSV) *O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you, I will praise your name; for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure.*
 - a) Isaiah recognizes the plan for the restoration of Israel as being God's plan from the beginning. The persecution, just as the wilderness wandering, was God's plan for building up his nation.
 2. ² *For you have made the city a heap, the fortified city a ruin; the palace of aliens is a city no more, it will never be rebuilt.* ³ *Therefore strong peoples will glorify you; cities of ruthless nations will fear you.* ⁴ *For you have been a refuge to the poor, a refuge to the needy in their distress, a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat. When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm,* ⁵ *the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place, you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds; the song of the ruthless was stilled.*
 - a) It is the power of God that has destroyed enemy strongholds.
 - b) The nations are fearful of Israel because of the victories that God has produced.
 - c) God has been a champion of the lowly: the poor and the needy.
 3. ⁶ *On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.* ⁷ *And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever.* ⁸ *Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.*
 - a) God will prepare his victory feast on the Mountain of Jerusalem. It is characterized by plentiful fine wine and rich foods.
 - b) God will destroy the shroud of death that seems to be everywhere. This probably does mean that he will destroy death as a function of life, but that he will destroy the oppressors who were daily inflicting death on the people of Israel.
 4. ⁹ *It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.*

- a) Isaiah writes of the coming of the Messiah and the wonderful kingdom he will set up.
 - C. Marriage Feast, Wedding banquet.
 - 1. Israel pictured herself as the bride of God.
 - a) God chose her, God courted her, and at Sinai God married her.
 - b) The picture of unfaithful Israel in the old Testament is that of an adulteress, one who goes after pagan gods. The terminology of Israel as a whore is common in the Old Testament.
 - 2. The Marriage feast was the place where the covenant was sealed between the bride and her groom.
 - 3. So for Israel to look forward to the Marriage Feast of God, is to look forward to the new covenant and being restored to her rightful relationship as God's bride.
 - D. This vision of the Messianic Banquet or Marriage Feast was applied to the Passover in later Judaism.
 - 1. The Passover was seen as looking in three directions:
 - a) Past: at what God did for Israel by freeing Israel from Egypt.
 - b) Present: at what God is doing now.
 - c) Future: when Israel could gather with the Lord for the future Passover when they would again celebrate their deliverance from bondage to the latest oppressor, when the new covenant would be sealed.
 - d) Even Today, the Passover Seder is closed with the statement: "Next Year in Jerusalem." They still seek the Messianic banquet.
- IV. You may wonder why I have spent so much time talking about this. It is because the Gospels are full of stories that assume that the readers understand the significance of these meals.
- A. John
 - 1. begins his Gospel account of Jesus with the story of Jesus turning water into wine (150 gallons of wine). He is announcing that the Messiah has come. This is the long awaiting Messiah, at a wedding feast no less, who provides an unlimited feast of fine wine.
 - 2. John closes his Gospel with another meal, breakfast on the shores of Galilee with an excessively large catch of large fish. His emphasis in the description is the surprising abundance of the catch. Jesus cooks them breakfast and the text says, "Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord." This Jesus is the Messiah, and the disciples are participating in his banquet.
 - B. Luke says more about the Messianic Banquet or Wedding Banquet than any other NT writer.
 - 1. Luke 5, Jesus calls Levi (Matthew) to follow.
 - a) Levi throws a great banquet.
 - b) Notice who he invites: sinners, outcasts. The spiritually poor and needy of Isaiah 25.
 - c) The Pharisees ask why Jesus would dare participate in such a banquet.

- d) His answer: *You cannot make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them.*
 - e) The Messiah has come. This is the Messianic Banquet, the wedding feast of God.
2. Luke 9, Jesus is in a desert place. Tradition has the Messiah coming from the desert in the Spring.
- a) He takes 5 loaves and 2 fish and feeds 5000 people until each have eaten all they can hold and still there are 12 baskets of food left over.
 - b) It is Messiah time. The Messiah has invited these to his banquet and have filled them.
 - c) Then he asks the question, “Who do the crowds say that I am?”
 - d) Peter answers, “You are Messiah.”
3. In Luke 13, people ask Jesus who can be saved.
- a) He describes people who suddenly cozy up to Jesus when they sense judgment is coming, but have not had a relationship with him previously.
 - b) Jesus says, (Luke 13:28-30 NRSV) *There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrown out.* ²⁹ *Then people will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God.* ³⁰ *Indeed, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.*”
 - c) A judgment time is coming at the Messianic banquet. It is only those who have been faithful to the Lord that will be invited in.
4. Luke 14 has several banquet stories.
- a) One talks of the need for humility when accepting the master’s invitation to his banquet.
 - (1) One does not immediately go to the head table looking for a prime seat.
 - (2) Rather one humbly sits at the foot of the table, and if the Master wants him to sit higher, he can respond to the Master’s invitation.
 - (3) *“For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.*
 - b) Another talks of who is invited: it is the poor, crippled, lame and blind.
 - (1) The implication is that we are to serve the poor, not swap wealth with those who can provide for us.
 - c) The third talks of the priority of the Kingdom of God and how the Jewish leadership had unwittingly excused themselves.
 - (1) When it was time for the banquet, the invited folks (i.e. the Jews) began to make excuses: for business, personal, and financial reasons.
 - (2) So who did God invite: you got it: poor, crippled, blind, lame.
 - (3) The implication is that the Jewish leaders who thought so much of themselves and had been invited would not come to the Messiah’s table.

- d) Luke 15 has three more banquets, as the shepherd finds his lost lamb, the woman finds her coin, and the Father's son returns.
 - e) The Story of the Rich man and Lazarus shows Lazarus seated with Abraham at his table in eternity while the rich man suffers for his lack of care.
- V. Then finally, in the Last Supper and the Emmaus dinner we come to the application of the Wedding Feast, the Messianic Banquet, to our observance today.
- A. Luke 22:15 *He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶ for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; ¹⁸ for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."* Then after the meal, the disciples were arguing over who was the greatest and Jesus told them that the greatest was the servant. He concluded that dialogue by saying, "*You are those who have stood by me in my trials; ²⁹ and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, ³⁰ so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom,*
 - B. You see, to the early Jewish converts, this Lord's Supper that we are about to observe, was a reminder of the Messianic Banquet that was to come, and, to a degree, had come.
 - C. As in the Passover, they could look back at what had happened. Jesus came to free them from their sins. Their look to the past was one of joy.
 - D. Their Look to the present was also one of Joy. The Holy Spirit lived within them. Jesus was their power for life in the here and now. Jesus was their strength in the persecution they faced.
 - E. And they looked to the future, for Jesus is coming again. Even though we share in the foretaste of the banquet, it has yet to fully come. Each time we celebrate this meal together, we are looking forward to the real Messianic feast that is to come.

- VI. The final book of the Bible, Revelation, records the final end of this world.
- A. (Rev 19 NRSV) *After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power to our God, ² for his judgments are true and just; he has judged the great whore who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants.” ³ Once more they said, “Hallelujah! The smoke goes up from her forever and ever.” ⁴ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who is seated on the throne, saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!” ⁵ And from the throne came a voice saying, “Praise our God, all you his servants, and all who fear him, small and great.” ⁶ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. ⁷ Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; ⁸ to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. ⁹ And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are true words of God.” ... ¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly in midheaven, “Come, gather for the great supper of God.”*
- B. We too, like the Jews of old, have a great expectation of sitting with the saints on high for the great marriage feast of the lamb. We will be his bride, to live with Christ forever.
- C. And this morning, with the Lord’s Supper, we have, as it were, an appetizer.
- D. This is the first course, and a reminder, that as we are faithful to him, we too can dine with the Lord.
- E. Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. “Come, gather for the great supper of God.”
- F. Jesus invites you to be his guest. Will you accept his invitation. It is not just an invitation to dinner, it is an invitation to give your live to him, to be his bride, to live with him and serve him forever.