

**1068 Feast, Discipleship, and Finding the Lost - Jesus (21)**  
(Verses refer to those in NASB unless otherwise specified, and by Whirlwind.)

First of all, let's look at what the banquet is a metaphor for. While we still have the opportunity to enter the kingdom of heaven, we must make the right choice. Justification by faith is only the beginning of a Christian's life, and we must embark on the road to sanctification. Be ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb. Second, we talk about how to be a disciple. We must know what we can give, be ready to bear the cross, and believe that the Lord's arrangement is for our benefit. Finally, we see that the kingdom of heaven is actively seeking the lost, and that repentance is the first step, and how God rejoices when sinners repent. Although the Lord is actively seeking, we still have to lead by example and work together with God in the Great Commission. When we believed and were baptized, God had already transferred us into the kingdom of His beloved Son. Therefore, we are already in Christ and on the way to sanctification. We must not sin and remain in Christ. Even if we cannot avoid sin, we know, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

**1. To prepare a banquet**

"And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." When one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this, he said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" (Luke 14:12-15)

This man understood correctly, Jesus did use parables to talk about the feast of the kingdom of heaven, we will know this when we look at Jesus' response in later verses. Treating guests in the human world is indeed usually in both ways. This passage does not mean not to invite acquaintances. It is unreasonable to say so, but to invest in the kingdom of heaven, and don't just think of asking for returns in the world, sort of like giving alms, "So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you." (Matthew 6:2-4)

Jesus continued to use the parable of a banquet, "But He said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many; and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.' Another one said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.' Another one said, 'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.' And the slave came back and

reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' And the slave said, 'Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.'""(Luke 14:16-24)

The Bible often speaks of the kingdom of heaven with banquets. For example, it is clearly stated here, "Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. Again he sent out other slaves saying, 'Tell those who have been invited, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.'" But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.' Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests."(Matthew 22:1-10)

These verses and the previous scriptures are basically talking about the same thing. We see that the guests who were prepared before only focus on their own affairs. In the end they have no part in the banquet, and we also see that the qualifications to be invited are quite low. If we use these scriptures as an analogy to the requirements in the New Testament, it means that salvation is originally prepared for everyone, and as long as you believe, you can be justified. Furthermore, it can be seen that it was the Israelites who were originally invited, and "...What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened."(Romans 11:7) A small number of Jews like Paul got it. Also because of this, "...But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, ..." (Romans 11:11) Therefore, the plan of salvation has a sequence, from the elect Jews to the Gentiles, just like "Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I have placed You as a light for the Gentiles, That You may bring salvation to the end of the earth.'""(Acts 13:46-47) For salvation, the threshold for salvation is set quite low, as long as one can believe. The scriptures clearly say, "for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."(Romans 10:10)

But we also see the Gospel of Matthew going on to say, ""But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And the man was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen.'""(Matthew 22:11-14) At that time, people

had to wear dresses at the banquet. Obviously, those people came on the road, and it was unlikely that they would wear dresses on the road. Because the man had nothing to say, so it indicated that the man could wear his dress. The only possibility is that the king prepared them for the banquet, but the man chose not to wear it, which is improper. Therefore, believing and being justified is only the beginning of being a Christian. To live a life of "separation and sanctification", which everyone can live, it is clearly stated in the New Testament, "because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'" (1 Peter 1:16) Although holiness cannot be achieved overnight, we must enter the narrow gate and walk on the road to holiness, and don't become the one not chosen. Please note that the scriptures do not say that there is only one person without a garment. Using the New Testament as an analogy, the garment refers to justification by faith and everyone has the indwelling Holy Spirit to guide us on the way to the sanctification.

In the last book of Revelation of the Bible, we also see the ultimate wedding feast of the Lamb, "Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, 'Come here, I will show you the bride (the Church), the wife of the Lamb (the Lord Jesus Christ).' And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." (Revelation 21:9-10) What we want to emphasize is that the New Jerusalem is the only church in God's eyes, that is, a group of people gathered in His name, and the physical location of that group has nothing to do with it, "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst." (Matthew 18:20) Paul knew this very clearly, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." (Galatians 3:26-27) We know that Jesus is the only begotten son of the Father, so we are all sons of God, which means legal adopted sons! The scripture says, "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren." (Romans 8:29) He is indeed the firstborn among many brethren.

## **2. How to be a disciple?**

"Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, 'If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions. 'Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? It is useless either for the soil

or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.'"(Luke 14:25-35)

Here it doesn't say not to love your parents, etc., but to say that loving the Lord is more important than loving all these. It is not easy to be a disciple. We must know what we can give, but sometimes, even if we are willing to make peace with others, they may not be willing, and our estimates may not be completely correct. The cross doesn't refer to asking for trouble, but is usually related to suffering. The growth of life is often accompanied by the suffering arranged or allowed by God (like Job). Basically no one is willing to take the initiative to bear the cross, but the verse says clearly that to be a disciple must be ready to bear the cross. This scripture does not mean that before believing in the Lord, one should estimate to the extent that one can fully bear one's own cross. If so, why bothers believing because no one can reach the full extent beforehand. But we should have the mind that when the Lord calls, we are ready to give up everything like James and John did at that time, "Going on from there He (Jesus) saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him."(Matthew 4:21-22) This is really not easy. I know it is very difficult for me to do so.

We must believe that the Lord's arrangement is for our good, because "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, ..." (Romans 8:28) As for the salt that loses its flavor and is thrown out, probably only the rock salt that is used directly will be like this, and it is impossible to make salty rock salty again that has lost its taste. Finally, we really need to have ears that can hear. Not only here, but to the seven churches mentioned in the Book of Revelation, all said, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (as in Revelation 3:22)

### **3. The kingdom of heaven is actively looking for lost sheep and lost money**

"Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them.'" (Luke 15:1-2) Indeed, the Pharisees and scribes judged others as sinners, but they did not expect all persons, including themselves, needs salvation, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

The sin mentioned in the Bible refers to disobedience to God. To prove this, we first look at the scriptures, "...through one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, ..." (Romans 5:12) This is because of Adam's disobedience. So disobedience means sin. Conversely, to prove that sin means disobedience to God, we can look at its logical equivalent, that obedience to God means no sin. God has absolute sovereignty, and obedience to God is absolutely not sin, so the conclusion is that sin equals disobedience to God. The verse says, "When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth." (Genesis 5:3) Thus, Seth was born with sin since Adam was contaminated by sin at that time. We are all descendants of Adam. Similar to heredity, we also carry sin from birth. We are sinners because we carry sin, not because we commit sins. Don't put the cart before the horse. Speaking of sin, we know that

**children can tell lies without being taught. With the born sin, how cannot people be not inherently evil and do people fall short of the glory of God?**

**There are two parables in the following verses. The first one is: "So He told them this parable, saying, "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."(Luke 15:3-7) Note that this man is actively seeking. It seems that whether we know it or not, that a person will become a true Christian is the work of the Holy Spirit Who actively seeks. We have also heard such testimonies.**

**Then it talks about the second parable of losing money, "Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!' In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."(Luke 15:8-10)**

**These two parables are talking about the same thing, that is, the kingdom of heaven is actively looking for the lost, hoping that sinners will repent, and seeing God's joy because of sinners' repentance. Although the Lord is actively seeking, we still have to work together with God in the Great Commission (cf. Matthew 28:18-20). We must set an example, let others see our good deeds, and be willing to be Christians. Therefore, in the Great Commission, all nations can be made disciples of the Lord.**

**Repentance is very important, it is the first step, just like "Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.""(Acts 2:38) So true repentance must be followed by action. Jesus also made it very clear, "...Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."(Matthew 4:17) When believing and being baptized, God has "...rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."(Colossians 1:13-14) So we are already in Christ and on the way to sanctification, we must not sin and stay in Christ. Even if we cannot avoid sin, we also know, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."(1 John 1:9)**