



Chapter 22

Have you ever tried to do something nice for someone, only to be rejected? Maybe you tried to open the door for someone, give helpful fashion advice to your teen (watch out!), or try out a new recipe. It stings to be rejected. It can be embarrassing or even offensive.

Icebreaker:

1. Have you ever tried to do something nice that was rejected, or a least under-appreciated? Talk with your group about what happened and how it made you feel.

Rejection is never fun, but this week's chapter begins with a story about cosmic-scale rejection! It's all part of the same exchange between Jesus and the religious authorities that began in the middle of chapter 21. Let's dive in!

Verses 1-14

The Kingdom of heaven was like a vineyard in the previous parable; now, it's like a king planning his son's wedding feast. The initial invitation goes out by servants (i.e., the prophets) to Israel, but is rejected. The message goes out to them again—this time via other servants (likely John the Baptist and Jesus)—but is again rejected. Verse 6 is shocking in its own way, but verse 5 contains actions that are, in the words of NT scholar Richard Bauckham, “tantamount to rebellion” against the king.

2. In what ways have you seen this same kind of apathy, indifference, and ultimately, rebellion, toward God in our present age?

The king then destroys the people and their city—likely a reference to what will happen to Jerusalem in AD 70. The second invitation in verses 9-10 is to “as many as you find,” which depicts the global scope of God's mission. The guests are now a ragtag mix that no doubt includes some surprising faces!

3. Many people turned down the invitation, yet the servants were called to keep sending out the invitation. What can we learn here as we are called to tell others about Jesus?

Verse 10 mentions both “bad and good.” It's possible to take this in more than one way. Certainly the wedding feast guests include representatives from the dregs of society—the “tax collectors and sinners.” In addition, it can also be taken as a reference to what we already saw back in chapter 13 with the parables of the net and the harvest. In fact, verses 11-14 may depict this very thing.

This is a strange episode, but wedding guests then, like now, were expected to wear their best and cleanest clothing to a feast. Again, Richard Bauckham helps us by explaining that “To appear in ordinary, soiled working clothes would show contempt for the occasion, a refusal to join in the king's rejoicing.” It isn't enough to merely be *present at* the feast; guests must also be genuine *participants in* the feast. Mere presence without engagement is worthless!

4. Do you know people who are present around the church but who refuse to engage in worshipping Jesus? We'll take time later to pray that their hearts would soften!

Verses 15-22

The tension escalates here as a group of leaders again tries to trap Jesus through a question about loyalty to the state and to God. Jesus's omniscience is again on display as He knows their intention despite their flattering lies. His response indicates a duty to pay the tax to Caesar, but that our even greater duty is to the God in whose image Caesar is made! Grant Osborne explains that, "Submission to government takes place as part of one's complete submission to God in every area." You know it already, but this can be tricky!

5. Politics and religion are famously contentious! What happens when our loyalty to government overgrows our loyalty to God? Check out the passages surrounding Acts 4:19 and 5:29 for examples of keeping these two in the right order.

Verses 23-33

The Sadducees take a turn at trying to trap Jesus through a hypothetical scenario involving passages from Genesis and Deuteronomy. Jesus rebukes them, though, for their lack of understanding and faith in God's power to raise the dead. The explanation is fascinating when we consider what Jesus says about the absence of marriage in our post-resurrection lives.

6. Who are you closest to relationally right now? Imagine being even closer, not only to this person, but to all people, and in relationships that are completely unhindered by sin. How does that make you feel?

Verses 34-40

Now, the Pharisees take another swing at trapping Jesus. The words Jesus answers with are the big idea of all of Scripture for what God asks of us. It's the essence of everything we should be pursuing, and it's the heart of the mission of Calvary Bible Church: *Building a Christ-centered community of people fully devoted to loving God and loving others.*

7. Love for God comes first, but it's not enough (or even possible) to only love God. How does our love for people reveal whether we really love God? How does our love for God enable us to love others?

Verses 41-46

Earlier in Matthew, Jesus had commanded people to not tell anyone about the healing miracles He had performed for them. He wanted to minimize the fanfare surrounding His supernatural ministry in order to prevent the masses from concluding that the Messiah—*their* concept of the Messiah, that is—had come. Jesus is now turning a "secret" into a pronouncement, but with a correction about the nature of the Messiah.

Jesus quotes Psalm 110:1, and there's a somewhat technical explanation for what the verse is saying. In Hebrew, the first "Lord" is the exclusive divine name, *Yahweh*. The second "Lord" is a more generic title of respect that could be applied broadly. The verse, then, has David saying "Yahweh said to my Lord..." David, being divinely inspired ("in the Spirit"), states that his "Lord" would be in the position of honor and privilege to Yahweh in the divine throne room.

The question hinges, then, on how David could call his earthly descendant (the Messiah) "Lord," and how this Lord could also be at Yahweh's right hand. This is no mere human!

8. Christian theology holds that Jesus, the Messiah, is both fully human and fully divine. What does His humanity mean for us? What does His divinity mean for us?

Tying the Bow

Jesus is the King who is to be celebrated! It's tragic to think that some will refuse to show up to the wedding feast. It's tragic to think that some would show up, but with no intent of participating in the celebration. May we be the kind of people who are fully engaged in the Kingdom celebration!

9. Let's close now by praying for those around us who are not yet at a point of worshipping Jesus. Pray that they would have a heart of flesh rather than stone, that they would have eyes that see and ears that hear the beauty of what Jesus has done.