

Matthew 22:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

Analysis

And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come (ἀπέστειλεν τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ καλέσαι τοὺς κεκλημένους εἰς τοὺς γάμους, καὶ οὐκ ᾔθελον ἐλθεῖν)—The doulous (servants) represent the prophets and John the Baptist who prepared Israel for Messiah's coming. The keklēmenous (those having been called/invited) refers to Israel, God's covenant people who had received repeated invitations through the prophets.

The phrase ouk ēthelōn elthein ('they were not willing to come') reveals the problem: not inability but unwillingness. The invitation was clear, the feast was ready, but human volition refused divine grace. This anticipates Jesus's lament in 23:37: 'I would have gathered you...but you were not willing.'

Historical Context

In Jewish wedding customs, the initial invitation was followed by a second call when the feast was ready. Refusing this final summons was a grave insult, especially from a king. The historical fulfillment points to Israel's rejection of the prophets' message about the coming Messiah.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What is the difference between hearing God's invitation and being 'willing' to come—what does true willingness require?
2. How do we see the pattern of 'repeated invitations' throughout Israel's history, and what does this reveal about God's patience?
3. In what areas of life might you be 'unwilling' to respond to God's clear invitation?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ κεκλημένους
And sent forth G3588 servants G846 them that were bidden G2564
τοὺς κεκλημένους εἰς τοὺς γάμους καὶ οὐκ ἤθελον
G3588 them that were bidden G2564 to G1519 G3588 the wedding G1062 And G2532 not G3756 they would G2309
ἐλθεῖν
come G2064

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 22:17 (Parallel theme): And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Romans 10:21 (Parallel theme): But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

John 5:40 (Parallel theme): And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

