

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 ἥθελον 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 οὐκ ἔθελον εἰλθεῖν ('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

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			
G2532	G649		G1401		G2564			
τοὺς	κεκλημένους	εἰς	τοὺς	γάμους	καὶ	οὐκ	ἵθελον	
G3588	them that were bidden	to	G3588	the wedding	And	not	they would	
G2564	G1519			G1062	G2532	G3756	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.

