

## Does Matthew 22:1-14 Support Arminian Claims?

Written by K B Napier

Wednesday, 15 September 2010 17:09

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In an effort to support their claims, Arminians rely on many texts, all of which they perceive to be in their favour. They do so with the best of intentions, for they believe that anyone can be saved, if they wish to be saved. *But, nowhere in scripture do we find such proof. God does not say anyone who wishes can be saved by their own choice.*

So, what can we make of this text in Matthew? Does it, after all, support the idea that we may be saved if we choose to be? Does it mean that God throws out His 'offer' of salvation to all and sundry?

*No, it does not!* I have been charged with twisting this text, and others, to suit my 'theory' that God predestinates those who will be saved. The critics ignore the plain texts of scripture that clearly speak of God doing this. But, what of this text? Surely it tells us that God could NOT have chosen the first category of people, for they turned their backs on Him? Let us see... and, as usual, let us look at it all in its proper context.

### The Proper Context of Matthew 22:1-14

The 'context' means: all material in the immediate texts that are to do with the verses we concentrate on. In this case, we must go back to the previous chapter, which will show us clearly what the context really is.

Jesus had been speaking to the Pharisees and chief priests (21:33-46) and no reader can deny that this text refers to these blind leaders of Israel. Note the close similarity with the parable in chapter 22?

In chapter 21, Jesus tells the Pharisees and chief priests that the kingdom would be taken from them and given to a nation (the Gentiles) that would bring forth proper fruits. The parable in the next chapter *continues* this condemnation of the Jewish leaders and perverted mosaic religion. Therefore, the next parable must be interpreted in this light. Verse one begins:

*"And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables..."*

See? He is talking to 'them again'. Who is 'them'? Obviously, it is the Pharisees and chief priests!

Once we understand this basic fact the rest falls in to place...

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We see that a king sent out invitations to those who should come to the wedding. But, they rejected the call and stayed away, even though the king had prepared everything for their delight. However, they made light of it all and did their own thing. They even abused the servants of the king sent by him to bring them to the feast. The king then burned their city and destroyed them, because they were not worthy.

Who are these unworthy people? Well, Jesus was talking to the Jewish leaders. Thus, the unworthy people were the Jews, whose chief city was destroyed in 70 AD. They had consistently abused their favoured position in God, so He turned His back on them, verses 1-7 (for a season, as we read in Hebrews).

The king then ordered his servants to get in other guests to replace the 'official' ones. They would not be from the usual nice places, but would be anyone at all – good or bad, they were called to the wedding. Who, today, is called to the wedding feast of the Lamb, verses 8-10? Gentiles! (Few Jews currently respond to the Gospel. They are not excluded from the Gospel, but the 'mantle' has been removed from them as a nation until later in time).

Who is the man who arrived without a proper wedding garment? He is the imposter, the one who claims salvation but has not obtained it. That is why he was not recognised by the king's men. We are warned that those who are not clothed in the spotless garments of righteousness will not enter heaven. That is what happened in this text! That man was cast into outer darkness.

Finally, verse 14, we read that many are called but few are chosen. The calling refers to the general preaching of the word. The chosen are those predestinated to salvation. Such an interpretation is consistent with that of the previous parables. Jesus was talking directly to the Jewish leaders and about the Jewish nation. When God brought Jesus to this earth, and He died, He died for 'all' (who would be saved), not just for the Jews. The old regime and temple rites were removed and the new promise took its place.

We can see, then, that this text does not support the Arminian idea of free choice. It is about God turning His back on a nation that had treated His salvation lightly. He then punished them for their evil and threw open salvation to all others. It does NOT speak about saving everyone who wishes to come: the man who did not wear the right clothes is proof of that... he wished to come, but in his own strength!

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Bear in mind that though the Jews were especially chosen as a nation, not all Jews were saved. This is also made clear in scripture. We should not use the 'Jewish factor' when talking about predestination to salvation through Jesus Christ, because God's covenant with them was not quite the same as the one He has with Christians, though all are 'saved by faith'. Jews were saved by adherence to rites and temple. We are saved by Jesus Christ.

Those Arminians who claim to adhere firmly to scripture must learn how to interpret correctly and not according to their own desire to see men saved. We must all desire men to be saved, but according to **God's** criteria, not our own.

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