

# **TANGAZA COLLEGE**

**CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA**

## **THE EXEGESIS OF THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST ( MATT. 22: 1- 14) AND ITS RELEVANCE TO CHRISTIANS TODAY.**

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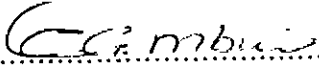
*This is a long Essay submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Arts  
degree in Religious Studies.*

**Date: 7th February, 2001.**

**Nairobi, Kenya.**

## **Student's Declaration**

I hereby declare that the material used herein has not been submitted for Academic Credit to any other Institution. All sources have been cited in full.

Student's signature.....

Caesar Mburu.

# **Dedication**

*To my cousin Zipporah Waithira Mwaniki*

## **Acknowledgment.**

There are a number of people who have helped me in writing this long essay. I would first like to thank Fr. Lacomara, the head of Biblical department in Tangaza College, who has been guiding me by offering professional advice to meet the academic and Biblical requirements in writing this essay, for reading and correcting it at each stage. Fr. Oliver for marking the grammar of this Essay; Sister Aringo for her assistance to me; Fr. Dominica Izzo for Lectures in long Essay seminar and for arming us with writing a quality academic research paper.

To the Capuchin friars, I owe many thanks for granting me this opportunity to study and undertake this project. Also many has assisted me in different ways. To all I say Thank you may God bless you all.

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## **GENERAL INTRODUCTION.**

When one reads the parable of the wedding feast (Matt. 22: 1 - 14) many themes emerge. Different people understand it in different ways and emphasise a particular theme from it. But my main concern in this paper is to verify how the rejection of Jesus' message by Israel led to its acceptance by others who were not born Jews into the people of God and the relevance of the parable to the Christians today in Africa.

The parabolic language used by Matthew may be confusing and may make a reader of the pericope to miss this point. Most people who read this parable do not understand the real meaning of it. They ask themselves what does the evangelist want to tell us? Matthew uses a culturally based stylistic device to communicate to his community a specific message. The message is contained in the parable itself and in a way it reflects the situation of his community. He expresses different theological points which are affecting his community. The main issues are why is the Gospel being preached to people who are not born Jews and secondly why does the early Church regards itself as the new people of God?

To answer these two main questions, Matthew addresses the issues of rejection of Jesus' message and its consequences. Israel in the person of her leaders has rejected its Messiah who was to liberate them. Other people who were not born Jews have accepted him and has adhered to his message. As a result they have inherited the promises of God to Israel and have become part of the people of God. Matthew's attitude is universalistic and he does not restrict himself to a particular tribe or people: Whoever believes in the message of Jesus the son of God and the Messiah who was promised to Israel has become a member of the people of God. This acceptance by the Gentiles was much possible because of the rejection of Jesus' message by Israel.

Though one has become a member of the new people of God, this does not guarantee heavenly inheritance or the kingdom of God. It demands the believer to work hard and attain the promises of Jesus to those who believe in Him. Therefore the parable is a warning and a promise to the new members of the people of God. Even Christians can reject Jesus' message if they do not remain faithful to their vocation. A Christian should not assume that just because one has become a member of the new people of God, he/she will inherit the kingdom of God.

This is the message to Christians today in Africa. An African Christian may think that because the Gospel has been preached to him/her, the person does not need to work for one's own salvation. Some may even think that there is no real difference between the God of our ancestors and the God of Jesus Christ. Therefore this parable is a challenge to the Christians in Africa to rethink their perspective of Jesus. It also challenges them to reflect on different ways in which they reject Jesus' message and opt for something else. It also asks them to try and understand Jesus as one of them so as to respond positively to his message. An African Christian is requested to try and understand Jesus' message in his/her socio-cultural situation in order for it to bear some fruits in one's life. This is what Matthew's community did and is what we are requested to do. Instead of rejecting Jesus' message out right as foreign, we should try our best to understand and apply it in our new situations as Matthew's community did. This would discourage indifferentism among African Christians. The Christian community should ask itself how can we appropriate the message of Jesus and remain who we are?

In order to address these issues mentioned above this work is divided into three main sections. A proper understanding of the parable, its theological meaning and its application to the present situation in Africa.

## **CHAPTER ONE:**

### **EXEGESIS OF THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST.**

#### **1. 1 INTRODUCTION.**

The parable of the "wedding feast" explains in summary the sociological situation of Matthew's community. This experience of Matthew's community may be interpreted as if it is happening to Jesus. It explains how the community came to be and why the Gentiles are included among the people of God. To illustrate the point Matthew uses the parable of the wedding feast. This is why it is important for the reader to understand what a parable is. Matthew's ideas become clear when we do the exegesis on the parable itself. As the parable appears also in Luke in a different form, it is good to compare the two accounts and ask is the parable found exclusively in the synoptics (i.e. as in Luke and Matthew) or is it found in extra biblical writings? Luke and Matthew relate the parable in different contexts to suit and stress their point. Luke emphasises on humility and the reversal of roles, while Matthew reflects on his community and the spread of Christianity outside the Jewish circle.

#### **1. 2 WHAT IS A PARABLE?**

A parable may have several possible meanings in the Bible. The word in the Bible can refer to a similitude, a parable, exemplary stories and allegory. Similitude compares two things. The comparison may or may not be elaborated upon. There is a figurative and an application. The figurative deals with a typical regularly recurring event or events that are observable. The verb used is in the present tense. Some similitude may have an introductory

remark and lack the application part.<sup>1</sup> In allegories each detail is treated separately. Its aim is to tell a story which is read naturally as such.

A parable proper is a "metaphor or a simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting by its clearness or strangeness, perplexing the mind and leaving it in sufficient doubt about its exact application as to provoke the mind into active thought."<sup>2</sup> The metaphor may be elaborated by a story. This is what the German word '*parabel*' means.<sup>3</sup> The parable is a story. Such a story may have or may not have an introduction. The verb is in the past tense. A parable connects something which happened once and can be sighted as a model to be imitated. A parable is not a fictitious story, artificially conceived, whose details are understood only by the elite. A parable is an expression of the mind which sees truth in concrete pictures but not in the abstract. A parable may appeal to the imagination by using something unusual which attracts the attention of the hearers. Sometimes the teller may use a saying familiar to the listeners and grounded in their own culture.<sup>4</sup> The story must remain realistic, meaningful and about something surprising to the listener. The parable provokes the hearer to ask: what is the relevance of the story?

The parable may seem detached from the present situation hence provoking the mind to active thinking. It demands the hearers to ask why the story is being told. The search for meaning and understanding of the story leads to an insight which helps the hearers see how the parable enlightens and explains the present situation. In this way a parable is an illustration. Its main purpose is to explain but by itself it cannot be explained.

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Lambrecht, Once More Astonished, The Parable Of Jesus, ( New York: Cross Road Publishing Company, 1981), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Charles .H. Dodd, The Parables Of The Kingdom, 3rd Edition, ( New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), 5.

<sup>3</sup> Lambrecht, *Op. Cit.*,3.

<sup>4</sup> Dodd, *Op. Cit.*, 9.

Usually parables have one main point. The above explains why Matthew uses the parable of the wedding feast to explain the present situation of the Church in Antioch.

The understanding of a parable holds the hearers attention, convinces them and helps them see the connection between the image used and the reality. As a result the oblique situation becomes clear. Therefore, a parable usually produces insight, conviction and recognition on the side of the listeners. The listeners realize that they had to practise what the parable says. When Jesus narrated the parable of the wedding feast, both the Jews and the Gentiles understood how it concerned them and their community. As a result, both were moved to respond to the demands which were asked of them.

A good parable challenges and moves one to make a decision. A parable affects the core of the listeners and makes them act.

Parables were taken from the daily life of Palestine and hence were well understood. That is why Joachim Jeremias states that to discover the setting of a parable, the present reader must ask himself what Jesus intended to say at that particular moment or situation and what effect his word had on his listeners.<sup>5</sup>

The allegorizing of parables is not a direct work of Jesus, but of the early Christians as they tried to adapt the parables to their own situation.<sup>6</sup> A good example is the parable of the wedding feast. Matthew did this because he was addressing a Christian-Jews audience.

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<sup>5</sup> Joachim Jeremias, The Parables Of Jesus, ( New York: Charles Scribers Sons, 1963), 22.

<sup>6</sup>Lambrecht, *Op. Cit.*,6.

### 1. 3 THE CONTEXT OF THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST.

The pericope (22:1- 14) appears in the fourth section in the Gospel of Matthew that deals with the Messiah's last days in Jerusalem (21:1 - 26:1a). Matthew has set his pericope among those showing the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders who demonstrated a lack of faith in Jesus by their challenge of his authority (22:23-27).<sup>7</sup> This pericope is designed to point to the rejection of Jesus' message and its result. The leaders dispute over the authority of Jesus culminates in his rejection and death. Jesus uses various parables to point to the leaders' lack of faith and its consequences. The mere knowledge of God's will is not enough. What matters is the doing of the will of God. Matthew points to the nearness of the time of Judgment. This judgment of Israel leads to the acceptance of the Gentiles as the people of God.<sup>8</sup>

This parable should be seen in connection with the other parables of judgment. They reflect the rejection of Jesus and the prophets, especially of John the Baptist whose ministry was a forerunner of that to Jesus, and its consequences. Matthew drives his point home in 21:43 where he states that the kingdom will be taken away from Israel and be given to other people. The leaders of the Jews understood Jesus' reference to them and their determination to kill him continues (21:45 - 46). Throughout this section Matthew presented the religious leaders as antagonists.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Donald Senior, The Gospel Of Matthew, ( Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 135.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

#### 1.4 THE STRUCTURE OF THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST

Matthew's structure of the parable of the wedding feast clearly points to Israel's rejection of Jesus' message. It differs markedly from the way it appears in Luke (14: 16 - 24) and the Gospel of Thomas (logia 64). For example in Luke, and in the Gospel of Thomas, there is a single servant while in Matthew there are several. This breaks the original connection between verses 5 and 8 so as to point out that the servants were not only rejected but also ill treated by the invited guests.

The parable can be divided into two main sections 22:1-10 and 22:11-14. The first section deals with the forerunners of Jesus, that is, the prophets, and their consequent rejection by Israel. In this way Matthew implicitly points to a similar result of Jesus' ministry. The main pattern of section 22:1- 14 is an invitation and the rejection of that invitation. These invitations refer to Israel's prophets, John the baptist, Jesus, and Christian missionaries.

In the first section, Matthew has redacted his Q source and has made some noticeable changes. Matthew changes the man (Lk. 14:16) to the king's son and *deiprion* in the Gospel of Thomas to a marriage feast.<sup>10</sup> Section two (22:11-14) is missing in Luke and in the Gospel of Thomas, which shows that it is an expansion of Matthew. This second section is designated to remind the Gentiles that though they have been accepted as the People of God they should not take this role for granted. At the same time Matthew points to the eschatological hour which will be accompanied by the influx of the Gentiles into the Church.

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<sup>10</sup> Jeremias, *Op. Cit.*, 63- 67.

A comparison with other extra biblical literature, especially the rabbinical parables, shows that the event of a man without a wedding garment is an independent parable that begins in 22:2 and changes the original setting of the parable from a private supper to a wedding feast. In the whole parable the second section supports the first section that deals with the rejection of Jesus' message by Israel and leads to the invitation of the Gentiles to membership of the people of God. Matthew reminds the Gentiles that they must perform authentic acts of a Christian life, otherwise, even they, themselves, will be rejected at the time of judgment.<sup>11</sup>

#### **1. 5 TEXT OF THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST ( MAT. 22 : 1 - 14 ).**

*22:1 Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying:*

*22:2 The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son.*

*22:3 He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come.*

*22:4 Again he sent other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.'*

*22:5 But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business,*

*22:6 while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them.*

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

22:7 *The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murders, and burned the city.*

22:8 *Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy.*

22:9 *Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.'*

22:10 *Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.*

22:11 *'But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe,*

22:12 *and he said to him, 'friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless.*

22:13 *Then he said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

22:14 *For many are called, but few are chosen.'*

## **1. 6. THE EXEGESIS OF THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST ( Matt. 22: 1-14)**

22:1 *"Once again Jesus spoke....."* This verse introduces the parable as a narrative.

παλιν ( again) connects the present audience with those in the previous parables.<sup>12</sup> παλιν

is not used here in the sense of answering or reacting to what has preceded.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> M. Eugene Boring, "The Gospel Of Matthew", In The New Interprators Bible, Matthew And Mark, Vol. 8, Lander E. Keck ( Chief Ed. ) ( Nashville: Abingburgh Press, 1995), 417.

<sup>13</sup> W. D. Davies And Allison C. Dale, The International Critical Commentary, The Gospel Of Saint Matthew, Vol., 2, ( Edingburgh: T & T. Clark, 1991), 273.

" *To them again...*" The audience are the Chief priests and the Pharisees( 21:45).<sup>14</sup>

This phrase is from Mk. 12:1 and might refer to the three preceding parables ( 21: 28-22:14) or simply by means of parables (παροβαλτικως has led many commentators to claim that there are two parables in 22:1 - 14. The verse is a transitional one. In each case the meaning of Matthew should be seen in connection to the whole section.<sup>15</sup>

22:2 "*The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king...*" This verse is a redaction. Matthew uses aorist passive to emphasize what the kingdom has already become, but the future is the principle focus.<sup>16</sup> Q source, Luke and the Gospel of Thomas has a man ( ανθρωπος τις \_ A certain man ). Matthew has a man king ( ανθρωπος βασιλει) which is redaction. The kingdom of heaven may have been borrowed from a related verse in Luke 14:15. The term kingdom (in Jewish terms) refers to 'nature', 'being' or 'state' or territory of jurisdiction of a ruler. Matthew uses the kingdom of heaven (*βασιλεια τουν ουπανου*) because of reverence to the word God (*Yahweh*) by the Jews as he was writing to the Jewish-Christian community. Matthew uses the two expressions kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God to mean the same thing.

The Semitic usage of the term king ( *Melek* ) refers to a national or civil monarchy (e.g Saul ) , redeemer king ( Messiah e.g. David or Cyrus Is. 45: 19 ) and before the exile it was applied to *Yahweh* as king of Israel ( Is. 9:11, Mic. 5:1ff, Jer. 23: 5-6, Ez. 17-22), after the exile '*Yahweh*' was understood as being the king of the whole world. *Yahweh's* kingdom is a supraterritorial kingdom determining the present and the future.<sup>17</sup> It has an eschatological dimension and also is present ( Is. 24:23, Zeph. 3:15, Zech. 14: 16 - 17, Ps, 27, 93, 96, and 99 ). In apocalyptic writing God's Kingdom is referred to as the final and

<sup>14</sup> Boring, *Op. Cit.*,417.

<sup>15</sup> Davies And Dale, *Op. Cit.*, Vol., 2, 411.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol., 2, 411.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol., 3, 198.

eternal kingdom of the saints ( Dan. 7:16 ff).<sup>18</sup> The Jewish and early Christians compared the kingdom of God to a banquet.<sup>19</sup>

‘..who gave a *Wedding banquet for his son.*’ In Luke it is a great supper, (δειπνον), in Matthew it is a royal wedding feast.<sup>20</sup> Matthew's idea of the wedding feast corresponds to the rabbinic *’āsá* and *misten* (*Sipre. no. 15. 17 - 21*). LXX has γαμος (wedding) in Gen. 29:22, Esth. 2:18, 9:22. In all these texts, wedding is used to refer to God’s fellowship with people. In the Old Testament, marriage of God with Israel is a symbol of covenant ( Hos. 2:18, Is. 54:4, Ez. 16:7). In the Old Testament the bride is the covenant people, in the parables Jesus is the bridegroom. Jesus speaks of the same eschatological time, as a time of eating and drinking in the kingdom of God. The symbol of a wedding feast was a well known Jewish image for the joy of the last day. The New Testament uses the image of the table fellowship or a marriage feast as a symbol of God’s fellowship with humanity. Matthew speaks of the kingdom as the messianic banquet that is derived from Is. 25: 6-10. The idea of Father /Son connects these three parables ( 21: 28 - 22:14). It links the parable to that of the ten virgins by its use of γαμος ( wedding celebration). The son is Jesus as in the previous parables, in 9:15, and in 25:1 Jesus is the bridegroom. The king is God because Matthew often substitutes God with king ( 5:35).<sup>21</sup> The early Church spoke of the eschatological wedding feast of Jesus Messiah ( Rev. 19: 7, 9).<sup>22</sup>

22. 3 *‘He sent his slaves.....’* The language of the parable corresponds to that of preceding parable.<sup>23</sup> Luke and the Gospel of Thomas have a single servant .<sup>24</sup> Matthew has

<sup>18</sup> Gerhard Kittel And Gerhard Fredrich, Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament, Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ( Michigan: William B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, 1985), 97 - 99.

<sup>19</sup> Daniel J. Harrington, The Gospel Of Matthew, ( Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1991), 306.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 306.

<sup>21</sup> Davies and Dale, *Op. Cit.*, 198.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>23</sup> Harrington, *Op. Cit.*, 305.

changed 'servant' to 'slaves' (δουλοι). The idea of sending his slaves is found in LXX , Prov. 9:3, Lady wisdom sends her slaves ( απεστειλε τους εαυτης δουλους) to invite people to her banquet.<sup>25</sup> Proverbs 1 - 9 compares Lady wisdom with dame fool. Lady wisdom is ready to share her banquet. Matthew borrows the idea from 21:34 where the servants stand for God's messengers.<sup>26</sup> The original call corresponds to the call of Israel and the slaves are the prophets of Israel.<sup>27</sup> In Jewish usage δουλους has a strong religious connection and refers to service. In Is. 53:11, the prophet describes his service as δουλευειη. In LXX and Greek Judaism δουλους stands for a slave., his status and situation, that is for the service of God. It expresses the nature of the relationship.<sup>28</sup> Αποστελλο means the sending of a special messenger with the emphasis on the sender ( Is. 6:8). The message and the one sent embody the sender. LXX uses Αποστελλο for Šlh to emphasise the authoritative element in the action and the position of the one sent. In Judaism it means official mission or sending by God. In the New Testament the stress is on the sending. Matthew stresses the authority of the one sending the slaves.<sup>29</sup>

*'...To call those who have been invited to the wedding feast'*. The story assumes a prior invitation (Lk: 14: 16 - 17 ).<sup>30</sup> The verse refers to a notice of the reminder to those who have been informed of the feast earlier.

The terms Καλεω ( to call ) and γαμος ( wedding) appears in Tob. 9:3, Jn.2:2, and Rev. 19:9. The perfect passive participle of καλεω ( to invite) is found in Mat. 20:18, 22:4, Mk. 3: 31, Lk. 7:39, Jn. 2 :2, 1 Cor. 10:27. God calls his son ( Mat. 2:15), he calls us to himself or to salvation ( Rom. 8: 30) and is asking us for our obedience. Jesus calls the

<sup>24</sup> Davies And Dale, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. 3, 199.

<sup>25</sup> Harrington , *Op. Cit.*,305.

<sup>26</sup> Davies and Dale, Vol., 3. *Op. Cit.*,199.

<sup>27</sup> Boring, *Op. Cit.*,417.

<sup>28</sup> Kittel and Fredrich, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. 2, 263 - 270.

<sup>29</sup> Benedict . *Op. Cit.*,665.

<sup>30</sup> Harrington . *Op. Cit.*,306.

disciples and also sinners to repentance ( Mat. 4:21, 9:13, ). In the Old Testament it has a parallel to the naming of a thing which is equivalent to it ( Gen. 17: 19, 1 Sam. 1:20 ( Lk. 1:32). The Hebrew word is *qara*.<sup>31</sup>

"...*But they would not come*" In the Gospels of Luke and Thomas those invited offer excuses.<sup>32</sup> Matthew omits all these excuses. Matthew want to points simply to the unwillingness of those who had committed themselves before.<sup>33</sup> These correspond to 21:30 and 21:35 - 36 where individuals agreed to do something but later broke their promises.<sup>34</sup> The verse also reminds us of the rejection of Jesus' call to people in 23.37 and Jn 5:10. In 1 Chro. 30: 10, people refused to respond to 'a call back' to the covenant.<sup>35</sup> The refusal of the of king's call is the same as rebellion ( 2 Sam. 10:4).

22:4 "*Again he sent other slaves .....*". These first four words are borrowed from 21:36. The two sendings corresponds to the two sendings in 21: 33 ff.<sup>36</sup> Luke and the Gospel of Thomas have one sending. The two sendings highlight the king's patience. This second sending of the slaves ( *αλλους δουλους* ) refers to John the Baptist ( 3: 7-10, 11: 2-19, 14: 1-2), whose ministry prefigured that of Jesus' call to Israel to repentance. Some scholars argue that this second group of slaves refers to the apostles and Christian missionaries. The second invitation shows God's patience with Israel.

"*..I have prepared my dinner.....*". Many commentators are not sure if this phrase has a foundation in tradition. *Αριστον* (meal) appears in Lk. 11:38, and 14:12. Here in Matthew it is a *hapax*.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Kittel and Fredrich, *Op. Cit.*,394 - 395.

<sup>32</sup> Boring, *Op. Cit.*,417.

<sup>33</sup> Davies and Dale, *Op. Cit.*,199.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>37</sup> Davies and Dale, *Op. Cit.*,199.

Ἀριστον means a meal. It refers to the early meal at the beginning of the festival activities. 'Meal' is an eschatological image that represents the heavenly banquet of the last times when the redeemed will participate in a perfect fellowship with God and Christ ( Lk. 14:24, Rev. 19:9, 3:20, Mat. 22:2). This idea of the eschatological banquet appears in the Old Testament ( Is. 34:6 ff) and in apocalyptic and rabbinical writings ( cf. Mat. 8:18, 26:29). The image of the eschatological feast goes back to the eschatology of Israel, (Is. 34:6, 25:6, Jer. 46:10, Zeph. 1:7. In Ezekiel it is used as an image of fellowship with God in the last days.<sup>38</sup>

*'My oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready..'* The verse seems to have no tradition. It seems to be redaction. It is a new Testament *hapax*.

In the Old Testament it appears in 1Kgs. 1:9,<sup>39</sup> where it refers to a religious sacrifice and meal and in Is. 25:6 which celebrates divine kingship. In the New Testament it occurs in Lk. 15:23, 27,30, Rev 19:17. In the New Testament the sacrifice of beasts does not have anything to do with the sacrifice of Christ.

ἑτοιμα ( ready) refers to God's work in salvation history. He prepares good things for those who love Him ( 1 Cor. 2:9). Salvation is the heart of his preaching and is present in Christ ( Lk. 2: 30 - 31 ) for whom the feast is prepared. This salvation is present and future ( Jn. 14:2, Rom. 9:23).<sup>40</sup>

*"..... Come to the wedding banquet"* The call to the banquet in Prov. 9.5 and Rev 19: 17 refers to a sacrificial feast. The notion is borrowed from Is. 34: 1-7 and Ez. 39: 17 - 20 where it refers to a sacrificial slaughter. Δευτε εις is found here only in the Greek Bible.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Kittel and Fredrich, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. 2, 36.

<sup>39</sup> Davies and Dale, *Op. Cit.*, 200.

<sup>40</sup> Kittel and Fredrich, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. 2, 36.

<sup>41</sup> Davies and Dale, *Op. Cit.*, 200.

22:5 *"But they made light of it...."* In Luke all those invited make excuses (Lk. 14:18) but Matthew states that they neglected or were careless.<sup>42</sup> Neglect, to be careless, occurs only here in the first Gospel. Matthew points out that the Jews in the person of their leaders had refused to listen to God's call to repentance and have rejected the Messiah. They had neglected the summons to the marriage feast.<sup>43</sup>

Απερχομαι ( 21:29, 30) is Matthean.

*" And they went away, one to his farm, another to his business.."* The excuses are missing and also the note of politeness: instead Matthew highlights their guilt.<sup>44</sup> Matthew does not mean that those invited responded in the same way. What is meant is that Israel was indifferent in its response to God's messengers. Some accepted, others were undecided and some others were violent.<sup>45</sup> The term εμπορια (business) occurs only here in the New Testament.<sup>46</sup>

22:6 *"while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them and killed them..."* Though this verse is unrealistic, <sup>47</sup> Matthew's focus is on the crucifixion of the son of God which was both strange and inexplicable. The idea of seizing his slaves appears in 21:35 and also in 21:46 where the Jewish leaders are seeking to seize ( κρατεω) Jesus. It occurs again in the passion narrative ( 26: 4, 48). The verb points to Jesus' opponents. This bears out Matthew's dualistic conception and clearly shows that his community was not part of the formative Judaism at this time but a separate group. Matthew shows that beside crimes against Jesus, the Pharisees and Scribes are guilty of many failings e.g. committing murder. The above indicates the distance, but, also, the closeness between Matthew's community

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>43</sup> Samuel Driver, "Gospel According To St. Matthew", The International Critical Commentary Vol. 3, (Edinburg: T& T Clark, 1993), 236.

<sup>44</sup> Davies and Dale, *Op. Cit.*, 200.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>47</sup> Boring, *Op. Cit.*, 417.

and the world of Judaism. Matthew depicts the Pharisees and the Scribes as appropriate leaders of this evil generation ( 12:38-42, 16:1-4).

υβριζω occurs once in Matthew and twice in Luke and seems to mean "arrogantly mistreated".<sup>48</sup> Mistreatment of king's messenger is referred to in the Old Testament in 1 Sam. 10:4 and Josephus Ant. 9: 263 - 266 where it has a striking parallel in its content.<sup>49</sup>

22:7 "The king was enraged. He sent his troops, to destroy those murderers and burnt their city.." In the Old Testament God's wrath is represented as a cup of wrath, meaning the suffering which man brings upon himself (Jer. 25: 15 - 17f, 27 ff, Ps 60:4, 75:8) and God hands to him.<sup>50</sup> Isaiah expresses God's wrath upon Israel as fire ( Is. 5: 24 - 25). Fire in the apocalyptic writings and in the New Testament is a sign of final judgment ( Mat. 3: 10, 12, 13:40)

Judth.1:7 ff and Mat. 22:1 ff have no connection but have similarities with the sending of soldiers, the killing of inhabitants and burning of the city which indicates a horrible end to the city. "Matthew uses an ancient folk theme describing a punitive expedition".<sup>51</sup> The Roman army which harmed Israel can be referred to as an instrument of God's punishment. Matthew is thinking in terms of salvation history.<sup>52</sup> Matthew views the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. as a judgment against Israel.<sup>53</sup> The destruction of Jerusalem does not end Israel's role in God's plan of salvation. Both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch says that the destruction of Jerusalem does not mean the end of Israel.<sup>54</sup> As the parable is directed to the Chief priests and Pharisees who are responsible for the fall of Jerusalem, the

<sup>48</sup> Davies and Dale, *Op. Cit.*, 200.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>50</sup> Kittel and Fredrich. Vol. 3, *Op. Cit.*, 167 - 172.

<sup>51</sup> Jeremias *Op. Cit.*, 68.

<sup>52</sup> Boring, *Op. Cit.*, 418.

<sup>53</sup> Harrington, *Op. Cit.*, 307 - 308.

<sup>54</sup> Davies and Dale, *Op. Cit.*, 202.

verse describes Matthew's interpretation of the event as resulting from Israel's rejection of Jesus.<sup>55</sup> The verse is instrumental in determining the composition of the Gospel of Matthew. This verse is lacking in Lk. 14: 15 - 24.<sup>56</sup>

22:8 "Then he said to his slave, ' The wedding is ready but those invited were not worthy". "Then he said" occurs eight times in Matthew. The third group. This verse has no parallel in Luke. The verse is deduced from 3:8 where Jewish leaders are commanded to produce the fruits of repentance but they did not. In Acts 13:46 the Jews of Pisidia are considered unworthy<sup>57</sup> as they do not have the right attitude as determined by the Gospel.<sup>58</sup>

V.9 "Go therefore into the main streets and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet" This verse shares no significant word with Lk. 14:21 although the sense is the same.<sup>59</sup> The word πορευομαι ( Streets) is characteristic of Matthew ( 28:19) In the Old Testament it is used in the imperative "for sending out" on a divine mission and those who are sent are bearers of divine commission. In the New Testament it denotes a task (Jn.11:11) and the disciples are to preach judgment and salvation.<sup>60</sup> διξοδος is sometimes taken to mean street - crossing or where the street goes through the city boundary and out into the country side.<sup>61</sup> This idea corresponds to that in Luke 14: 21 - 23, where the streets and lanes of the city are first trasversed: then the highways and hedges of the country.<sup>62</sup> The command to go and invite everyone stands for the universal mission of the Church. The rejection of the invitation by the house of Israel has led to transferring the mission to the Gentiles who were considered as not worthy of salvation and not members of

<sup>55</sup> Harrington , *Op. Cit.*, 308.

<sup>56</sup> Charles Dennis Duling, " Matthew " The Anchor Bible Dictionary Vol. 6, David Noel Freedman, (editor) ( New York: Doubleday, 1992), cxlviii.

<sup>57</sup> Davies and Dale, *Op. Cit.*, 202.

<sup>58</sup> Kittel and Ferdrich, *Op. Cit.*, 64.

<sup>59</sup> Davies and Dale, *Op. Cit.*, 202.

<sup>60</sup> Kittel and Fredrich, *Op. Cit.*, 916 - 917.

<sup>61</sup> Harrington , *Op. Cit.*, 306.

<sup>62</sup> Davies and Dale, *Op. Cit.*, 203.

the people of God. To Luke, the invitation to the Gentiles to enter the kingdom is of first importance. The unwanted and rejected members of the society are called to replace the invited guests.

*22:10 "Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all they could find both bad and good..."* The words 'into the streets' ( εἰς τὰς οἴκους) are found in Lk 14:23 and after that Luke and Matthew part ways<sup>63</sup> The term streets has no special emphasis here. The term πᾶς is an adjective and has a predicative meaning of the whole. In the Old Testament it implies the total claim of God and His word. In the New Testament it is used to mean a great number ( Mat. 2:3, 4:24).<sup>64</sup> In Matthew 22:10 the invitation is extended to all, both good and bad.<sup>65</sup> Good and bad refers to the empirical Church as a mixture as also shown in other parables e.g. 13: 24-30.<sup>66</sup> Πονεροὶ is a noun meaning the wicked. At the final separation the πονεροὶ (bad) are those who do not meet the standard of God's righteousness (13:49). Αγαθοὶ (good) as an adjective means excellence. It gives status or quality. The phrase good and bad set the stage for 22:11-13, which explains that "mere admission to the kingdom is not enough to guarantee staying in it. It acknowledges the mixture of those called by Jesus into the kingdom."<sup>67</sup>

*"So the wedding hall was filled with the guest"* This phrase has similarities with Lk. 14:24 and πιπλημι is redactional in 27:48 and differs from Mk. 15:36.<sup>68</sup>

*22:11 "But when the king came in to see the guest, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe."* The nominative participle θεσσασθαί ( visit) is editorial in

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>64</sup> Kittel and Fredrich, *Op. Cit.*, 795 - 796.

<sup>65</sup> Boring, *Op. Cit.*, 418.

<sup>66</sup> Davies and Dale, *Op. Cit.*, 203.

<sup>67</sup> Harrington, *Op. Cit.*, 306.

<sup>68</sup> Davies and Dale, *Op. Cit.*, 203.

6:1 and 23: 5), *ανθρωπος* ( man) and *ενδυμα* ( garment) are characteristically Matthean.<sup>69</sup>

The interpretation of 22:11 has throughout exegetical history been influenced by Rev. 19:8 which refers to fine linen as righteous deeds. Most commentators refer to it as meaning good deeds or works. Davies and Allison say that it refers to the resurrection of the body as it harmonizes with Mat.13:43. In both cases it means the guest was not properly prepared.<sup>70</sup> In early Christianity conversion was seen as the wearing of a new garment.<sup>71</sup> The imagery is found in the rabbinical writings that refer to repentance. In Isaiah 61:10 God clothes the redeemed with the wedding garment of salvation. Apocalyptic literature speaks of eschatological clothing as a white garment, the royal robe and glorious robe. In all these the garment is a symbol of righteousness awarded by God, and to be clothed with it is to be allotted membership of the redeemed community. The wedding garment stands for repentance, God's offer of forgiveness and imputed righteousness, and doing the will of the father are expected of the disciple.<sup>72</sup>

The verse describes judgment<sup>73</sup> extended to those in the Church. The man stands for both groups, the evil invited and those who rejected the invitation. He is the wicked.

*22:12 ' And he said' This is equivalent as in 22:8.*<sup>74</sup>

*" 'Friend, how did you get here without a wedding robe' And he was speechless"*

*εταυρε* (friend) is used here ironically. The only New Testament use is in Matthew, where the owner of the vine yard ( 20:3) and the king (22:12) employs it when addressing the grumblers and the man without a wedding garment. Jesus has it in addressing Judas (26:50).The meaning of friend in each case has a distinct relationship in which there is

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>71</sup> Boring, *Op. Cit.*,418.

<sup>72</sup> Jeremias, *Op. Cit.*,118.

<sup>73</sup> Davies And Dale, *Op. Cit.*,205.

<sup>74</sup> Harrington, *Op. Cit.*,306.

generosity on the part of the one and abuse on the part of the other. " It is used in the context where the questioner knows the answer or is putting the other person on the spot".<sup>75</sup> There is the assumption that the man ought to have worn the proper garment and by not doing it so has abused the king.<sup>76</sup>

22:13 "*The king said to the attendants..*" The Gospel of Matthew emphasises that the angels gather false disciples out of the kingdom and throw them into the fire ( 13: 41 - 42, 49-50). This has influenced Matthew to switch from slaves to servants who represent angels as in the parables of the tares and the bad fish. In Hebrew, the distinction is between *ebed and shammash*.

"*Bind him hand and foot*" This phrase has a Jewish background. In 1 Enoch 10:4 God instructed the angle Raphael to bind Azazel hand and foot and in the apocalypses of Abraham 13: 14 Azazel lost his heavenly garment. All this has affinity with our text. The wicked will be unclothed and suffer like the fallen angels. In Old Testament ( Zeph. 1: 7 - 8) it means deprivation of power ( c.f. also Acts 21:11, 2 Sam. 3:24).<sup>77</sup>

The verse has an eschatological teaching. Outer darkness refers to hell Mat. 8:12, 25:30. The weeping and gnashing of teeth 13:42, 50, 24:5, 25:30, 13:28 is an apocalyptic reference from the Q source which had become a favorite of Matthew to show the terror of condemnation at the last judgment.<sup>78</sup>

22:14 "*For many are called but few are chosen*" The term called ( εκλεκτοι) is used in the sense of 'invitation' to become a disciple.<sup>79</sup> The notion that in the world to come most people will miss out is a very Jewish tradition as found in Barn. 4:14, 4 Ezra 8:1,3, 2

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 306.

<sup>76</sup> Davies And Dale, *Op. Cit.*,205.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>78</sup> Boring, *Op. Cit.*, 418.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 418.

Baruch 44:15 and in 6 Menah. 29 b.<sup>80</sup> It contrasts the idea that all Israel has a place in the world to come. ( M. Sanh 10:1). But in our context it can be understood better in a Semitic sense and in connection with the whole parable. Many are invited to the banquet of the kingdom ( 22: 1- 10) but only a few pass the scrutiny of judgment ( 22:11-13).<sup>81</sup> In the parable God is the chief actor and in total control from the beginning but one must work " be worthy of the calling" ( Eph. 4:1). Elect seems to imply the messianic community of salvation and those who will be accepted in the last judgment. " The attention to the elect people of God has shifted from the Old Testament understanding of the people of Israel as a whole to that of the righteous remnant, a shift already made in some streams of Judaism (Wis. 3:9, 4:15, 1 Enoch, Apocalypse of Abraham 29 )".<sup>82</sup> This shows a dispute between Matthew and the Pharisaic leaders on the issue of who constituted this elect remnant, the continuing people of God.

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<sup>80</sup> Davies and Dale, *Op. Cit.*, Vol., 3, 207.

<sup>81</sup> Harrington, *Op. Cit.*, 306.

<sup>82</sup> Boring, *Op. Cit.*, 418.

## 1. 7 A COMPARISON OF MATTHEW'S PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST AND LUKE'S PARABLE OF THE GREAT SUPPER.

### 1.7.1 *A Comparison With The Parable Of The Lame Man And Blind Man.*

The theme of rejection does not appear only in the biblical texts but also in the extra biblical literature. The parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22:1 -14 has similarities with the parables of the blind man and of the lame man as found in Ezekiel the prophet in his apocrypha, in the Epiphanius and the rabbinical literature. The two parables point out that during the judgment day the soul will be judged together with the body.

The parable of Ezekiel, the prophet of the apocrypha ( Ant. 10 & 79) has been referred to by Josephus and is found in the Qumran fragment as 4Q second Ezekiel.<sup>83</sup> Epiphanius' parable has many Christian elements and is thought to have been written later than that of the Christian advent and has borrowed elements from that of Matthew. The rabbinical parable is unique to that of Matthew as it is found in b. Saruh. 9/a - b, Lev. Rab. 4.5, Midrash Tanhuma.

Matthew's parable contains integral parts of the Jewish text.<sup>84</sup> The element of the king holding a wedding feast for his son, is an element of the rabbinic text. The Epiphanius parable tells us that all the citizens of the king were soldiers except two civilians, a blind man and a lame man, who were not invited to the wedding feast of the king's son. The two points of the rabbinical parable is that: God is not like man as He cannot forget the civilians.

The second point is that during judgment time the soul will be judged because of its

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<sup>83</sup> Richard Bauckham, "The Parable of the Royal Feast ( Matthew 22: 1 - 14) And Parable of the Lame Man And The Blind Man" *The Journal Of Bible And Theology*, Vol. 115, No.3. Jamaica: Published By Biblical Theology At St. John's University. 1997), 471 -487.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 479.

union with the body. The parables are eschatological in their nature. They refer to the time of resurrection and judgment. The two parables are in a narrative form and not allegorical.

### ***1.7.2 Comparison Of Matthew's Parable With That Of Epiphanus And Rabbinical Literature.***

All share the same idea of the king inviting guests to a banquet. Sometimes it symbolizes an eschatological banquet but not always, especially in the parables found in the rabbinical literature. The rabbinical parables share the idea of a king who invites guests to the festivities of his son ( Gen. Rab. 18:10) or his daughters ( Gen. Rab. 9:4, Resig. R.20:10. In the rabbinical parable the Greek text refers to a human King. The common idea between the parables indicates that it was a common Jewish custom of religious story telling in that period<sup>85</sup>

### ***1.7.3. A Comparison Of Matthew's Parable Of The Wedding Feast (Mat: 22:1 - 14) And Luke's Parable Of The Great Supper, ( 14: 15 - 25).***

Scholars hold that Luke has retained the original form of the parable as found in Q source. This has led to many scholars and commentators seeing in Matthew's parable as really made up of two parables 22:3-10 and 22:11-14, with v. 2, serving as an introduction to the second parable. This verse also indicates a great occasion of state unlike in Luke where it describes a dinner party of the elite. In Matthew it has a major political tone.

In Luke the original intention of Jesus is to defend his preaching of the Gospel to the poor. In Luke the emphasis is in admonishing people. Matthew differs from Luke because he retains the Jewish characteristics of the parable as he was writing to a Jewish- Christian community while Luke was writing to a non-Jewish Christian community. The two follow

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 481 - 482.

different traditions. An understanding of the parables of the great supper ( Lk. 14:15-25) and of the wedding feast ( Mat. 22:1-14) can be well grasped through a comparison of their different aspects.

The context of each evangelist is different. In Luke the parable appears in Jesus' teaching on humility while in Matthew it appears in connection with Jesus' struggle with the Chief Priests and Pharisees on the subject of his authority. Each evangelist has linked the parable to its context through an introduction. The introduction ties it to the preceding periscope with the next passage. The two parables reveal a common source that has been revised and adopted by both evangelist and the Gospel redactors.

Luke's text seems to have been preserved better than Matthew's text.<sup>86</sup> Luke is clear, consistent and straight forward. Matthew has introduced various allegorizing features and explanations and has attached another story to the conclusion. Luke has connected his parable with the preceding context 14.15- (see connection between 14.7-14, and v.15). This is the work of Luke and not of the redactor. Matthew 22.6 might be the work of Matthew or a redactor.<sup>87</sup> The final redactor of the Gospel of Matthew seem to have emphasized the theology of replacement. Matt 22.7 shows the heights of the idea of the reviser of the Gospel.

Luke mentions the anger of the man but omits the destruction of the city and of the murderers. Mat. 24:7 is expressed in unique Matthaen statement (c.f., 8: and 13:38). Mat. 26:6 is derived from a secondary revision of the parable. If it was in the original text Luke could have preserved it. These two parables have been edited and redacted in the literary stages of their transmission.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Brad H. Yong, Jesus And Jewish Parables, Rediscovering The Roots Of Jesus' Teaching, ( New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 169.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

The original characters and information has been changed to emphasize a specific point or to adopt an illustration to a new context. The main character in Luke's parable is a man ( 14:16). Luke has a great dinner ( 14:16). Matthew's main character is ἀνθρώπου βασιλεί ( 22:2) and the great supper has been transformed into a wedding feast. Matthew's novelty is clear in introducing the son who is not mentioned in Luke's version. Matthew's mention of King and son joins the parable to the preceding one of the wicked tenants ( 21: 37 - 39).<sup>89</sup>

Matthew mentions no killing of the son in the proceeding parable. This seems to be the work of the redactor. The two texts have two sendings but Matthew's texts ( v. 6) has added an accusing statement to the original parable which is missing in Luke's. The change of characters and information may have occurred because the transmitter of the parable felt the need to improve the story. Some elements in Luke which go back to a Semitic origin do not appear in Matthew. Matthew has left some elements which are found in Luke ( 14:18-21, 23.). He speaks of bad and good instead of the poor, maimed, blind and the lame.<sup>90</sup>

The material found in each text reveal the evangelist's creativity as he compiles his text. The anti- Jewish tension in the parable of the wedding feast may have originated from the editor or the scribe.

Each of the evangelists has designed his parable to suit his own purpose. Therefore the same parable appears in different contexts. The setting of each parable, its illustration, and the audience are the key elements for proper hermeneutics. The parable acquired a new narrative form, a new introduction and audience as it was written down. At its writing stage there occurred a certain adaptation and re-application.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

The main aim of both evangelists was to explain why the Gospel was being preached to other people. Luke addresses the theme of the reversal of roles, a theme prominent to him. Matthew intends to explain why the Gospel is being preached to non-Jews. Both makes it clear that this was as a result of the rejection of Jesus' message by the Jewish leaders.

### **1.8 CONCLUSION.**

The parable carries on a polemic against the Jewish leaders and their replacement by a community of a non-ethnic entity which have come to believe in Jesus and with a universal mission. The parable turns its attention from the leaders of Israel to the Church. This indicate Matthew's pastoral concern. Matthew seems to understand the doctrine of censure and election might bring illusion to his community. The Christian is asked whether to be among the many, that is, those who claim to be members of the Church but do not practise Jesus' teaching or among the few who practise his teachings. God's Judgment does not spare those in the Church. The first epistle of Peter says, judgment begins with the household of God.

## **CHAPTER TWO:**

### **THEOLOGICAL CONCERN OF MATTHEW.**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The parable of the wedding feast aims to explain a number of issues which explicitly manifest the rejection of Jesus' message. The themes and concerns of Matthew become clear when we consider his theological concern. The main purpose of the present chapter is to address these issues in order for the reader to understand the message of the parable of the wedding feast. The message of Matthew can be grasped clearly, first, by considering the situation of his community and later those issues addressed in the parable.

#### **2.2. COMMUNITY IN CRISIS**

The community to which Matthew was writing was facing some internal and external crises which will be discussed here below. These crises influenced his perspective when writing his Gospel. These crises were both external and internal.

##### ***2.2.1 External Tension.***

The theme of rejection of Jesus' message by Israel becomes vivid when one studies the external conflict. External conflict refers to tension between Matthew's community and the Judaism. A close study of the community reveals that it had direct conflicts with formative Judaism over a number of issues. This resulted in the departure of Matthew's community from the synagogues. This persecution involved most of the members of Matthew's community and its missionaries who conducted the Jewish mission. Matthew's community by this time seem to be Christian-Jewish opposed to formative Judaism in the

period following the first Jewish war (22:6-7).<sup>92</sup> Some evidences which are clearly indicated in the Gospel depict the external conflict. Such evidences includes the following.

The language used in Matthew's Gospel. The group referred to itself as righteous and law biding. It referred to those who had rejected the message of Jesus as wicked, ungodly and lawless.<sup>93</sup> This distinguished the community from others who had rejected the message of Jesus by identifying the characteristics which separated them. The Gospel uses strong language towards the leaders of Judaism. It accuses them of godlessness, lawlessness, apostasy, and the persecution of the righteous.(22:4-5). The Gospel is hostile to the Scribes and the Pharisees. The Scribes and the Pharisees and their oral tradition were rejected by Matthew's community which had a different interpretation of the law. The Pharisees had devoted themselves to the study of the law because there was a consensus among themselves that the Torah needed an interpretation. This interpretation developed later into oral tradition which supplemented the oral law. These two groups make up the formative Judaism, which slowly developed into rabbinical Judaism after many hundreds of years. At the literary stage of Matthew's Gospel, formative Judaism was at its infancy. The evidence from the Gospel indicates that formative Judaism had had great influence on the Matthean community and had come into conflict with it.<sup>94</sup>

The evangelist depicts the main opponents of Jesus as the Pharisees and the Scribes. Matthew's community viewed these people as rivals and a threat to their safety and way of life. In the conflict passages which deal with the law and its interpretation it is the Pharisees who are the major protagonists (12:1-8,9:14,15:1-20,19:3-9, 22:34-40, 41-46). Although

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<sup>92</sup> David C Sim, The Gospel Of Matthew And Christian Judaism, The History And Social Setting Of The Matthean Community, ( Edinburgh : T& T Clark LTD, 1998), 109.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 111 - 112.

anti-scribal and anti-pharisaic materials appears in Mark and Q sources, Matthew has magnified and developed what he found in his sources.

Matthew uses a polemical language toward the scribes and the Pharisees. Matthew accuses them of having committed crimes and are guilty of many failings. Matthew refers to them as those guilty of murder (12:6). They are evil, *πονηρος/πονηρια* (9:14, 12:34, 22:18) and proper leaders of this evil generation. This polemical language shows a closeness in its shared world view and an understanding of the Mathean community as an independent and distinct group.

Another indication of the external conflict is the use of sectarian language. Matthew's community accepts the pillar doctrines of the Jewish religion and uses a dualistic language. The evangelist uses such terms as good and bad (5:45,7:17-18,12:34-35, 22:10,25:14-30) which makes a clear cut distinction between those who have accepted the message of Jesus (i.e. Matthew's community) and those who have rejected it (those outside it). The evangelist asserts that his community was comprised of the righteous and the good who were faithful to Jesus' message while those outside it were wicked. The Evangelist refers to those outside it in cosmic terms of the kingdom (Matthew's community) and the sons of the evil one : the sons of the kingdom belong to the son of man (Jesus ) while the sons of the evil one belong to satan.<sup>95</sup>

The study of the external tension reveals that Matthew tries to identify his community within the Jewish tradition. Matthew aims to help his community to survive the pain of transition by affirming the authority and authenticity of Jesus.

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

### ***2.2.2 Internal Tensions.***

The above discussion showed Matthew's community in conflict with the main Judaism or parent-body. The present discussion aims at showing the presence of an internal crisis in Matthew's own community which he wishes to address. His community lived close to the opposing Judaism and needed to be informed about the credentials of Christianity and the best way to defend itself against non-Christian attacks. As a result of such attacks, some Christians seem to be assailed by doubts and have abandoned their faith. Matthew wants to tell his readers that, once they were within Judaism, but those days were over.<sup>96</sup>

The leadership and authority crisis led Matthew to assure them that one day the community members would assume their rightful place as the true leaders in their own setting. He encouraged them to ally to Christianity.<sup>97</sup>

The community faced challenges because of their interpretation of the law and its application. Matthew tried to convince his readers that theirs was the right way to live the Torah. Other issues discussed were order and structure of the Church.<sup>98</sup>

Matthew answered the question of the future of the community by showing that his community was in utter continuity with the history and eschatological claims of Israel. As Israel's heroes and prophets were rejected and persecuted, so Matthew's community is persecuted for righteousness. But they would be vindicated because they were faithful to Jesus. If they live faithfully the teachings of Jesus they will be imitating the kingdom of heaven (6:10). If the community put God's kingdom first, other issues and worries about life

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<sup>96</sup> J. Andrew Overman, Church And Community In Crisis, The Gospel According To Matthew, (Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1996), 20.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

here and now will be resolved. Therefore, Matthew's Gospel aims at supplying hope and guidance necessary to comfort them in their crises of faith and communal life.<sup>99</sup>

Another issue at hand was the mission to the Gentile which seems to have been an object of current controversy with the community. The community was being encouraged to accept the Gentiles.

Although Jesus and his message was rejected by the leaders of the Jews, Matthew showed him as extremely effective teacher and leader. The apostles are true leaders as they were given authority by God. Matthew's community stands in that train of tradition within the Jewish centered Judaism.

## **2.3 THEOLOGICAL CONCERN OF MATTHEW.**

### ***2.3.1 Rejection Of Jesus:***

The rejection of Jesus is explicitly manifested in the fourth section of the Gospel, which shows the confrontation between Jesus and the Chief priests and elders. This confrontation results in the death of Jesus which marks the climax of his rejection.

In the parable of the wicked tenants, (21: 33-46) the rejection of the son (Jesus) resulted in a reversal of roles. This reversal occurred as people rejected John's and Jesus' message. The parable refers to a son who was killed and the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus criticizes the leaders who failed to see the importance of him and his message and hence the bringing of the destruction to the nation of Israel and its people. A clear reference of this is found in 21:46 where Matthew points out clearly that these parables refer to the leadership

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<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

in Israel. This idea is explicit in the parable of the wedding feast (22:1-14) which Matthew used to address the theological question which surrounded Jesus, his ministry and his death.

Matthew's theology and political situation were interlocked. The criticism of Jesus of the current social structure and its local leaders provoked a strong reaction. Hence "the killing of Jesus, and the rejection of his message, the rejection of Matthew's message, are connected to the upheaval of 66-70 and its aftermath".<sup>100</sup> As we have seen above Matthew's community is said to be "responsible, they have heard the message of John and Jesus, they understand Israel's laws and traditions"<sup>101</sup> and they will inherit the kingdom.

Some of the reasons which are explicit in the Gospel and which Scholars cite as the cause of this rejection can be summarized as follows. Jesus did not come into conflict with views, opinions and convictions of Judaism. Jesus attacked the temple. This offended most Jews as the temple was closely associated with *Yahweh*. Jesus also claimed to be the spokesman of God and that sinners would be in the kingdom (Mat 21:31). By offering them forgiveness, he made himself a public figure taking over the role of priesthood.

Although some scholars argue that Jesus was against observance of the law and externals and favored faith and grace. It seems that Jesus was not against the law's observance and external rituals, but criticises the legalistic, externalistic bigots who oppose him and instigate his death.<sup>102</sup>

The house of Israel in the person of her leaders have become the outsiders. This shows God's freedom of action. Israel has failed in her commitment to the covenant and therefore God's choice of Israel in no way bound Him permanently as the parable of the wedding feast shows.

But was Israel rejected forever?

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>102</sup> E. P Sanders, Jesus And Judaism, (London: Scm Press LTD, 1985), 270-281.

### *2.3.2 Rejection Of Israel.*

The judgment of Jesus against his critics should not be taken as a judgment against the entire nation of Israel but of her leaders. Many scholars in the past claimed that the Gospel indicates that Israel was rejected. Davies and Allison disagree with them and opt for the first idea. Matthew's words in the Gospel do not deny Israel the promises of ultimate salvation. The mission commanded in the Gospel of Matthew does not mean that Israel has been rejected by her God. The author wants to show that the failure of Israel to respond to the Gospel provoked the mission to the Gentiles. The mission to the Gentiles was conducted as a means of salvation for Israel. Matthew concurs with Paul on this point (Rom 12: 7ff).

There is no definite claim that Israel has been rejected by God. The passage which rejects Judaism (e.g. 23:1-10) shows that there was a struggle between Judaism and Christianity. Therefore the claim of Brandon and K. W. Clark cannot be taken as valid. The idea that the children of the kingdom will be cast out" (8: 12) does not refer to the rejection of Israel but to the duality of the early Christian attitude towards, the Jews (Judaism ) which was at the same time one of condemnation and yet of respect.<sup>103</sup>

The whole Gospel bears an universalism which is evident in 1:21 and 28:11 and includes the mission to Israel. The people in 1:21 refers to those born Jews and Gentiles who will be offered God's gracious salvation through Jesus. The idea of the rejection of Israel contradicts 22:14 which tells of the doctrine of the Remnant of Israel who will be worthy of the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 23:37-39 claims that Israel will one day embrace her risen Christ.<sup>104</sup> If Israel was not rejected by God, who then does the parable of

<sup>103</sup> W. D. Davies, *The Setting Of The Sermon On The Mount*, ( London: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 333.

<sup>104</sup> David M. Stanley, "The Conception Of Salvation In The Synoptic Gospels", *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol., XVIII, No.4, (Washington : Catholic Biblical Association Of America, 1956), 345-362.

the wedding feast refer to when it speaks of the invitation to those at first uninvited? What does the author want to tell us?

### 2. 3.3. *Missionary Concern.*

In the above section we argued that Israel was not rejected by her God. The Gospel at the same time does not support particularism but has the notion of universalism. Some scholars like David Sim argue categorically that Matthew's Gospel has no clear reference to the mission to the Gentiles during the life time of Jesus which seems to be true to some extent. Davies, Senoir, Sanders and J.Overmann argue that in the Gospel the salvation of the Gentiles has been alluded to. Some scholars like Joachim Jeremias and Riches disagree with this opinion. But this idea has biblical and extra-biblical base. The Old Testament prophets especially Isaiah (45:22) and Zephania (3:8) argue in favour of the Gentiles' salvation. Some extra-biblical writings such as R. Joshua and the Sibylline oracles (p.752ff) indicate that there are righteous Gentiles who would be saved in the world to come.<sup>105</sup> Paul thought that the Gentiles, though sinners, would turn to God. Therefore, it seems that some Jews expected that the Gentiles will be saved when God's glory will be revealed.<sup>106</sup>

Some scholars argue that the Matthean Jesus restricted his mission to Israel (7:6) and hence particularism. Although this idea seems to agree with 10:5,23, 15:24 and 23:15, those passages reflect the current trend of thought in the primitive Christianity which opposed the mission to the Gentiles. This might also be the position of Jesus. Matthew himself parts company with this particularism and favours universalism. He begins his Gospel with the birth narrative which shows the Gentiles as participating in the divine plan of salvation. While Herod, with the whole of Jerusalem, rejected the birth of Jesus, the

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<sup>105</sup> Sanders, *Op. Cit.*, 213-220 .

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

Gentiles (in the persons of the Magi) accepted him. The first respondent to Jesus preaching goes beyond the boundaries of Israel (Mat. 4:23-5). Throughout the Gospel, the Gentiles are shown as people with faith in Jesus. Even at the end of the Gospel it is a Gentile who confesses that Jesus is the son of God (27:54). The risen Lord gives a command to his disciples to preach to all nations (28:16-20). The Gospel begins and ends with a favourable tune to the Gentiles.<sup>107</sup>

Matthew reveals an ultimate concern for the salvation of the Gentiles (8:11) and he insists on the mission to the Gentiles (22:8 ff ). Matthew himself seems to accept the mission to the Gentiles. The particularism of Matthew's Gospel is a pointer to his loyalty to the historic tradition of Jesus' ministry and of the early Church. The approach of Jesus and the early Church was first to Israel and later to the Gentiles. This is demonstrated by the story of the Canaanite woman who was a stranger but was adopted among the people of God. It was partly the failure of Israel to respond to the Gospel that provoked the mission to the Gentiles. Though the Gentiles accepted the Gospel invitation there was a concern for their personal preparedness and a moral concern after their acquiring the privilege of Church membership (22:6,9). This was shown by the parable of the labourers (21:33-43). Therefore the anti-resentment to the Gentiles mission was of a section of the early Church. Matthew accepts the right of Gentiles admission into the Church.<sup>108</sup> Jesus began a movement which came to see the Gentile mission as a logical extension of itself.

#### ***2.3.4. Christian Discipleship.***

The call to discipleship comes from Jesus but something is demanded of the disciples. Matthew sees the essence of discipleship as revolving around understanding Jesus'

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<sup>107</sup> Davies, *Op. Cit.*, 326 - 332.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 326-332.

teaching and putting it into practice. This leads to the bearing of good fruits which is the foundation of the Christian existence (13:16 ff). The true disciple faithfully puts into practice all the teachings of Jesus contained in Matthew. (28:18-20). Matthew points out that what matters is not a blood relationship to Jesus but the one who does the will of the heavenly father (4:22, 8:21-22). Believers must attain this to enter the kingdom but not a rigorous obedience of the law.

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus clearly shows that the superior righteousness (5:20) of discipleship involves more than a name. It involves those who become so through baptism and the implementation of the teachings of Jesus. This doing of God's will is connected to putting it into practice morally and spiritually. This doing of God's will determines who will remain in the kingdom of God. Even the sinners will enter the reign of God if they convert and do the will of the Father. Those called from the thorough fares to the wedding feast will remain inside ( 26: 31-46) only if they wear the "wedding garment"(22:11) of glorious resurrection.<sup>109</sup> The guest's speechlessness proves he knows he is guilty because he does not submit to the norms of the kingdom .

#### **2. 4. CHRISTOLOGY.**

There is an implicit christology in this parable of the wedding feast. Jesus is referred to as son of God. He is the guest of honor rejected by his contemporaries. As the Son of God, He is the Messiah (3:17, Mk1:11, Lk3:22), who fulfills the Old Testament prophecies and inaugurates the kingdom of heaven through his teaching in his public ministry, passion and resurrection. He fulfills the law and prophets. Jesus refers to God as his father. He is God's unique son who reigns through suffering. Peter (17:5), God the father (24:36), the

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<sup>109</sup> Michael H. Crosby, The House Of Disciples, The History And Social Setting Of The Matthean Community, (New York: Mary Knoll , 1988 ), 44-58.

high priest (26:63), and the Centurian (27:54), reveals Jesus as the son of God. As Messiah, Jesus is described as king of Israel (2:2, 21:5, 27:11,29,37,42).<sup>110</sup>

Jesus, son of God, in his teaching reveals God's will but is rejected or ignored. His task was to preach the Gospel of the kingdom which requires repentance and obedience to God's will (4:17). Jesus falls in the line of the rejected prophets of Israel and John the Baptist ( 5:10-12,23:34-39,24:4,3:1-2,14:1-13). His teaching and preaching are finally rejected (11:1-12:50)<sup>111</sup>

Jesus, the son of God, inaugurated the kingdom in three phases. In his public ministry, he preached and taught the ethic of a new era, which inaugurated the kingdom of heaven. His passion is an important part of this inauguration as it shows his death and rejection as part of this inauguration. His death breaks the bond of death and inaugurates a general resurrection.

## 2. 5. SALVATION HISTORY.

Salvation history has a linear - temporal dimension. Salvation history can be divided into six periods, the time of promises, the time of transitions, the time of the messiah's inaguration of the kingdom of heaven, the time of Israel's decision, the time of all nations and lastly the time of consummation.<sup>112</sup> The time of Jesus' ministry fulfills the past promises in which revelation was restricted to Israel, and God's law was not completely revealed.

John the Baptist was a transitional prophet who announced the dawning of the kingdom and called for repentance (3:11-12). He both pointed to the Messiah and fulfilled all righteousness. John the Baptist marks a decisive turning point in God's redemptive plan.

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 533.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 533.

<sup>112</sup> *Green, Op. Cit.*, 537.

(4:17), effects its powers (4:23, 9:14-17, 35, 11:2-6, 12:28, 43-45), reveals God's radical will and formed a new people of God by inaugurating the world mission (8:5-13, 10:8, 13:31-33, 15:21-28, 21:33-36, 22:1-14, 24:14, 28:16-20).

The time of Israel's decision and the time of all nations are two complementary aspects of the inauguration of the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew wanted to show that the true people of God were those who believed and obeyed Jesus (12:46-50) and those who were righteous according to Jesus' new standard. (7:21-23). It showed that all people were as privileged as Israel was. The decisive point was the destruction of Jerusalem which showed God's judgment (21:33-46, 22:1-14) and anger on the centralized power in Jerusalem. The destruction of Jerusalem showed the end of the exclusive mission to Israel. This was followed by a universal mission (22:7-10) which was seen as yet in the future and associated with the end of time events ( 24:14)<sup>113</sup>

The time of all nations was occasioned by Jesus reception of the Gentiles into the blessings of the covenant (2:1-12, 8:5-13, 15:21-28). But Matthew sees the fulfilment of the promise of the universal salvation as associated with the end of time. The end time focuses on the return of Jesus, the final judgment and glorious salvation that God's people would inherit. This would bring universal and eternal judgment based upon a person's actions and association with Jesus. ( 22:11-12).

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 538.

**CONCLUSION.**

Jesus preached his message to Israel which provoked a two fold reaction of faith and unbelief. The rejection of Jesus' message by some section of Israel had positive result: it became the way for other nations to receive this message. It is also the reason why the Gospel is preached to us today. Therefore the fruits of this rejection are positive.

## **CHAPTER THREE: APPLICATION.**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION.**

The purpose of the prior work was to understand the meaning of the parable and more particularly understand and to apply it to the African continent. This chapter aims at contextualising the message of the parable in the African continent but especially within Kenyan Church.

### **3.2 BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS.**

The question of how the bible should be interpreted, has been, and is being interpreted by Africans is very important at the moment. It has been suggested that the use of biblical critical method, historical, textual, source form, reduction and others, will help in understanding the bible. The contextualization of bible investigations, where the reading and interpretation is shaped by personal involvement of the inquirer, is important. An African has to initiate such a process if he/she want to re-examine the problem of churches in Africa. He /she should avoid assuming a position of righteousness and superiority as a member of any church. One must start from the conviction that God is and has been in all religions / churches. God is and has been with his people. An African bible reader will thus accept that such churches and African religious systems are not just tolerated by God. They are seriously seeking God. They are to be respected as divinely given means for the salvation of all people.

God is actively present in inviting us to communion in the messianic banquet and therefore there are many good elements in such groupings and these are the result of God's activity which is never ultimately defeated by sin and death. Therefore a reading of the bible

should not and does not admit the superiority of any special group and given authorization to despise, reject or condemn offhand whatever is different from or looking strange to such group. The problem of the salvific value should be tackled from a holistic stand point in which full account is taken of the special choices or elections of God and also of all the other elements in God's relations with the whole of humankind

### 3.3 AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE.

Christianity is relatively young in African. Recently many young churches and denominations have emerged and had been critical of the mainstream churches. The sociological setting in Matthew's Gospel has striking similarities with the church in Africa. The external and internal tensions emerging in Matthew's Gospel reflects the situation in African today. Each denomination and church claims to be the true heir of the Church of Christ.

The catholic church for centuries, through a substantial body of material issued by the Holy See, has claimed to be the church of Christ. The Holy See claims that the church of Christ subsists in the catholic Church which is governed by the successor of Peter and by bishops in union with the pope<sup>114</sup> and is the all embracing means of salvation and from which salvation can be obtained.<sup>115</sup> This view is predominantly an institutional view of the Church. Such a view might be dangerous in a continent in which her people are divided into different ethnic groups each opposing the domination of the other. The Church might be conceived as one of these dominating groups. Although most African share a common world view, they like to identify themselves with their ethnicity. This might have contributed to the phenomenon of rapid growth of many breakaway churches in Africa. In the spirit of

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<sup>114</sup> Austin Flanery, General Editor, Documents Of Vatican Two, Conciliar And More Post Conciliar Documents, Vol., 2, *Ecumenism*, No.2., 5th Print,( Mumbai: St. Paul, 1998), 157.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, *Ecumenism* no. 2, 157.

ecumenism, ecclesial unity in Africa needs to be emphasized. Following the Africans idea that "I am because we are and we are because I am"<sup>116</sup> all Christians are invited to discover their true brothers and sisters.<sup>117</sup> This coming together requires each member of any Christian group to recognize the sacramentality, unity and universality in other Christian groups which bear witness to Christ. This is because they all bear traces of God's grace, of his creative presence and action of the Holy Spirit.

The language used by some denominations is exclusive and regard all other groups as ungodly, wicked and lawless. Such claims disowns Christ and his Spirit. This is because the pillars of faith which qualifies them to be Christians is exactly what qualifies all other churches. Christ is present where his word is preached and the people are born through the grace of water and the Holy Spirit. This point militates against any narrow and exclusive view of the church. As all communities are justified by faith they are all to be received with joy and sympathy as brothers and sisters of Joseph ( Gen. 45:1ff)<sup>118</sup> The sense of brotherhood/ sisterhood should be extended beyond the confines of any particular church.

Such an approach is a challenge to African states where there are divisions based on ethnicity. In that way the church will become a sign of hope and unity among Africans. The Gospel of Christ will have a true meaning for Africans. In most cases the church fails to be a light of the world and her invitation is rejected because of her failure to proclaim the kingdom of God in her prophetic mission. The church in Africa must intensify her common witness to the Gospel and her service to humanity in deep respect and fraternal love to all other churches .<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> John S. Mbiti, Introduction To African Philosophy And Religion, ( Nairobi: Heimann, 1979), 7.

<sup>117</sup> Patrick Kililombe, " The Salvific Value Of African Religions", AFER, Vol., 21, No. 3, ( Eldoret: Printed By Nakuru Press, 1979), 273.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>119</sup> John B. Sheerin And John F. Hotchkin, ( editors), Pope Jonh Paul II, Addresses And Homilies On Ecumenism 1978 - 1980, ( Massachusetts: U.S. Catholic Conferences, 1981), 50.

### 3.4 CHRISTIAN LIFE IN AFRICA.

Our main concern in this sub topic is how an African can be a true African and a true Christian? As we have seen in the part on the theological concern of Matthew, this was the problem of Christian - Jews who struggled to keep a balance between Jewish culture and Christian faith. Some unable to stand firm went back to Judaism. This phenomena is present in our African society. The main problem in Africa is that the Gospel message seems not to address African culture. Most Africans reject the Gospel message despite being baptized in the Christian Churches. The main cause of this problem is the duality which exists between the Gospel message and African culture. The Christian message was proclaimed to a people deeply rooted in the cultures and had their own ways of worship, world view and understanding of God. God addressed them in these situations.<sup>120</sup> The Gospel of Christ should aim at addressing this duality and diversity between culture and Christianity. Christianity should aim at addressing the real issues affecting Africans.

Africans emphasis on experiencing something. Salvation which is communicated by the Gospel should be historical and experiential to Africans. As long as the Gospel does not form a good link between these two aspects, most Christians will take recourse to African traditional practices whenever they are confronted by problems. Christ's message to be salvific should be presented as providing the means of overcoming the deeply grounded feelings of insecurity which creates acute social and psychological problems among African Christians and help us to restrain from idolatrous escapism.<sup>121</sup>

This challenge can be addressed by trying to contextualise the Gospel message. If Christ incarnate is presented as a God who is in solidarity with human beings and their

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<sup>120</sup> J.K.Mugambi And Laurenti Magesa, ( editors) , Jesus In African Christianity: Experimentation And Diversity In African Christology, ( Nairobi: Initiatives Publishers, 1989), 15.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

destiny, it will help to liberate an African who is subjected to the fear of evil spirits. This is why most Africans, rich , poor, educated and illiterate are Christians during the day and in the night they would consult witchdoctors and medicine men to try to find solutions to their problems. Most feel that the Gospel message does not address their daily challenges and hence lack total commitment to it. Is this not a form of rejection of invitation to the wedding feast or indifference which prevailed among those invited?

Following the spirit of the second Vatican council of not rejecting anything which is true and holy in other religions, we should present Christ as the ancestor who is the source of life and fulfillment of the cosmotheandric relationship in the world. This notion is in line with Jesus as inaugurator of the kingdom of God which breaks the powers of evil. In this Jesus will be able to address the sufferings of Africans in a holistic approach. Such an invitation to the Gospel message will not be rejected by Africans.

### **3.5 TOWARDS AFRICAN CHRISTOLOGY.**

Matthew in the parable of the wedding feast presents Jesus as the Son of God. This title of Jesus is in conformity with the African view of the great ancestor. The great ancestor was conceived as the source of life and fulfillment of human aspirations and desires in this life. This was connected with the understanding of life which is seen beyond death and death was understood as a necessary passage to life. Christ as the great ancestor has power and authority to judge, reward and punish.<sup>122</sup> Such a conception of Jesus will make an impact to the individual, society and political and economic systems in Africa.

Africans believed that for one to be truly human one has to be born an African. In this way one attains fullness of being and personality. The incarnate *logos* as a black man

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<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

per excellence, gives room for Africans to understand him as one who underwent the rites of passage and became the source of their self identification with him. Christ will be seen as one who acquired age and experienced its difficulties. He triumphed over them all and hence became the best model to the Africans.<sup>123</sup>

Jesus as incarnate son of God is sinless. Sinlessness is one of the divine qualities among Africans. Therefore Christ's sinlessness is true to his divinity.

Christ may be conceived as a chief, a heir of father's throne. Christ's chiefship demands total commitment on the side of his subjects which includes struggle for liberation.<sup>124</sup> This become clear when we see his authority and power as derived from suffering and his humanity.

An understanding of Jesus as our ancestor in whom all other ancestors have their being and life, will help to overcome fear which Africans has toward their ancestors. It will also help in promoting a strong relationship with them and view them as saints are seen in the christian church.

### **3.6 CHURCH IN AFRICA AS PEOPLE OF GOD.**

How can we understand the church in Africa as the people of God? The model of Christ as our ancestor will make us understand better the concept of the church as family of God. Christ is our elder brother. He is the first born among many brothers and sisters who form this family. This notion is in line with African thinking. This stems from a strong kinship system operative in most African cultures. The kinship system controls social relationships among the people. Kinship system governs the thinking, behaviors and whole

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

life of the individual in a society of which he / she is a member. When this concept is applied to the church some of its elements need to be refined.

Christ as our elder brother and great ancestor, is the founder of this family, the church. This family welcomes everyone irrespective of his / her color, race, sex and nation. This helps us to see a new kind of relationship which exists when one becomes a member of this family. Christians do not become members of this family of God through blood relations. This can be well understood when we reflect on the two ways of joining a certain community. The first is by birth and the second by ritual. Those who join a certain family or community through a ritual are obliged to obey all rules and regulations of that family or community. Rejection of all or some part of them would lead to being expelled. Through the ritual of baptism we become members of the family of God, the church and we are obliged to observe the rules and obligations of the same family.

The father figure emerging in the parable of the wedding feast corresponds to the African conception of the family. The head of the family is the father or mother according to the family tree. The church in Africa can be understood as a household, a theme prominent in Matthew: God the father and Jesus the son ( elder son) are the key figures in this family. This is in line with the African understanding of the role of the elder son in the family.<sup>125</sup>

### **3.7 PROBLEMS IN LITURGY AND WORSHIP.**

Salvation, which is a gift of God, requires one to respond positively and actively. There are some problems in our small Christian communities because some members see themselves as holy and see others as evil. Such Christians should avoid self- righteousness which hinders a free response to God's grace and hence spiritual growth. A Christian should

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

always remain open to God's grace and be ready to respond. It is a common phenomena in our churches for some people to be discriminated against due to color, race, culture and religion. Others suffer discrimination because of their marital status. The Gospel today is challenging us to rethink our stand on such attitudes. The Eucharist is a fellowship based on love, a symbol of messianic banquet. If the Eucharist is to be meaningful and have an effect on all who participate in it, then such discriminations should not exist among us . A symbol of table fellowship shows brotherly and sisterly love among those who take part. This should be projected even beyond the liturgical celebrations. Eucharist is meant to unite us.

### **3.8 CONCLUSION**

. The preaching of the Gospel in African is an extension of the divine invitation to us. Different Churches and denominations in Africa continue to respond to this invitation today. Our elder brother, Jesus, invites us to the messianic banquet. Our response is important.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

Matthew's parabolic language is used to express the rejection of Jesus' message and its ultimate outcome. His aim is to encourage his community to remain faithful to the message of Jesus. His community is the new people of God. This is as a result of Israel's failure to remain faithful to God's covenant and promises. To illustrate this point, Matthew traces the salvation history from its beginning to his times. His intention is to remind Israel how they have rejected God's covenant, his Son and a call to repentance. As a result the Gentiles who have accepted the message of Jesus have inherited the promises to Israel.

Therefore God's promises have universal goals. They were meant for all people through Jesus the Messiah. The rejection of Jesus' message by Israel has a positive outcome. God is able to reach all people as designated from the beginning. The preaching of the Gospel by missionaries in Africa is an extension of the mission of God through Jesus Christ. It can be interpreted as a divine providence. Salvation has reached us as planned from the beginning.

The African Christian is challenged to contextualize the message of Jesus in his/her own culture. The phenomena of many churches and denominations in Africa are an attempt by Africans to respond to the message of the Gospel in their own situation. An African is challenged to face the situation with care, but also with courage. A right understanding of Jesus and his message will help an African to be a true Christian and a true African. He/ she is challenged to approach liturgical celebrations and assemblies with an open mind and a spirit of acceptance to others. This can make the church truly African and our liturgical celebrations a true reflection of Jesus to others. Otherwise we will be rejecting the message of Jesus in our own ways.

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