

Titles of Christians (7)
Chosen Ones of God
Colossians 3:12
Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan

In many countries, students have to take an exam after they finish middle school. This was true of Vietnam when I was living there. I don't know what the present situation is, since I left Vietnam a few decades ago. At the time I was living there, this exam was very important, for it will affect the students' future. Whoever failed the exam would have to repeat grade 12. But even for those who passed the exam, they were divided into different grades based on the marks they got in the exam. When the students applied for university or college, whether they will be accepted or rejected depends on their exam marks. Therefore all students had to study very hard. It was not enough to just pass the exam, but they had to achieve high marks, the higher the better.

Christians also have to pass an examination, and one of the titles of Christians is "The chosen one":

^{NASB} **Colossians 3:12** So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience (Col 3:12 NASB)

Here apostle Paul says Christians are the chosen ones of God; we are to have a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

The term "chosen ones" indicates that some people are chosen, and some are not. So who are chosen? By what criterion are we chosen? If we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and get baptized, will we be certainly chosen?

What criteria are used to choose people?

First of all, by what criteria are Christians chosen? Does Yahweh God choose the most intelligent ones? And reject the slow and dumb people, letting them die in sin and be destroyed in the lake of fire in the future? How does He choose people?

^{NIV} **1 Corinthians 1:26 – 28** Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸ God chose the lowly things of this world and

the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are (1Cor 1:26-28 NIV)

In this passage Apostle Paul is addressing the Christians in the Corinthian church; he says that not all of them are wise according to the standard of the world, not many are influential, not many are of noble birth, yet they are called and chosen by God! In verses 27 – 28 Paul even says that Yahweh God has indeed chosen the foolish things to shame the wise ones, He chose the weak things to shame the strong ones, He chose the lowly and despised things in the world, He chose the things which are not to nullify the things which are!

What does it mean? Does it mean that Yahweh God sees who are the lowliest, the weakest, the most foolish, and He would choose them? Does it mean that Yahweh God would simply reject the intelligent and strong people? That would be too strange and very unfair!

On the other hand, it is a fact that even many poor and lowly people just keep on rejecting the gospel and don't want to believe in Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ. So how can they be saved? In their case, they should not be chosen by God! On the contrary, many rich and highly intelligent people love Yahweh God very much, and are very faithful Christians. In their case, they should not be rejected, they should be chosen. Apostle Paul himself was very intelligent, and he was chosen. The Lord Jesus himself said that Paul was a chosen instrument:

^{NIV} **Acts 9:15 – 16** But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.” (Act 9:15-16 NIV)

The word “he” in this passage refers to Saul. Later on he changed his name to Paul. Here the Lord Jesus says Saul is his chosen instrument; in the future he will bear the Lord's name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel, and he will suffer for the Lord's name.

From these two passages, 1 Corinthians 1:26–28 and Acts 9:15–16, we see that Yahweh God doesn't choose people based on their intelligence or status in the world. On the other hand, He has compassion on the lowly and poor people, but it doesn't mean that just because someone is poor and lowly, he would be chosen by God.

Then by what criteria does Yahweh God choose people?

Yahweh God chooses people according to righteousness by grace

^{ESV} **Romans 11:5 – 6** So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. ⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. (Rom 11:5 – 6 ESV)

Here it says that Yahweh God chooses people by grace, it doesn't depend on works. Yahweh God does not choose us because we are intelligent, learned or skillful! On the other hand, He would not choose us just because we are lowly, weak and foolish! Then on what basis does He choose us? He chooses us by grace.

This is the first point: Yahweh God chooses us by grace. Let's read Matthew 22:1–14.

^{ESV} **Matthew 22:1 – 14** And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, ² “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, ³ and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. ⁴ Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.’ ⁵ But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶ while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. ⁷ The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. ⁸ Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹ Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’ ¹⁰ And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests. ¹¹ “But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. ¹² And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. ¹³ Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ¹⁴ For many are called, but few are chosen.” (Mat 22:1-14 ESV)

This is the parable of the wedding feast. Verse 2 (Mat 22:2) says, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.” The kingdom of heaven is the same as the kingdom of God, so the king in the kingdom of heaven stands for Yahweh God, and the son of the king stands for Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

What then does the bride of the son of the king stand for? In the New Testament, the church stands for the wife of the Lord Jesus Christ.

^{NASB} **Ephesians 5:31 – 32** for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.³² This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. (Eph 5:31-32 NASB)

From this passage Ephesians 5:31-32, it may appear that the wedding has already taken place, from the fact that Christ is compared to the husband, and the church is compared to the wife. But how come in the parable of Matthew 22:1 – 14, the wedding feast will be in the future, in the kingdom of heaven?

Here we have to understand the customs of the Jewish people. In Jewish custom, when a girl is pledged to be married to a man, they would be considered as husband and wife even though they haven't had the wedding yet. For example Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus was betrothed to Joseph. Even before they came together, Joseph and Mary were considered as husband and wife.

^{NASB} **Matthew 1:18 – 19** Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. (Mat 1:18-19 NASB)

Here it says that Mary was betrothed to Joseph. Even though they hadn't got married, Joseph was called her husband in v.19.

That's why apostle Paul is telling the Christians in the Corinthian church that right now in this age, the church is compared to the virgin who has been betrothed to Jesus Christ, even though the wedding will be in the future in the kingdom of heaven. But right now she is considered to be the wife of Jesus Christ and therefore she has to be faithful to Christ.

^{NASB} **2 Corinthians 11:2** For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you *as* a pure virgin. (2Co 11:2 NASB)

Let's come back to the parable of the wedding feast. Matthew 22:1 – 2 says that the wedding feast of the Son of God will be in the future in the kingdom of heaven. In the meantime, the king sends his servants out to call those who had been invited to come to the feast. This signifies that Yahweh God sends His servants out to call people to repent and to return to Him; the servants of the king stand for the servants of God who preach the word of God to people.

When the servants of the king called the people to come, they rejected the calling. One went to his farm, another took care of his business, some even seized the king's servants and killed them. Indeed that is exactly what's happening in this age. When the servants of God preach the gospel to the people, most people would just ignore it and go on doing their own business; some people would even do violent things to the servants of God. In the past thirty some years of preaching the gospel, I have been scolded and insulted many times, though not to the point of getting killed. The Old Testament records that many prophets of Yahweh God had been killed by the people of Israel. When the Lord Jesus Christ came to preach the gospel to people, they killed the Son of God as well. Then after Jesus had been taken up into heaven, his disciples started preaching the gospel to the whole world, and since then they have been persecuted and killed up to this day by all the peoples of the world, not just the Jews.

When the king heard that his servants had been mistreated and even killed, he got angry and sent his troops to punish the evil people. Then the king sent his servants to go out on the streets and invite anyone they could find, both good and evil, to fill up the wedding hall. This situation can be compared to the people of Israel who rejected the gospel, so Yahweh God sent His servants to preach the gospel to all the people of the world, so that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus and repents of their sin would be forgiven and be granted salvation. That's why salvation is not by works; these people simply accepted the invitation and came to the wedding feast; they didn't need to do anything great. In the same way we are saved not because we have done great things, we are saved simply by responding to the invitation of Yahweh God. We are saved by grace, not by works.

In this parable, those who reject the invitation and mistreat the servants of the king are punished. Yahweh God will likewise punish those who keep refusing the gospel and insulting His servants. In real life many people have heard the gospel, but they love money more than the word of God. Usually the rich and powerful people don't see the gospel as precious, because their money can solve a lot of their problems and they don't feel they need God; indeed quite often they despise the gospel and even Yahweh God. In this parable those who accept the invitation to the wedding feast are the poor and lowly people, they see their own unworthiness and they appreciate the invitation of the king. In real life most poor and lowly people need God's help, and therefore they see the preciousness of the gospel. In the end the humble and lowly are chosen, but the rich and powerful are rejected.

That's why in 1 Corinthians 1:26 – 28 apostle Paul says that among the Christian brothers and sisters, not many are wise by human standards, not many are influential, not many are of noble birth. Yet Yahweh God has chosen the humble and lowly ones because they answer Yahweh's calling, and receive the grace of God with gratitude. On the contrary the wise and powerful people

are rejected by Yahweh God because they don't need the grace of God; they despise and reject the word of God.

Now let's continue to study the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22:1 – 14. Will everyone in the wedding feast be accepted into the kingdom of heaven and be saved?

Will everyone in the wedding feast be accepted into the kingdom of heaven and be saved?

In order to answer this question, let's read the latter part of this parable from verse 11 onward:

^{ESV} **Matthew 22:11 – 14** “But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. ¹² And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. ¹³ Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ¹⁴ For many are called, but few are chosen.” (Mat 22:11-14 ESV)

Before the wedding feast started, the king came in to look at the guests, and saw a man who did not wear a wedding garment. He asked him why he didn't have a garment, and the man couldn't answer. The king told his servants to throw this man into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Please take notice here, being thrown out into the darkness is a very serious thing, because first of all, the Lord Jesus Christ is the light of the world, those who follow the Lord will not be in the darkness:

^{NASB} **John 8:12** Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.” (Joh 8:12 NASB)

Those who follow the Lord will not walk in darkness, therefore those who are thrown into the darkness would not be with the Lord Jesus. That means they would be lost, they would lose their salvation.

But why is this person thrown into the darkness simply because he didn't have a wedding garment? Why is this wedding garment so important?

In order to understand this point, we have to look at the customs of the Jews. According to Jewish customs, when someone invites people to a banquet, he would give them a very nice white garment because he is concerned that if any guest doesn't wear a nice garment to his banquet, that would put his banquet to shame. This nice wedding garment is a gift from the master, every guest would have one. Do you know what a nice garment stands for in the Bible?

^{NASB} **Revelation 19:7 – 8** “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” ⁸ It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (Rev 19:7-8, NASB)

The bride stands for the church, and it says here that the fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints. The word “saints” refers to Christians; Christians are called “saints” in the book of Revelation. So fine linen stands for the righteous acts of Christians, if anyone doesn’t have a fine linen garment, that would mean he doesn’t have righteous acts, he is not a righteous person. Certainly an unrighteous person is not allowed to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Please remember that this nice wedding garment is a gift from the king, just as righteousness is a gift from God. We are sinners, we are not righteous people; but when we believe in the Lord Jesus, we repent of our sins and are baptized. All our sins are washed clean by the blood of the Lord, and we become righteous. Therefore righteousness is by the grace of God, just as the fine linen wedding garment is a gift from the king.

But why didn’t this guest have a wedding garment? Maybe he has made the garment so dirty that it cannot be worn any more. Please remember that this garment is bright and clean. In order to keep a garment bright and clean you have to wash it often. If your garment gets dirty you have to wash it right away, you don’t delay. If you delay washing it, the dirty spot would become permanent, and cannot be cleaned any more. Maybe some people don’t even bother to wash the garment, and it becomes dirtier and dirtier. By the time the wedding comes, the garment will become dirty beyond recognition; in the end he is thrown out into the outer darkness.

The garment stands for righteousness, and conversely the dirtiness on the garment stands for sin. After we commit our lives to Yahweh God and to the Lord Jesus, and get baptized, we are given righteousness. It is as if we are given this clean wedding garment, but we have to keep this garment clean. We should not live in sin anymore, for we have died to sin. Yahweh God grants us the Holy Spirit to help us to live a righteous life; if we are not careful and commit sin, we will have to come before Yahweh God and repent, and not delay. Then the blood of the Lord Jesus will wash us clean again.

^{NASB} **Revelation 7:13 – 14** Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?” ¹⁴ I said to him, “My lord, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great

tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”
(Rev 7:13-14 NASB)

This passage says that those who wear the white robes have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them clean in the blood of the Lamb to make them white. Remember this white garment stands for righteousness. If we are not careful and commit sin, we have to repent right away; then the blood of the Lord Jesus will wash our garment clean again.

^{NASB} **1 John 1:8 – 9** If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1Jo 1:8-9 NASB)

Everyone has sinned, no one is perfect; if anyone says he has no sin, he doesn't want to admit he is a sinner, and he is simply deceiving himself. But when we commit sin, we confess before Yahweh God immediately, then the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ will wash us clean again.

Conclusion

Now let's sum up everything. It is not that the one who has been baptized would be automatically chosen by God to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Yahweh God chooses people based on their righteousness. He does not look at our money or status in society. He would not check whether we have been baptized and go to church regularly. Yahweh God only wants to see whether we have the white wedding garment or not, that is, whether we are a righteous person or not.