

## The Parables of Jesus

### - The Invitation to the Great Banquet

(Luke 14:16-24)

This parable was given while Jesus was in the region of Galilee. He was invited to the house of the "chief Pharisee" of that region to "eat bread" on the Sabbath. - Luke 14:1. In a previous "Parable of the Month" entitled, "The Parable of the Lowest Seat at the Feast," (please, visit our "Library" page of our website) we discussed in detail the events that would eventually lead up to the parable we will be discussing. For now, let's take a brief review of the events leading up to our parable.

The first event that took place when Jesus entered the "chief Pharisee's" home that we discussed was the healing of the man with "Dropsy." (Luke 14:2-6) Afterwards, Jesus reproved the chief Pharisee and the other leadership for their incorrect attitude of heart towards helping others on the Sabbath (they refused to answer His questions concerning this). He then proceeded to take note how they vied for seating position at dinner. They were pushing and shoving each other to try to get the right seat at the right table with the right people and in the right room. As He witnessed this spectacle, Jesus then upbraided them for their arrogance and pride by speaking forth the parable/ teaching of the "The Lowest Seat at the Feast." (Luke 14:7-14)

As Jesus finished speaking that parable and the teaching that went along with it, one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things that Jesus taught and said, "*Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.*" (Luke 14:15) Jesus, in response to this person's remark, immediately proceeded to bring forth the next parable - The Parable of "The Invitation to a Great Banquet" - Luke 14:16-24.

However, before continuing to discuss our parable, we should take a brief look at the statement that this man blurted out. It seems as if it came out of nowhere. At first glance it doesn't seem to really have anything to do with the parable and teaching that Jesus just gave. Why does this man declare such a self-evident statement about those who will eat bread in the kingdom of God? Of course, anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God would be blessed. Well duh!!! But why does he take the time to make this point? Was he trying to defuse a tense situation by offering a statement that everyone could agree upon? Was he trying to interject himself into the conversation in order to seek some kind of status by offering his own opinion and become the center of attention by all present including Jesus?

The man spoke of the goodness and blessedness of the "great banquet" that was spoken of many times in the Old Testament that will take place with God and His people at the resurrection. Isaiah 25:6 points to this "feast" as he states, "*And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.*" This great banquet is believed to take place at the time of the resurrection.

I believe this man's response was in connection with Jesus' use of the term "resurrection" in the previous parable found in Luke 14:14, "*And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.*" However, I also sense that it was this man's attempt to "change the subject." After all, it was getting "a little hot in the house." Jesus was making them all, including the chief Pharisee, look pretty bad. In my mind, I can see this man, listening to Jesus and not being too happy. I see him maybe take a piece of bread or a sip of wine and simply blurt this statement as if to say, okay, I'm getting bored of this. Let's move on. Of course this is just speculation on my part.

However, as we will see, Jesus did not miss a beat. He used this as an opportunity to continue to teach and clarify some false doctrines and traditions that had crept into the leadership and therefore into Judaism which were not found within their scriptures – especially concerning the resurrection. The Jewish people believed that salvation was theirs, and only theirs, because they were of the "seed of Abraham."

However, unfortunately, they even began to make conditions and excluded any Jew who **they considered** to be a "sinner" - such as a harlot, a tax collector, those with leprosy, etc. They had made it into a very "elite and exclusive club" which ultimately would only make place for them to be at this great feast. This man and every other religious leader in that house believed they, or at the most a select other few, were going to be at the feast in the resurrection. Everyone else they considered not be to "worthy" to partake of that feast and be in the presence of God.

This was one of the main obstacles in their acceptance of Jesus' message, as well as John the Baptist's message, of repentance as a pathway and preparation of the heart leading to salvation. They believed that there was no need for them to repent for their salvation. Their salvation was "set in stone" (so they thought, incorrectly) because they were of the "seed of Abraham." Jesus gave this parable to address that incorrect thinking. I believe many people today are under a similar misconception and need to truly "hear" this parable that Jesus gave two thousand years ago because this deception, even though it may come in different ways, was the same yesterday, and is today and will be in the days to come.

### The Parable of the "Invitation to a Great Banquet" - Luke14:16-24

*"A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."*

Let's review a brief synopsis of the parable. A man planned a large banquet and sent out invitations by way of his servant. Notice, the invitations were sent out way ahead of time to give all those invited time to prepare, get their things in order and be ready. It would not be a "spur of the moment" invitation which could give rise to people honestly, with valid reasons, not being able to attend. It was this way so that **no one** would be able to have an excuse not to attend.

When the banquet was ready, the man sent his servant to contact each of the invited guests, telling them that all was ready and the meal was about to start (verses 16-17). One after another, the guests made excuses for not coming. As we look at these excuses we see that they make absolutely no sense.

- One had just bought a piece of land and said he had to go see it (verse 18). This is a poor excuse and you know that it is a lie. Who buys land that they have never seen before?
- Another had purchased some oxen and said he was on the way to yoke them up and try them out (verse 19). Again, this is a very lame excuse and you know it is a lie. Who buys oxen without seeing them and without knowing if they are healthy enough to do the work they would be bought for?
- Another gave the excuse that he was newly married and therefore could not come (verse 20). What does newly married have to do with going to a feast? This was another lie using a poor excuse.

The bottom line was that they just did not want to attend. They all had an excuse. Some once told me that excuses are like armpits. Everyone has them and they all stink!!! The real question that I think of is, "Why didn't they want to attend?" Ultimately, I believe it was because they did not think the man who was giving the banquet was worthy of their attendance.

Let's review the "characters" of our parable.

- The "certain man," also referred to as "the master of the house," represents God, the Father.
- The "servant" represents the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is many times typified by the use of a servant. (See in Genesis the "servant" that was sent by Abraham to bring a wife back for Isaac.) It would be the Holy Spirit who would be sent by the Father to invite the Jew first and then the Gentiles. This would be accomplished through the disciples and apostles and every other believer who would be filled and led by the Holy Spirit to tell all people the Good News so that they can attend the great banquet of the Lord of hosts at the time of the resurrection.
- These first three "invited guests" represent the Jewish leadership who, knowing the scriptures, should have been prepared, ready and waiting for the Messiah's coming to partake in that great banquet in the coming Messianic Kingdom. However, they rejected and refused the invitation. It also represents the Jewish nation as a whole who refused the invitation.
- The ones referred to as "*the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind*" represented all those Jews whom the religious "elitists" had rejected and believed to be cursed by God because of their social status or physical maladies. This would include the harlots, tax collectors and other "sinners" who were also deemed "unclean" and/or "unworthy" by the religious "elitists." However, as we are well aware of, these were the very ones in which Jesus spent much of His time with and was persecuted the most for doing so by the Pharisees.
- The ones in the "highways and byways," etc were the Samaritans and the Gentiles. Remember, The Gospel was to the Jew first and then to the Samaritans and the Gentiles. Acts 2:8 tells us this as Jesus tells His disciples, "*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*"
- The other character in this parable is one that may not be so noticeable and even passed over. I believe it is the main character in this parable. The character that I am referring to is the "invitation" itself. The invitation represents Jesus. He is the only way into the banquet. All of these individuals in this parable had the opportunity to either accept or reject the "invitation."
- It is only a person who "accepts the invitation" (Jesus and His message) that will be allowed into the banquet.

As stated in previous parables, this call declaring that the time had come, should not take the Jewish people by surprise; especially, the religious leaders. They knew the scriptures – or they were supposed to. The fact of the matter was that the leadership of that time chose to neglect the invitation and chose not to be ready when the time came and the call went out to attend. The "call" and the "time" were here and now because Jesus, the Messiah, the "invitation," was right there in front of them.

The real issue was that they became blinded by their self-righteousness and their misconstrued way of thinking in which they came to believe that their "place at the banquet" was "secured" simply because they were of the seed of Abraham. This caused them to become so wrapped up in their own arrogance that they were blinded to the true way of salvation, their Messiah. They were blinded to the "invitation," the only true way into the banquet extended to them by the Father who was right in front of them - Jesus.

They were so concerned with their traditions and incorrect lifestyles and incorrect priorities that when the Messiah was right in front of them they could not recognize, nor did they even want to recognize Him. They also became so self-righteous that they ultimately, whether they realized it or not, placed themselves in a higher position than God, the Father. They didn't receive His invitation to the banquet.

The main problem was that they did not think they needed an "invitation." They thought that their access to the banquet at the resurrection was because they were of the "seed of Abraham." They thought it was going to happen **their way** which was not God's way. They were seriously mistaken as this parable reveals.

We must take notice that Jesus uses the term "*compel them*." Jesus tells us that the "master" is exhorting those who do not even belong to "*the city*" (the Gentiles) to come. They were not only invited but they were greatly urged by his servant to come to this banquet. Salvation is for both the Jew and the Gentile, male and female – everyone. The Father is not simply extending an invitation for everyone to come but He is pleading with them and is compelling them to please, come to the banquet. The "master" (God, the Father) desires His "banquet" to be filled and have no empty places.

Jesus makes it clear in this parable that those who first were given the invitation to come and partake of the God's banquet (the Jewish leaders and the Jewish people) had an incorrect attitude of heart, as well as an incorrect perspective of what it meant to be the "seed of Abraham." The blessing of being "the seed of Abraham" simply meant that God would always remember His covenant with Abraham and His descendants. The "Good News," the invitation, the Messiah, would be extended to them first but then it would be extended to the rest of the world.

This is the "mystery of the faith" that was "hidden" until Jesus came to reveal it. God loved and had always desired for the world, Jew and Gentile, to not perish but come to the saving knowledge of His love exemplified, expressed and revealed through the Son of God – Jesus. Unfortunately, they misunderstood and took the "privilege" of being God's chosen people for granted. In the process, they ended up hardening their heart towards God and towards the One they were supposedly waiting for, their Messiah.

A person's salvation only comes one way - through Jesus. John 14:6 - "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*" It does not matter who you are or where you come from or what your lineage would be. It does not matter what church or ministry you belong to. Salvation and a place at the banqueting table in the resurrection and at the marriage feast of the Lamb, is only made possible through Jesus.

As we conclude our discussion on the parable of "The Invitation to the Great Banquet," we read that Jesus ends this parable by relating the master's final decision, "... *That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.*" (Verse 24) Those who ignored the invitation to the banquet ended up choosing their own consequences of their decision —they missed out. Notice, that this becomes a **permanent** decision for those that make that choice for Jesus explicitly says that "*they will not taste of my supper.*"

So it will be with God's judgment upon those who choose to reject the "invitation," of the Father to come and sit at His banqueting table of the marriage feast of the Lamb in the resurrection. It will be their choice. By rejecting Jesus they will have their choice confirmed, and shall **never** taste the joys of heaven. Those who accept the invitation, accept the only way into the banquet which is Jesus, will have the joy of sitting at the table of the Lord and partaking of every good thing that is found within the Kingdom of God.

- Song of Solomon 2:4 – "*He brought me to His banqueting house and His banner over me was love.*"
- 2 Peter 3:9 - "*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*"
- Romans 10:13 - "*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*"
- John 3:16 – "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"