

Parable of The Great Kingdom Banquet

How did you become a Christian? Some men and women say they said a prayer. Some say that they have always been a Christian. Some think that they are a Christian because they live in a country that has many Christians. The Pharisees of Jesus' day believed that they were going to heaven because they were Jews, descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Others will say they are going to heaven because they are a good person and are performing good works. Many people think that if they believe Jesus existed and that He was a good person, they are going to heaven. Some claim that a person does not need to repent of their sins. Just believe Jesus died for your sins and it is okay to reject Him at some future date. God understands. They might have even said a brief prayer at some emotional point. Others say everyone is going to heaven because God is loving and good. Surely He would not want anyone to go to hell! In this study of Luke 14:15-24 and the following one, Jesus will teach us what is required in order to go to heaven. Be prepared for some strong statements.

EATING BREAD IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD. In the previous study, Luke 14:7-14, Jesus had just finished a parable about proud individuals who tried to sit in the best seats

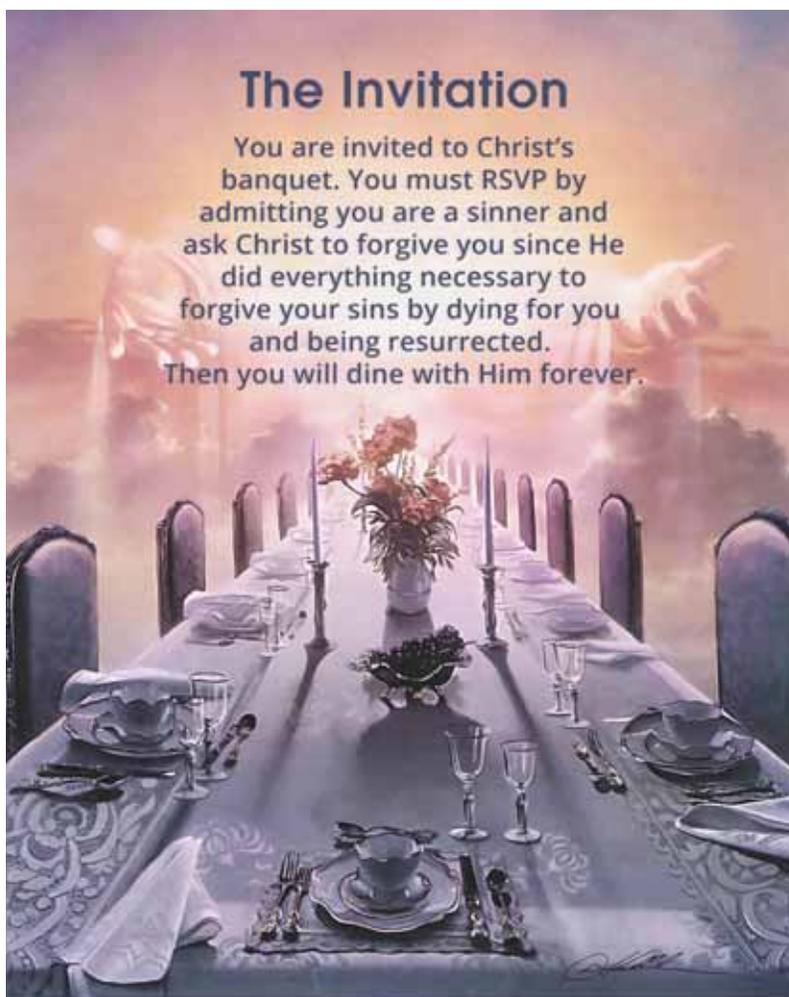
at a banquet. He also gave an illustration in which He encouraged some Pharisees to host a meal for people who could not afford to return the favor. Jesus' message was to be humble which results in one being more concerned about others. The Pharisees in the room must have been either angry or embarrassed. Some may have been embarrassed if their consciences were not hardened. Otherwise, they were probably angry that once again Jesus condemned them. However, we do not know for sure.

As soon as Jesus had finished, a quick-thinking Pharisee made a statement that appears to say, "We will have the best seats

since we will be eating in the kingdom!"

When one of those who were reclining at the table with Him

heard this, he said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" Luke 14:15 (NASB)



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He was correct that everyone who eats bread¹ in the king-

1. The phrase eat bread refers to a meal that the people share. The phrase also implies that bread was a major part of a Jewish meal in Jesus' day. For example, when Christ taught the disciples how to pray, He told them to pray for their daily bread (Matthew 6:11). He did not limit the request to just bread but to foods in general. In Matthew 7:9 Jesus used the illustration of a son asking for a loaf of bread. That is, the child wanted something to eat. We must remember that they did not have refrigerators to keep meat from spoiling in Jesus' time. At the time that Jesus fed four thousand people (Matthew 15:32-37; Mark 8:1-10), one of the disciples was concerned as to how to feed so many

dom of God will be blessed.

CHARACTER OF THE FUTURE KINGDOM. The kingdom about which the Pharisee was speaking will occur after the future tribulation. Many Old Testament passages teach that during the millennial kingdom the earth will be transformed. Isaiah 25:6-9 describes the future kingdom symbolically as a mountain (see Psalm 2:6-12; Daniel 2:44-45). We are told God's kingdom will stretch over the world. The animal world or kingdom will be at peace. Sin and the effects of sin will be suppressed. People will live for hundreds of years. Isaiah 65:20 states that if a child dies at one hundred years of age, he or she will be considered accursed. People will be forced to submit to Christ's rule (Isaiah 11:1-10; 65:17-23; Zechariah 14:10-21). There will be no crime. No one will need to lock the windows and doors of their homes (Zechariah 2:4). The trees, grass, flowers, and plants that provide food will be extremely productive. As a result, we are told in Isaiah 25:6-7 that people will eat as if it were a banquet every day.

The LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain;

**A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow,
And refined, aged wine.**

**And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering
which is over all peoples,**

Even the veil which is stretched over all nations.

Isaiah 25:6-7 (NASB)

In Matthew 8:11 Jesus told the Pharisees that people would eat food in the kingdom. When Jesus was with the disciples in the Upper Room, He said the next time they would eat together was in the kingdom (Luke 22:16, 30). That is, the kingdom on earth will be a wonderful place. Therefore, the Pharisee was correct. People will eat bread in the kingdom

people. Then Jesus asked how many loaves of bread did they have. Bread was the major part of their diet. The disciples replied that they had seven loaves of bread and a few small fish. There were fewer fish than bread. At the feeding of the five thousand (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:33-44; Luke 9:12-17; John 6:1-14), fish were included as well as bread. Various meats such as fish and lamb were included in meals (John 21:9). Bread was consistently used as a synonym for a meal (Mark 3:20; Luke 15:17; John 6:31-35). In Matthew 15:2 we are told that they washed their hands ceremonially before eating bread (Mark 7:2-5; Luke 11:38). Bread was the major part of their diet and it was also a synonym for a meal.

and we can imagine that the food and wine will be terrific.

CITIZENS OF THE FUTURE KINGDOM. But who will live in the kingdom? Was the Pharisee correct that he and the other Pharisees would be living in the kingdom? Let's look at some Scripture verses.

Both Matthew 24:29-31 and Revelation 19:11-21 teach that at the end of the tribulation the second coming of Christ will occur. Revelation 19:21-20:6 teaches that the kingdom follows the second coming of Christ. The kingdom is also called the millennium, the kingdom of God or the 1,000 year kingdom of Christ. The tribulation ends with the battle of Armageddon when Christ and the resurrected Christians and angels come and defeat the armies of the world that are gathered against Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:1-5; Revelation 19:17-19).

After the victory at the battle of Armageddon, Christ will determine who among the survivors from the tribulation will enter the kingdom of God. This occurs at the Sheep and Goat Judgment described in Matthew 25:31-46, where every mortal, non-Christian will be sent to hell and the mortal Christians will enter the kingdom. Therefore, immortal and mortal Christians will enter the kingdom along with all of the Old Testament saints who will be resurrected (Revelation 20:4). Those who have immortal bodies will be destined for the eternal new heaven and earth described in Revelation 21-22.

Jesus, the apostles, the prophets, all of the Old Testament believers (saints), and all of the Christians will be in the kingdom. But unbelievers will not be in the kingdom. This means most of the Pharisees will not be in the kingdom because they will be in hell. The gospels tell us that some Pharisees did believe (John 7:50-52; 19:38-39).

The Pharisee was correct! Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God! But if he thought he was going to be in the kingdom, he was wrong because he had rejected Christ!

GUESTS OF THE GREAT KINGDOM BANQUET. Therefore, Jesus gave them another parable.

But He said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many; and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say

to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.' Another one said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.' Another one said, 'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.'" Luke 14:16-20 (NASB)

The parable is straight forward. Some man gave a big dinner. The Greek word for dinner refers to the main meal of the day, but Jesus used the phrase "big dinner" symbolically of the feast or banquet in the kingdom. Jesus says that many are invited. It is a free banquet.

It was the custom of the day to issue two invitations to a banquet. The first one was the formal invitation, but it did not specify the day or time. The second invitation informed the guests that the meal was ready. "Come and party!" That is why Jesus refers to two invitations. Many had been invited and now the meal was ready. But Jesus says many made excuses. The Greek word for "to make excuses" has the sense of urgency and demand. They just could not attend due to some urgent obligation. Today, many people make excuses by claiming to be sick. But in the parable, the first guest said that he had just purchased some land and needed to evaluate it. This is clearly an excuse. Who buys land without seeing it first and determining if it is usable? Another said he had purchased five oxen and needed to test them or examine them. This also is just an excuse. Who buys five oxen before determining if they can perform the required



task? And a different man states that he has a new wife and does not want to leave her. Now did he not want to leave her for sexual reasons or to provide her companionship? In the Jewish culture of that time, women were not highly regarded. Therefore, why would he stay home for his wife? The Pharisees would have considered this to be a silly excuse. These men did not want to come to the banquet. At the end of verse 18 we are clearly told that they made excuses. They could have come! In the culture of the day this was an insult.

NEW GUESTS OF THE GREAT BANQUET. Therefore, the slave returned and told his master that those whom he had invited had declined to come.

And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, "Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame." Luke 14:21 (NASB)

This made the master angry. We can understand the anger. To have accepted an invitation to dinner and then refuse to come after the meal has been cooked and the

preparations for the banquet are finished is more than rude. They did not keep their commitment. Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:37 that when we make a commitment we must keep it.

But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil. Matthew 5:37 (NASB)

What did the master do since the food was ready and there were no guests to eat it? The food will spoil unless

someone eats it. Therefore, the answer is to invite others. Consequently, the master sent his slave to go quickly and invite the poor, crippled, blind, and lame. The Greek words for “streets’ and “lanes” are *plateia* and *rhyme*. The first word refers to a wide road and the second word refers to a narrow road. A better translation of the passage would be “Go out at once into the streets and alleys.”

The slave was to bring in the poor. The Greek word for “poor” is *ptochos*. It does not refer to people who are called

poor yet have a television, a car, a laptop computer, and an iPhone. This Greek word refers to someone who has nothing. They were street beggars. The word will be used of Lazarus who is called a beggar in Luke 16:20. Jesus is referring to a spiritual beggar as we will soon discover. The word is also used in Matthew 5:3 to refer to those who are “poor in spirit.” The Greek word translated as “crippled” is *anapeiros*. It has the meaning of “pertain-

ing to a state of being maimed or mutilated, resulting in a crippling condition—‘maimed, mutilated, crippled.’² It has the sense of someone who was maimed or mutilated and as a result was unable to have normal use of their arms, legs or another body part. These are the people that the head of the household invited to the banquet meal. He invited street people, the homeless and those who need our help. The blind

might need someone to put food on their plate. Someone else might need help in order to eat. Some might lack accepted eating manners. To do what the man of the household did would become inconvenient. But the man of the household did not care, he and his staff would help them. These were the same groups of people that Jesus encouraged us to invite in His illustration in Luke 14:12-14.

When the slave returned, he informed his master that he had done exactly what the master had commanded, but

there were still seats available.

“And the slave said, ‘Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’ And the master said to the slave, ‘Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled.’”
 Luke 14:22-23 (NASB)



Therefore, the master commanded that the slave find others to come. Find them wherever possible. The master had prepared a banquet

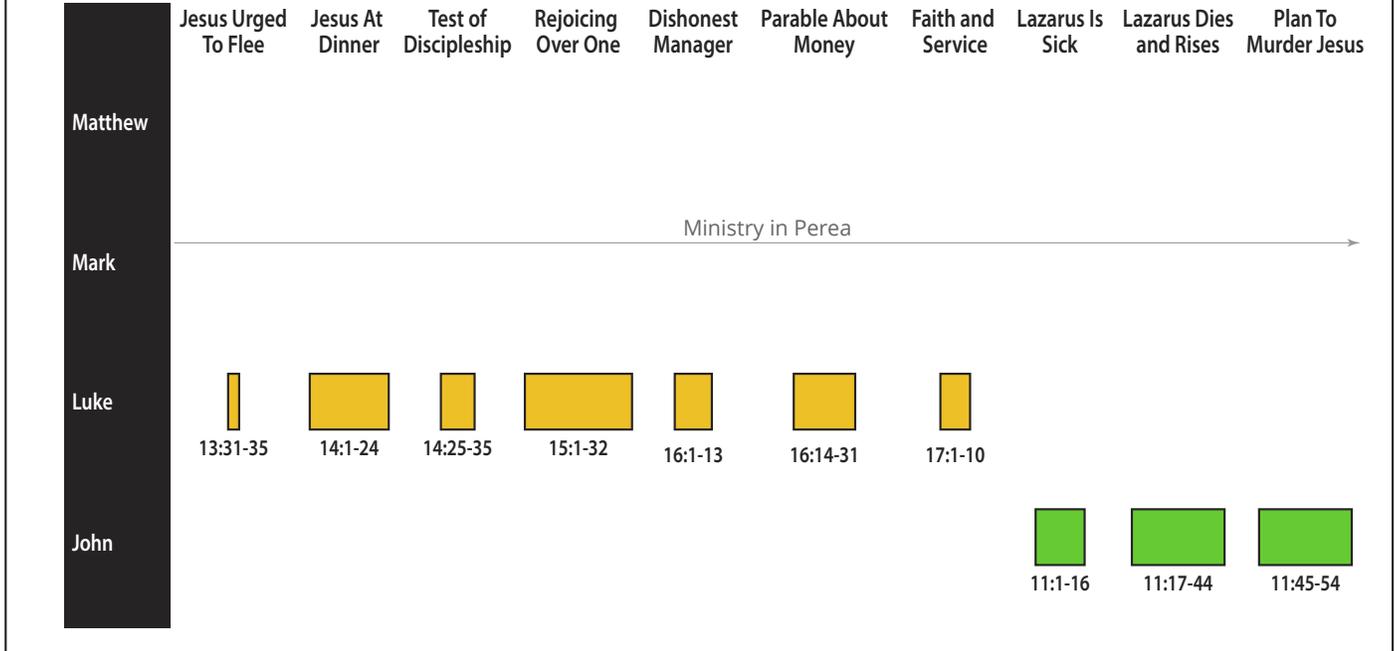
and he wanted all of the available seats to be filled.

NONE OF THOSE MEN SHALL TASTE MY DINNER. When was the last time you invited a street person into your home for a meal? Jesus was not suggesting that you send money to your local gospel rescue mission so that someone else can invite the homeless for a Thanksgiving meal. The message of the parable of the great kingdom banquet is not to urge you or me to be concerned about the poor, the crippled, the blind and lame. That was the previous message in

2. Lou and Nida. Greek-Lexicon of the New Testament. United Bible Societies. 1988. vol. 2, p. 273, 23.177.

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Luke 14:12-14.

The message of this parable is different. Read the last verse.

For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner. Luke 14:24 (NASB)

The end of the parable reveals that it has a spiritual message. The men, who symbolize the Pharisees, will not taste the dinner in God's kingdom. They will not even get into the kingdom. They are going to hell. Those who are supposedly undesirable, the "poor, the crippled, the blind and lame," will be going into the kingdom. The "poor and crippled and blind and lame" were those the Pharisees despised.

The parable teaches us several important spiritual points:

1) First, those who will eat the banquet dinner are those who will be living in the kingdom, that is, they are the saints of the ages or the believers.

2) Only those who respond to Christ's invitation, to the gospel, will enter the kingdom. Those who do not respond will not be eating in the kingdom and, consequently, will

spend eternity in hell.

3) The "poor, crippled, blind and lame" symbolize the spiritually poor—those who could not help themselves. Matthew 5:3 describes the spiritually poor in spirit. These are the humble people who submit to God and beg for forgiveness for their sins.

4) The "men who were invited" but did not come symbolize those who are self-righteous. They are the proud. The proud do not see a need to seek forgiveness. The proud do not seek forgiveness since they do not believe they need to be forgiven. They feel they have more important things to do than to respond to Christ's invitation and follow Him. Most do not believe in God. Others believe they can go to heaven by doing good works because they do not understand that Christ did everything necessary for their forgiveness. Thus they insult Christ.

For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools . . . Romans 1:21-22 (NASB)

CONCLUSION. Stop and consider. In which group are you? Are you like those who were invited to the great banquet in the kingdom but did not go or are you like the “poor, crippled, blind, and lame” who went to the banquet”? If you are not in sorrow over your sins and do not want your sins forgiven through Jesus Christ in order to go heaven, then you are like the men who did not go to the banquet. But if you are in sorrow over your sins, believe that Jesus Christ died and was resurrected so you can be forgiven, and you want your sins to be forgiven, then you are like the “poor and crippled and blind and lame” who went to the banquet. The “poor and crippled and blind and lame” symbolize those who know they have need and rejoice that they have an invitation to go to the banquet. Which are you? If you want your sins forgiven, then tell God that you are a sinner and ask to be forgiven, and yield yourself to Him.