

↩ **Note "One Sabbath day Jesus went to eat dinner in the home of a leader of the Pharisees, and the people were watching him closely," Luke 14:1.** The story in Luke 14:13-24 would have initially been received as a laughably impossible scenario. No such scene would have ever happened in that culture. One of the challenges of correctly interpreting Scripture is that it happened in a different cultural setting than ours. Remember, we don't have the truth until we have correctly interpreted, and it is often more than just the words but also the culture background that comes into play to reach the truth. The social system of first century Israel was much like it had been the previous two thousand years, rural, agrarian, clans and families living on traditional sites and doing traditional work that had been passed down to them. There were no theaters or any of our normal entertainments, no traveling like we do today, they worked all day from dark until dark, and socialized with those at their table. To have a great feast prepared for you by a prominent person would be one of the few highlights of your entire life and you would not miss it.

1. The build-up to the parable from Luke 14:1 and Luke 14:13-15.

- ✓ Jesus gives a lecture about humility and the care for the least, and that God would reward that humility in the resurrection of the righteous. This leads to the statement in Luke 14:15 about that scenario in the kingdom of God where there is going to be a great feast, see Isaiah 25:6; and Revelation 19. The Jews endured endless rituals of legalism that went all the way down to the most minute aspects of hand washing and eating. Why would they put up with such burdens and tight restrictions?? Because they believed they were saving themselves by doing such things, achieving "the resurrection of the righteous" The more rules they kept, the more they deprived themselves, the more assured they were of that resurrection, so they kept adding more and more. This is more or less how all religions work; why do people put up with all the rituals and rules and dos and don'ts and restrictions?? Because they have the hope of eternal life, it's a false hope, but it's a hope.
 - ✓ This man is assuming he's among those going to that banquet, so he makes what amounts to a toast in Luke 14:15. Jesus immediately corrects that thinking with this story: effectively saying, "just because you think you're going doesn't mean you are." All the restrictions and rules and good deeds cannot make up for a single law of God that you have broken, which has rendered us unrighteous eternally. Jesus shatters their false hope with a parable
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2. The invitation.

- ✓ They would have easily identified with every aspect of this story to a certain point. The invitations came in two courses: course number one would have been a verbal invitation given months in advance of the actual event telling them what and where but not when the event would take place. They would be given the month or even the week but never the day or the time. They had to kill, clean, prepare and cook the meat as well as the vegetables and there were no warmers or anything like that to keep the food at an optimum temperature. The second invitation would bring a person the great news that the banquet was ready. Again, this would be the highlight of a lifetime or at least the year, people wouldn't miss it for anything when the call came, Luke 14:17. Pharisees loved the banquets, it gave them opportunity to show off, it was their big thrill in life Matthew 23:6.
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3. When the Excuses Came Luke 14:18.

- ✓ After the “come and get it”, the most bizarre thing happens in Jesus’ story: the pre-invited and pre-accepting guest refuse to come. Typically, they would have lived in great expectation of this event, but “They all alike began to make excuses” here is where those listening would have said, “surely, this is joke!” Not going was unthinkable given the social fabric to that day and it also would have been a huge breach in social ethics. To say you would go and then essentially refuse to come was considered fighting words in those days, it would equivocate to hatred and a declaration of war!! To refuse was to declare that you wanted no friendship with this person. Hundreds would have been invited, but Jesus gives us three sample excuses. One, bought a piece of land, why do they need to go see it today? What would they see that they couldn’t see tomorrow? This is absurd. Two, bought 5 yoke of oxen, again, what would you miss if you tried them out tomorrow? 10 oxen was an expensive purchase, such a person would not do their own plowing. Three, married, also absurd, marriage was a long courtship process, and you wouldn’t have over-lapped that banquet with this one. Why not just bring her?

4. Those newly included Luke 14:21.

- ✓ Angry would have been and understatement, all this expense, all this work, all this preparation, all this time and expectation, and response is indifference and disdain? He’s invited the likely and they refused, so now he’s going to invite the unlikely. These are the poor, the impoverished, the unlikelies. Jesus mostly was surrounded by unlikelies: tax collectors, fishermen political activists, prostitutes, sick, the afflicted.
- ✓ The story turns from one preposterous idea to another one: that this man would invite people like this. The Jews prided themselves in being separate from people like this. Bring in,” they wouldn’t have naturally agreed to attend even if they had been invited because the social norms would have made them think they had no business being there. Part of the reason why they invited the upper class was a reciprocation policy “I scratch your back and you scratch mine.” The poor would refuse because they had no way of paying this man back, which was expected in this culture. All the poor are brought in and there is still seats? A really big banquet! Luke 14:23 says the humble Jewish populace was pictured in the poor but the next group are not Jewish. This group are the ones not allowed into the city; they are the outsiders. They would have to be compelled; it wasn’t just against social norms; it was against the law to go into a city or into such a banquet as Gentiles. We’ve gone from the likelies to the unlikelies to the Nevers. This is the Great commission: “Make disciples of all Nations, baptizing them...” “You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.”

5. The Exclusions

- ✓ As in Luke 14:24 if anyone made such excuses and refused to attend they would never get a second chance. The Jews were the special invited guests, the invitation had been out a long time, they were God’s chosen people, chosen to attend His celebration. Jesus’ earthly ministry was the effective second invitation. “Com everything is ready, My Servant has arrived, the Son of God Himself.” “Repent for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” The King is giving the final invitation. If Jesus was the way to the banquet, If He was the door, if He was the truth, they wanted nothing to do with it. They all said yes to the first invitation but no to the second one because they refused to accept God’s Son. They preferred to die with their pride than to live in humility, they got their wish! see Luke 13:34. God’s Reaction?, what was the reaction of the rich man who was refused? He had every right to be angry – God’s reaction is *permanent exclusion*. Johnn 3:36. Who will be in banquet? The ones who know they are unworthy, undeserving, unlikely, the “nevers.”

Who’s going to be at the table?? all who are willing to except God’s description of them: “Sinners in need of a Savior”. Who’s not going to be there?? Not the religious who refuse Christ (“Lord, Lord did we not in Your name work miracles and cast our demons...”), not the prideful who think they know a better way. Take this parable as a warning: Unless you accept God’s invitation to come through Christ, you won’t be their either!
