

THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND THE HOUSE OF JESUS

LUKE 13:29-14:24

REV. CHARLES R. BIGGS

Introduction

There are two prominent images that are contrasted in our text from Dr. Luke's Gospel today: the imagery of house (House of Israel and House of Jesus) and the imagery of banquets (Banquet of the Ruler of the Pharisees and the Banquet of God). Jesus says to unbelieving Israel that their house is left "desolate" or "forsaken" (13:35a) for rejecting Jesus and His Kingdom, but he says that the Kingdom that will continue to come powerfully in Him and be manifested will eventually be a full house (14:23b; cf. Parable of the Mustard Seed, Luke 13:18-19).

The contrasts in our passage are between the House of Israel that is mostly full of unbelief and the House of Jesus that will be filled by the grace of God.

The banquet imagery is used by Jesus to teach about the fellowship of God with his people, the great festive joy of being in God's presence and supping with him in His Kingdom. However, many who have been invited to the banquet feast of God are not accepting the invitation; rather they are rejecting his gracious invitation with many excuses. However, those who were not initially invited are being invited now and are accepting joyfully this special invitation to a great and eschatological Kingdom Banquet ("Some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last" (13:30).

^{ESV} **Luke 13:29** And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last." ³¹ At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." ³² And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.' ³³ Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.'" ³⁴ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! ³⁵ Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

I. Jesus Pronounces Woes or Laments Over Jerusalem (Luke 13:31-35)

Jesus is headed for Jerusalem (9:51; 13:22) and so he must bring his salvation Gospel-Kingdom message to the center of the Jewish world- - to the heart of their worship and

religion. But his fate and the fate of Israel (represented by Jerusalem) are entwined together (Green, pg. 534). The response in Jerusalem will be consistent with Jerusalem's response to the prophetic-Kingdom-repentance message of the prophets: **Unbelief**.

In fact, as the prophets brought possible salvation through repentance to Jerusalem and were killed and Jerusalem was judged for her rejection, so in Jesus Christ the Great and Eschatological Prophet of God will be killed and Jerusalem judged for her rejection.

Jesus teaches that Jerusalem should not be remembered or characterized so much as merely the center and heart of the Jewish world, but that the city should be remembered and known as the center and heart of where faithful prophets were killed. Jerusalem should be known for killing messengers sent to her by God! (vv. 33b-34a).

As Professor Green writes: "As God's agent, Jesus must carry the divine message to Jerusalem, but Jerusalem kills those whom God sends; on account of this, Jerusalem itself is doomed" (pg. 534).

There is an interpretive link found in the beginning of this pericope that ties it to the greater context: "At that very hour..."

³¹ *At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you."* ³² And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.' ³³ *Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.'* ³⁴ *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!* ³⁵ *Behold, your house is forsaken.* And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

A. Two Kings and Their Missions (vv. 31-33)

Herod Antipas- Ruler or Tetrarch of Galilee

In Luke 3:1 and 3:19 we learn that Herod Antipas was the ruler or Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea on his father's death in 4 BC and held the office until AD 39; he was the ruler over a fourth of a region (*Tetrarch*) and thus ruled most of Jesus' lifetime.

Herod Antipas had put John the Baptist into prison the last we heard in the narrative (3:19-20; 7:18-23), but we learn in Luke 7 that he has also put John the Baptist to death:

i. Pharisees "warn" Jesus of Herod's desire to kill him (v. 31)

It seems that the Pharisees are seeking to get Jesus out from Herod's domain so that they can rid the people of His teaching (I don't think we are to believe that they are truly concerned for him

although some scholars see the reference to “some Pharisees” as indicating that some Pharisees are siding with Jesus and do not want him to be killed, not fully understanding his message).

In my opinion, and based on what Dr. Luke has told us with reference to the Pharisees (Luke 5:21, 30; 6:7; 11:53; 14:1) it seems likely that this was an evil and diabolical attempt to get Jesus to leave this region of Herod’s so that he would be more exposed to the power of the Sanhedrin.

Herod was indeed a powerful and evil man as Dr. Luke has made known throughout his gospel (3:19-20; 9:9), but this powerful and evil man will not hinder our Lord from his Divine Messianic Mission no more than the devil could do in his temptations and attempt to destroy the Son of Man (cf. 4:1 ff).

ii. Jesus’ response: “Go and tell that fox...I finish my course” (v. 32)

A. A fox was a description of a cunning but weak ruler (Geldenhuis, pg. 382). The fox was used by the Jews as a symbol of a sly man, but more often for an insignificant or worthless one (Morris, pg. 249). T. W. Manson says ‘To call Herod “that fox” is as much as to say he is neither a great man nor a straight man; he has neither majesty nor honor.’

B. Jesus’ realization of the Father’s timeline and agenda.

Jesus will remain faithful to His Divine Messianic Mission; nothing can distract him from the baptism he must undergo (cf. Luke 12:49-50).

^{ESV} **Luke 13:32-33:** And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day **I finish my course**.³³ Nevertheless, **I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following**, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.'

Jesus will finish his course, that is his Divine-Messianic-Mission to complete his work on behalf of His people; nothing, not even a great and dangerous ruler, can detract or distract him from His Father’s will.

Biblical commentator Plummer notes the irony in Jesus’ reply (concerning Herod trying to kill him): “I have nothing to fear from Herod; I am safe here, for death comes in

Jerusalem; not only is he safe, God's will is done" (Bock, pg. 1248).

C. Jesus knows that it is in Jerusalem according to the Divine Will of God that he will die (cf. 9:22, 44).

B. Woes on Jerusalem (vv. 33-35)

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! ³⁵ Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

Jesus as the Great and Final Prophet of God will face suffering and death in Jerusalem just as the prophets who were sent before him (cf. Acts 7:51-53).

- i. As Jesus has told the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree (13:6-9, so now he pronounces specific prophetic woes upon Jerusalem (vv. 32-35).
- ii. Jesus indicates prophetically the formal rejection of Messiah in his death.
- iii. Jesus desires to protect Jerusalem in himself from impending divine judgment (see last two sermon on Luke 12:49-13:9 and 13:10-30) as a hen gathers her chicks under her protecting wings - -but they will not turn to him in repentance and faith.

As YHWH reached out his loving arms covenantally to Israel throughout redemptive-history, so Jesus does so now, revealing the heart of God as a God of love and mercy to those who turn to him in repentance and faith ("Slow to wrath; abounding in steadfast, covenantal love..." cf. Exodus 34:6).

- iv. Jesus is deeply burdened by the hardness of the hearts of many in Israel. Throughout redemptive-history when God had sent them prophetic messengers to turn them back to God and away from their sins, the city of God was characterized by murder rather than repentance (v. 34a).

In Dr. Luke's second volume, the Book of Acts, we learn more of this hard-hearted rejection and mass unbelief in Israel:

^{ESV} **Acts 7:51-53:** *"You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. ⁵² Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, ⁵³ you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it."*

Acts 28:25b-28: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: ²⁶ *"Go to this people, and say, You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. ²⁷ For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them."* ²⁸ Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen."

- v. Because of the majority of those in Israel had rejected him, Jesus says: **"Behold, your house is forsaken"** (v. 35)

This saying of Jesus was to eschatologically fulfill the prophecy of Jeremiah the Prophet (cf. Luke 24:25-27; 44ff):

Jeremiah 12:7: "I have forsaken my house; I have abandoned my heritage; I have given the beloved of my soul into the hands of her enemies.

Jeremiah 22:3-5: Thus says the LORD: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place. ⁴ For if you will indeed obey this word, then there shall enter the gates of this house kings who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their servants and their people. ⁵ **But if you will not obey these words, I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation.**

Although the House of Israel would become a desolation because of unbelief, God still offers the people grace to be redeemed as Jeremiah the Prophet goes on to say later in his prophecy:

Jeremiah 31:31-34: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his

brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Jeremiah says that Israel's house will be desolate or forsaken as Jesus says has occurred in their rejection of Messiah, but there is still hope for all who believe in Jesus to find hope in the New Covenant promises that were foretold by Jeremiah and the New Covenant blood that was shed in Jesus Christ. IN Christ those who have ears to hear can hope in: "They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest...for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" says the LORD.

Because of Jerusalem's rejection of Jesus Christ who is the only hope and Savior of mankind whether Jew or Gentile, their house is left desolate. God no longer lives there; that is the final disaster (Morris, pg. 251). Because the people of Israel have rejected Jesus, they have no salvation from their covenant breaking, no protection to cover them from the impending wrath of God to come.

A. **Jerusalem as house.**

Jerusalem was the city of God's Household or people (see Heb. 3:1-6). This means that Jerusalem or Zion was representative as the heart of God's special revelation and saving activity where God's people resided.

This temporal-typological location on the map in the Middle East is desolate now in the sense of having any special significance for the covenant purposes of God in the world. God's household as specially represented in Israel is no longer valid (Jerusalem was part of the "old wineskins" of redemptive-history now that the new wine in Jesus has come).

B. **Temple as house.**

Once the glory of God left the temple of God's people permanently in the Person of Jesus Christ, the temple was left desolate as a place where God would meet with his people.

"Since Jerusalem and the temple have opposed God's messengers and fallen into sin, they are headed for disaster and judgment, which means that the temple and the city (which at present refuse to bless the one who comes as the

Son of Man) can no longer be the source of God's blessing" (Quoted in Beale and Carson, pgs. 338-39).

National Israel is formally under the curse of God and the only hope of escaping God's wrath is through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ the Messiah of God!

As Paul teaches us in Romans 11, God will use the Gentiles' faith in Jesus the Messiah to cause many in Israel to be jealous and to repent and so as the Apostle Paul says: All of true and elect Israel will be saved!

Just as there was a remnant when Jesus Christ first came - Simeon, Anna, Mary, Joseph, Zacharias, Elisabeth and others....John the Baptist, Christ's disciples, etc. So, God will save those in Israel who turn to Christ by faith alone through grace in v. 35b:

And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

Jesus holds out hope to Jerusalem at the end of this prophetic lament or woe quoting Psalm 118:26:

ESV Psalm 118:26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD.

It is as if he is saying that if Israel responds with welcoming faith in Him, understanding Jesus to be the Messiah then they will see Him in His Kingdom and be saved!

If Jerusalem welcomes the One who comes in the name of the LORD, they will be saved! Jesus is saying here that if the people would accept and receive God's prophetic Messianic-Messenger then the judgment of God would be averted and the salvation of God experienced by believing Israel.

This brings to the fore some narrative dramatic tension on Dr. Luke's way of telling this story. Jesus is going to Jerusalem and he knows that he will die (9:21-22, 51, 13:34 et al), yet there is hope of salvation for Israel if they will receive Jesus as Messianic-King rather than reject him and kill him. His death however is a sovereign decree and act

of God that cannot be changed, but nevertheless the dramatic tension should be noted here from a human perspective. As we read, we await Jerusalem's response to Messiah.

II. The Parable of the Wedding Feast at the House of the Ruler of the Pharisees (Luke 14:1-11)

Although Jesus tells Israel that their house is forsaken (13:35a), yet he still holds out hope for those who have eyes to see him and his Kingdom (cf. Luke 8:1-15) and declare "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD". As the Old Covenant prophets did, Jesus holds out hope and salvation for those who would turn, or repent and have faith in Him.

Jesus even accepts another invitation from the House of Israel to dine. Jesus dines now particularly with a ruler of the Pharisees (14:1), even though Jesus know their hearts well and realizes that the Pharisees are "watching him carefully" (14:1b). Jesus accepts the invitation so as to reveal more of His Word (although through parables) and to teach in a way that some in Israel might still come to faith in Him.

^{ESV} **Luke 14:1** One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. ² And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. ³ And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" ⁴ But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away. ⁵ And he said to them, "Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?" ⁶ And they could not reply to these things.

⁷ Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, ⁸ "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, ⁹ and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. ¹¹ For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

A. The setting: the House of a ruler of the Pharisees *on the Sabbath* (14:1a; cf. Luke 4:31ff; 6:6ff; 13:10ff).

Jesus dines at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees (Again it is important to note the imagery of house and the imagery of banquet or reclining at table with God in the midst of the people). The ruler of the Pharisees would have probably been an important member-representative of the Pharisees on the Council of the Sanhedrin; he was a very important figure.

There are guests there who include Pharisees and Teachers of the Law (14:3a) who are seeking not so much to hear and listen and submit to Jesus as they are “watching him carefully” (14:1b).

These times at table in a Pharisees house were like other incidents recorded when those in the streets dropped in. The houses in Palestine at this time were opened, and others could easily peak in or come right in to join the group.

The man with dropsy (v. 2) apparently was passing by, or made an attempt at coming into to the Pharisees’ house, and Jesus uses this opportunity to again show forth the Kingdom power and miracles he performs to display the authority of God himself and to give those who have eyes to see in Israel another chance.

Some commentators also suggest that the man with dropsy present was a trap set by the Pharisees to get Jesus to break God’s Law (or their interpretation of it).

B. The healing: a man who had dropsy (14:2)

Dropsy is also called *hydrops* after its Greek name (*hydropikos*) and its symptoms are swollen limbs and tissue resulting from excess body fluids (it is referred to in Leviticus 15:1-12). Often in the ancient culture, dropsy was viewed as God’s judgment, either for sin or uncleanness (Bock, pg. 1256).

This man would have been an outcast from the polite, influential and exalted society of many in Israel. To be a Pharisee or a poor sick man with dropsy would have represented two ends of the social spectrum. At the table in the ruler of the Pharisees’ home you have both ends of the social spectrum represented: those important in culture and one who is unimportant.

C. The table talk or discussion: “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?” (14:3).

Jesus shows forth the Kingdom power by healing this poor and sick man, but he also teaches and interprets the healing by asking the Pharisees and teachers of the law if it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath. The argument that Jesus

implies from lesser to greater he has used before to explain the true interpretation of the fourth commandment when he has healed on the Sabbath (13:10ff).

Basically, Jesus' argument is if you take care of your ox or your own son (by pulling them out of a well) as a work of necessity or mercy on the Sabbath, should you not also take care of healing the sick, the blind, the lame on the Sabbath?! Why would you make a false and unnecessary distinction between the needs of an ox or son and the needs of the weak?

Jesus teaches that deeds of mercy and compassion are works of necessity and they can be performed on the Sabbath (or Lord's Day)!

Unfortunately, they remained silent (14:4a) and even could not reply to Jesus about these things (14:6). This shows a great deal of ***pride, arrogance and lack of humility before Jesus who is clearly showing his Kingdom power and authority before them.***

As Professor Bock notes: "For Luke, silence speaks louder than words, for it suggests that no response is possible and that the leadership stands condemned" (pg. 1259; cf. Luke 20:26; Acts 11:18; 12:17; 15:12; 22:2).

- D. **The Parable Message of Humility:** "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (14:11)

In light of this Pharisaical hypocritical attitude of exalting oneself in the presence of God's Kingdom power and authority, Jesus tells them a parable to teach and reveal the Kingdom and teaching the true attitude of humility for those who are true disciples of the Kingdom (We should remember that parables could also veil the Kingdom from those who could not understand and see, cf. Luke 8:1ff; Matthew 13:1ff).

Jesus notices that many at the banquet had chosen places of honor in response to the invitation to dine at the ruler of the Pharisees' house (14:7).

All of the men there want to show their great position and importance by how close they were to the host at the table.

In the ancient culture, as well as today, the closer you sit to the host, the more important you were to him (so if he is a ruler of the Pharisees, you were accepted as just as important as he, if not more important).

The shape of the ancient table was like a U shape. The host would sit at the base, or southern end, or the bottom of the U; those on the right and left were considered the most important guests at table.

Jesus warns against moving up in importance at a feast and scrambling for seats of honor based merely on what one thinks of oneself, or upon one's *own estimation of his or her importance* (which some had done and that is what makes Jesus tell them a parable about this, 14:7).

Someone who thought he was important and took the better and more important seat at the table may be shamed when the host says nicely but firmly: "Hey, you don't mind moving down and making room for someone more important do you?!" (14:8-9) Jesus is speaking from and illustrating the truths of the Wisdom Literature of the Proverbs when he says this:

^{ESV} Proverbs 25:6-7 Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence or stand in the place of the great, ⁷ for it is better to be told, "Come up here," than to be put lower in the presence of a noble. What your eyes have seen

Jesus tells them that contrary to how they think they should behave in light of their sinful tendencies; the way up in the Kingdom is always down- -especially before God's presence (14:8).

In verses 8-9, Jesus tells them that when they are invited, they shouldn't decide for themselves whether they are great or not, or declare it for themselves in the seats at the table that they take for themselves.

The issue here is one of humility; when one is humble, he depends upon God to exalt him in due time. This is another Kingdom paradoxical reversal that turns the culturally accepted practices upside down (as we have seen elsewhere in Luke's Gospel: 1:52-53; 6:21, 25; 10:15; 18:14; also James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).

In other words: *Honor must be given, not taken.*

As the great poet George Herbert wrote in a couplet applying this text:

***“Humble we must be, if to heaven we go;
High is the roof there, but the gate is low.”***

Even in Rabbinical literature of Jesus’ time, Rabbi Simeon ben Azzai asserts: “Stay two or three seats below your place [i.e., where you felt you should sit], and sit there until they say to you, ‘Come up!’ Do not begin by going up because they may say to you ‘Go down!’ It is better that they say to you, ‘Go up,’ than that they say to you, ‘Go down!’ (*Lev. Rab.* 1:5).

Jesus is saying also (in line with this wisdom that many of them had learned) that the invited guests should wait on the host to seat them in the places that he thinks they should be placed at the table ***in his estimation***.

Jesus tells them that if someone greater comes in they may be shamed if they have taken the highest and most important seats (places of honor near the host), and the host says to them please move down and make room for more important folks at the table.

Jesus’ point in this is that the man with dropsy, a poor, sick, humble man has come into their midst on the Sabbath. He has not been given the exalted position and attention that he should have been given on the Sabbath. Here was a man after God’s own heart, but not considered very important in the eyes of the Pharisees and lawyers of Israel, but he was very important to Jesus and received the special attention (not from the ruler of the Pharisees), but the greater host who was Jesus!

Jesus was greater than the host himself and he was in their midst, and Jesus by divine mercy and compassion, calls the man with dropsy to take the higher position and a place of honor next to him, and those in exalted positions next to Jesus at the table have been asked to move down a few notches.

Jesus’ principle is that in the Kingdom those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble

themselves before his great and majestic presence will be exalted.

As all of Jesus' Kingdom teachings, this too is paradoxical, contrary to the thinking of this present age that is passing away. But this was the heart of God that was revealed in the Old Covenant prophets as well. When the Prophet Ezekiel delivered his oracle against the proud prince of Israel, he said:

^{ESV} **Ezekiel 21:24-26:** "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have made your guilt to be remembered, in that your transgressions are uncovered, so that in all your deeds your sins appear- because you have come to remembrance, you shall be taken in hand. ²⁵ And you, O profane wicked one, prince of Israel, whose day has come, the time of your final punishment, ²⁶ thus says the Lord GOD: **Remove the turban and take off the crown. Things shall not remain as they are. Exalt that which is low, and bring low that which is exalted.**

III. The Parable of the Great Banquet of GOD (Luke 14:12-24)

While Jesus still dines with the Pharisees who are carefully watching him (14:1b), Jesus tells another parable. This parable is about a great banquet that God will give in His Kingdom (14:15b). The Teachers of Israel were all familiar with the Old Testament teaching of the Great Banquet of God where God will sit down and dwell in the midst of His people (as revealed in Isaiah 25).

Jesus uses this familiarity and understanding of the Old Covenant revelation to instruct all mankind as to how they are to live when inviting guests to banquets. He says: "When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind and you will be blessed..." (14:13-14)

The people who are to be invited to the Great Banquet are weak in the eyes of the world, poor in the eyes of the world, and unable to return the invitation; they do not have anything to offer but themselves- -and they cannot even return the favor of a banquet- - they depend only on the generosity and grace of the host. ***It should be noted that this is the last time in Dr. Luke's gospel that Jesus dines with the Pharisees.***

¹² He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

¹⁵ When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!"

¹⁶ But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. ¹⁷ And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' ¹⁸ But they all alike began to make excuses.

The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.'

¹⁹ And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.'

²⁰ And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' ²¹

So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' ²² And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' ²³ And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. ²⁴ For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'

- A. **Who shall we invite?** That is a question we have all asked when making up our list of folks for weddings, showers, barbeques, and other special events? Who do we want to come? Implicit in this question we ask ourselves is perhaps: "Who are important to us?" "Who have invited us before?" "Who do we want to be there and to be seen in our presence?" And maybe... "Who can pay us back?"
- B. Jesus says that when you give a feast invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind (14:13). These are the folks who were not on people's "important" list; they were not influential, they had no money, they actually have problems and issues that only God can deal with. They are outcasts, not those who would bring us a good name by interacting and being known by them.

Generosity and grace (not merely "getting something") should be our motivation in invitation!

- C. The issue of the parable that Jesus is getting across is one of privilege and grace and understanding that being invited to the Great Kingdom Banquet of God is an invitation where we cannot repay God; we do not have a right or a good name to be on his invitation list. Yet we are invited to come through Jesus Christ alone to a party that lasts for all eternity! (I've had great wine before, but I cannot imagine the wines that God will serve at his sumptuous feast! Every time I go to Wegman's deli and wine store I am reminded of the wedding feast that the undeserving have been invited to- -and I long for that day!).

D. The hope is not for recognition by mere men now because you are known by them or because you know certain important people of this present age. Rather, the reason for invitations to those who are humble in the eyes of the world, who cannot repay you is a twofold message of hope:

- i. We will be rewarded by God for reaching out to those who were unimportant, sick, humble, and weak in the eyes of the world. Jesus says: “You will be repaid (reimbursed!) at the resurrection of the just” (14:14b) at the end of time when Christ returns for his Bride.
- ii. In living like this through our invitations to feasts now we show forth the other-worldly and eternal principle of the Kingdom: ***That the most important people we can invite are those who cannot invite us back.*** This reveals God’s Kingdom in our actions; it reveals God’s heart who has a special place for the poor, the lame, the sick, the humble, and the weak in this present age.

NOT reciprocity, but rather reception of the culturally despised and weak!

What is the primary Kingdom truth and principle that is being clearly revealed here in the exalted being humbled before God and the humble being exalted is that in the larger eschatological context of God’s special revelation?

It is this: The source of honor in God’s Kingdom is not derived from the social order that is constructed and described by affluent friends, siblings, relatives or rich neighbors (14:12)- -all of those many people we all are tempted to seek to impress!

Rather the source of honor in God’s Kingdom is derived from the judgment and electing mercies of God, and he loves the poor, the crippled, the lame, and blind- -these are people that the world doesn’t love as much because they are not in the position to exalt us in our own estimation, and they cannot pay us back when we seek to honor them (in other words, many times we only seek to honor those who can reciprocate the favor and honor or exalt us in return, cf. 14:12-13) and that leads to the other parable that Jesus tells to reveal more clearly God’s Kingdom.

As Professor Green wrote in his commentary: “The text asserts that the only [honor or] commendation one needs comes from God who is unimpressed with such social credentials as govern social relations in Luke’s world” (pg. 552). Beale and Carson wrote: “God acknowledges as guests in his kingdom only those who acknowledge their own poverty” (pg. 340).

- E. Jesus’ instructions on who to invite to your next party causes one man to get eschatologically excited and he cries out: **“Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”**

It is interesting to note that this man apparently could understand and “hear” the parable that Jesus was telling. It seems obvious that this man understood that Jesus was saying that the Kingdom would be made up of humble folks: the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind (14:13)- -those people who are only there because God has favored them and shown them grace.

But it could also be (probably!) that the man thought all of the Pharisees were humble and therefore deserved a place at the Great Banquet of God.

There was to be a great banquet of God! As the Old Covenant prophets had foretold, the Gentile nations will come to Zion and Abraham as the Father of many nations will be fully revealed at this Wedding Supper of the Lamb.

^{ESV} **Isaiah 25:6-9:** On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. ⁷ And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. ⁸ He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. ⁹ It will be said on that day, ***“Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”***

The passage in Isaiah’s prophecy tells us of an eschatological banquet feast that reveals the universal (“catholic”) embrace of God’s salvation (that includes Israel’s remnant and the Gentiles from the four parts of the earth).

The door of entrance to that sumptuous Kingdom-banquet-feast is through Jesus Christ alone.

- F. In response to the man who can “hear” Jesus and can understand the Great Banquet of God in the Kingdom, Jesus responds with another short and similar parable by revealing that many are called to the banquet, but few are chosen.

ESV Matthew 22:14 For many are called, but few are chosen."

Why? Because when they are invited, they make excuses and reveal that their focus and hope is found merely in this present age that is passing away.

In the ancient world, a host would invite many to come to his banquet, and then he would send a servant to tell them when the meal was actually ready (There was the initial invitation, then a second invitation to say “Come for it is ready” now).

It is important to note the larger redemptive-historical context here. The first invitation refers to the promises of the Old Testament and the messenger who makes the second round of final invitations is especially Jesus Himself (Geldenhuys, pg. 393; Although Jesus’ disciples will continue this invitation in their preaching, Acts 1:8ff).

Geldenhuys wrote: “Through the messengers of the Old Testament God invited the people of Israel to share in the blessings of the coming Messianic kingdom. Now the kingdom was close at hand in Christ, and John the Baptist and Jesus himself proclaimed this plainly. This was the final invitation extended to the Jews” (pg. 393).

- a. A servant calls for all those who have been invited (in the context, we are still speaking primarily of those in Israel who have received the invitation through a special revelation in the Old Covenant that Gentiles were not privy to): ***“Come, for everything is now ready”*** (14:17).
- b. Everything is ready means that the time of the Kingdom is NOW in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, the Messianic-King and the Kingdom is clearly revealed for all with eyes of faith leading them to repentance of sins and trust in Jesus Christ alone.
- c. **Lame “Excuses, excuses” however...** (14:18-20). We might want to meditate on these excuses slowly and carefully as a people hearing God’s word.

These lame excuses are not all that *illegitimate!* The excuses include taking care of property and wife (or family)! They are mere daily concerns that have become obstacles to God's Kingdom; they are daily concerns that have taken the focus off of God's eternal, unshakeable Kingdom and put the focus on this present world that is passing away; In other words, *these excuses are good things in themselves but they have taken priority over seeking first the Kingdom of God* (cf. Matt. 6:24-34).

- i. "I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it...Excuse me" (14:18b)
- ii. "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them...Excuse me (14:19)
- iii. "I have married a wife, and therefore cannot come." He doesn't even ask to be excused, perhaps it was just that his wife didn't want him to come and he realized (perhaps unwisely) that if mama ain't happy nobody's happy –so he doesn't even ask to be excused because he can't come anyway (She won't let him come- -she's the 'head of the household'!?)! ☺
- iv. *Theses lame excuses reveal the heart of all men in light of the presence of God's Kingdom.* What are your excuses for not following Jesus and seeking His Kingdom, and loving God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength and loving your neighbor as yourself?
- v. These excuses show that the true priorities of hopes of the people are not found in God and His Kingdom being revealed in Jesus, but in this world and they have gotten caught up in the cares of this world that choke the good seed that has been planted within their hearts (cf. Parable of the Sower, Luke 8:1-15, particularly 14-15):

^{ESV} **Luke 8:14-15:** And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. ¹⁵ As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

These are:

***LEGITIMATE EXCUSES THAT HAVE BECOME
ILLEGITIMATE PRIORITIES!***

- d. The Host of the Banquet says: “Go invite others then...so my house may be **filled**” (14:23b)
- i. Jesus’ house will be filled. It is worthwhile to note God’s sovereign purposes being fulfilled here! Even though many are called, and some do not respond, this does not frustrate God’s plan for a full house! Rather, the meal is ready, the Kingdom has come, and the house will be filled- -God will call others who will respond. As Professor Bock points out: Jesus does not postpone the banquet or withdraw the meal; he gets a new audience. The time of blessing is now and continues into the future. The ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’ merge in the decision about Jesus (pg. 1275).
 - ii. But with whom will the banquet be filled? Who will respond and come to his banquet, the Great and Eschatological Banquet Supper of God and the Lamb?
 - iii. The poor, crippled, blind and lame- -they respond to the invitation is the implication, and yet there is still room for more (14:21-22).
 - iv. Who else will come? Those even further outside the city gates in the highways and hedges where the beggars and robbers live- -those people who are even further away from special revelation (like the Gentiles) and those further from the covenant privileges of those who have been initially invited (like Israel; cf. Acts 1:8)
 - v. Why will these people particularly come?
 1. The poor, crippled, blind and lame: They have nothing to trip them up (or worldly cares to choke them) in this present world- -nothing to hold onto and grasp tightly and sinfully to- -they need grace and realize it- -they have no hope apart from divine favor and grace- -and they realize it.

They are NOT the privileged who have gotten fat on the special revelation from God (like the

Pharisees, Teachers of the Law, and many in Israel). They are those hated and despised by men, who had no chance at ever being invited to a special banquet apart from the inviting favor and grace of a wonderful host!

2. Why those in highways and hedges? Although they have not been privy to the special revelation that Israel has been privileged to experience, when they do hear it (Gentiles like Theophilus, Luke 1:1-4), they respond with faith because they realize that there is no hope in themselves- -only in Christ and His Kingdom.

While many in Israel were thinking they deserved to be exalted guests at God's banquet, a great many Gentiles realized that they had nothing to rely upon except the grace of God found in Christ- - alone!

- vi. Those who were invited (Israel) shall NOT taste my banquet because they refuse God's invitation in Jesus (14:24). Jesus ends with another sober reminder concerning unbelieving Israel and their unwillingness to acknowledge Jesus as Messianic-King-Lord.

Who are invited? You are...all of those who have ears to hear Jesus' invitation. What does the invitation say:

“Come, for everything is ready- -ready through the perfect work of redemption of God accomplished through Jesus Christ- -come!”

Jesus alone can invite you to the Wedding Supper of the Lamb. Jesus alone can provide you with pure and white wedding garments of righteousness (cf. Matt. 22:1-14; Rev. 19:6ff). Jesus alone is the way to this sumptuous feast in the Eternal Kingdom!

Accept Jesus' invitation by faith alone; accept his gracious invitation today before it is too late- -the Kingdom meal has been prepared- -come and sup with the King of kings and the Lord of lords!

Jesus' house will be filled with all people who accepted his invitation to come! As Isaiah the prophet said many years before:

^{ESV} **Isaiah 55:1-4:** "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does

not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.
³ Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.

RSVP by faith now...

RSVP is from a French phrase *repondez sil vous plait* and it literally means "Please reply"!

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Scripture Lesson

^{ESV} **Psalm 98:3** He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

^{ESV} **Isaiah 63:7** I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

^{ESV} **Hebrews 8:8** For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,

^{ESV} **Hebrews 8:10** For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

^{ESV} **Acts 2:22-39:** "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know-²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.²⁵ For David says concerning him, "' I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope.²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption.²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'²⁹ "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.³⁴ For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "' The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand,³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool.'³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"³⁸ And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."

^{ESV} **Hebrews 3:1-6:** Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession,² who was faithful to him

who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. ³ For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses- as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. ⁴ (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) ⁵ Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, ⁶ but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

Revelation 19:4-9: And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" ⁵ And from the throne came a voice saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great." ⁶ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. ⁷ Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; ⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"- for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. ⁹ And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

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