

behavior of both the host and the guests, and in response to a guest's statement of "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God," Jesus delivered the searching parable of the Great Supper. It is a sample of Jesus' table talk, and a worthy example of how we should redeem social engagements to further the cause and press, albeit in a tactful manner, the claims of the Heavenly Kingdom to come. In keeping with Old Testament prediction (Isa. 25:6), those who reclined with Jesus at meal, were well acquainted with the Kingdom of God's divinely prepared banquet. Moreover, this is not a figure of speech, for Jesus repeatedly referred to His dining with His own in the anticipated Messianic feast (Matt. 8:11,12; 26:29; Luke 13:29; 22:29,30). Therefore, the response of Jesus' fellow dinner-guest to the thought of disinterested hospitality (Luke 14:13,14) being rewarded in the resurrection and subsequent Kingdom was most appropriate, and thoroughly Scriptural. But it raised an important question: "Who exactly will be included in that coming heavenly banquet—those who held an official invitation, or those who have promptly responded to God's call, by refusing all rival claims, and pressing into the Kingdom of Heaven at the earliest opportunity?" Jesus Christ's answer to this question no doubt puzzled, and

perhaps angered the assembled guests that Sabbath day. For by His answer, contained in the Parable of the Great Supper, Jesus forewarned that most, if not all, of the respectable guests, so smug in the status quo of Pharisaical religion, were in dire danger of being excluded from that prized and anticipated Heavenly reward. In explaining His concerns, He referred to the provision of a great supper; the issuing of many invitations; a supplementary call at supper-time; additional, extended invitations; and finally gave a startling conclusion to the entire parabolic scene. May we comprehend His concern for our souls as well and heed His warnings contained in this discourse.

### *The Great Provision*

*Luke 14:16: "Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper [δέιπνον μέγα], and bade many."*

*Proverbs 9:1-6: "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding."*

Our Heavenly Father has been centuries in preparing for us the great gospel feast, wherein are to be found furnished "all things that pertain unto life and godliness," (II Pet. 1:3), and many soul delicacies, ample food for heart and mind, and sure to nourish

us up in the words of faith and of sound doctrine (I Tim. 4:6). Herein is served "strong meat" for those who are of full age (Heb. 5:14), the "new wine" of the Spirit (not the world's "old wine"!) to gladden the heart of man, the "bread" that endures to everlasting life (Jn. 6:27, 58, 63), so generously supplied by the Son of Man through the spirit of His words, and the salt that seasons the whole and preserves the heavenly quality of this bountiful table (Mk. 9:50).

The great lengths to which God has gone to make provision for His own are truly astounding. From the rescue of Adam and Eve by blood sacrifice (Gen. 3:21), the call of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), the commission of Moses (Ex. 3:10), to the coming of the Eternal Son of God in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4), to be born of a virgin, the Divine redemptive initiative has been witnessed in instance after instance. Finally, in one ultimate expression of His love, and His desire that all should be saved, He has made Him Who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (II Cor. 5:21). Having acted historically in the Cross of Christ, God has now put His Word of reconciliation (II Cor. 5:19) in the heart and mouth of His ambassadors who announce to the world, "*Come, for all things are now ready!*"

In view of such painstaking preparations, it is no light thing, when men place the call of mundane and material interests above His invitation to come and dine with Him in Kingdom joys forever!

### *Invitations: Given And Declined*

*Luke 14:17-20: "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."*

At first, the Host sent official invitations to many friends and acquaintances within the city social circle. This, of course, speaks of Christ's initial offer of the Kingdom to the Jews, the original "children of the Kingdom," to whom "pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises" (Matt. 8:12; Rom. 9:4). So we see that a sense of priority prevailed in the issue of invitations: To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile (Rom. 1:16; 2:10; Acts 1:8, 13:46; cf. also Matt. 15:24). The second phase of God's redemptive plan, after the Jews have, for the most part, rejected the gospel message, is to gather an innumerable company of Gentiles into the gospel net, by issuing a general call through the preaching

of the Kingdom message (Rom. 11:25; Rev. 7:9; Jn. 21:6). This Gentile ingathering is here parabolically pictured as the Host of the supper commissioning His servant to bring in the poor, maimed (without use of limbs), halt and blind and later, the highway and hedge-row travellers. But this mission change on the part of the Host and servant, is due to the anger and disgust generated by the Jewish rejection. Despite their proud and pious reflections of resurrection-bliss in the coming Messianic banquet, their preoccupation with lesser concerns, and their unwillingness to “eat” the bread of life, in the form of wholesome teaching (Jn. 6:63), offered to them directly by the Person of Jesus, the Messianic King, woefully disqualified them from participation in the long awaited Kingdom. How could they be blessed to eat bread then, when they refused to eat His bread now? But let us look at the reasons for this rejection. We see that those originally invited were otherwise occupied, prepossessed by the seemingly lawful and legitimate claims of rival concerns. They professed much interest in God’s Kingdom, but they cared little for its claims, and therefore somewhat politely craved indulgence of the Host, with the offer of excuses, excuses, excuses. Their hearts were governed by the tyranny of the urgent, and the monopoly of the trivial. For

the following reasons they begged leave of the generous Host, and His magnificent table:

- *Luke 14:18* : “*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.*” The lure of “real” property, tangible gains, and land ownership preempted this man’s interest in the Kingdom of God. It was not without reason that Jesus warned, “*Children how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter the Kingdom of God!*” (Mk. 10:24b), and “*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon*” (Matt. 6:24). Sadly, untold multitudes have followed in the soul-dooming path of this first respondent. How much better for Him to have said, “Have me excused from examining this field, surely it will be there tomorrow, for today I must eat bread in the Kingdom of God!” This excuse, and all similar ones, are but pretexts for disinterest, and express an abysmal indifference to the claims of Christ’s Kingdom.

- *Luke 14:19*: “*And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.*” This man, likewise had utilized the purchasing power of money, and bought ten oxen. He fully intended to test-drive his team, and would not permit the invitation and the supplementary summons by the Host’s servant, to interrupt his carefully laid plans, for he said “I go to prove them.” Oh, what a stubborn determination there is in that “I go.” “*I go to get gain,*” “*I go to get alcohol,*” “*I go to indulge my lusts,*” “*I go to pursue my dreams*”—how often do we hear it, in its many subtle, and sundry forms. It is the language of the insanity of sin, and bespeaks the folly of one fascinated with the sparkle and spangle of fool’s gold.

- *Luke 14:20* : “*And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.*” This man’s alibi has been used many times over by those more interested in peace within the family circle than eternal life. Especially in our matriarchal age, when women rule most roosts, whether in or out of the church, the unspoken “I cannot come,” can be detected in the bowed head and lowered eyes of the one who would be excused from His obligations to God. This is the man who can do his soul no good for the sake of a woman. Oh, wretched man that thou art! Wilt thou burn in hell for the sake of a domestic tranquility, which will eventually, and perhaps shortly, disintegrate for your disobedience to God! But the same warning may be applied to timid women, who through “the fear of man” (Prov. 29:25) are ensnared in a refusal to place God’s interests first. Jesus anticipated such domestic spiritual disharmony, and firmly informs us that, apart from absolute allegiance to Him, we cannot be His disciples: “*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple*” (Luke 14:26).

## Conclusion

Excuse-making, when responding to God’s “*Come; for all things are now ready,*” has serious consequences. The initial invitation, and its subsequent summons constituted their last opportunity to enter the Kingdom, for Jesus said, “*For I say unto you [ὅμην], That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper*” (Luke 14:24). Alas, the invitation and the supper were JESUS CHRIST’S, and they had excluded themselves because they had excluded Him!

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# EXCUSES, EXCUSES, EXCUSES....

## Empty Alibis For Spiritual Indifference

*Luke 14:16-24*: “*Then said he unto him, 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 shewed 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.*”

One sabbath day, Jesus was invited to a meal in the home of a leading Pharisee. After giving two sets of instructions, designed to check the