

PARABLES, “THROUGH PEASANTS EYES!”

Study 39, “The Great Banquet,” Part IV, Luke 14:15-24

1. The p. can be even called the p. of “The Banquet of the 7 Speeches.” They fall naturally into 7 stanzas, with ideas in the first four and then other key ideas in the last three;

“And he said to him,

‘A man once gave a GB

And he invited many

(1) And he sent his servant at the hour of the

Banquet to say, ‘Come, all is ready now!’

But they all began making excuses.

(2) The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field

And I must go out to see it.

I pray that you have me excused.’

(3) And another said, “I have bought five yoke

of oxen.

and I go to test them

I pray you have me excused.’

(4) And another said, I have married a bride,

And therefore--

I cannot come.’

(5) So the servant came and reported to the

Master. Then the householder in anger said

To his servant, ‘Go out quickly, into streets

And the lanes of the city, Bring in the poor,

Maimed, blind and lame.’

(6) And the servant said, ‘Sir,’ what you have

Commanded has been done,

and there is still room.’

(7) And the master said to the Servant, ‘go out’

Into the highways and the hedges,

And compel to enter, that my house may be filled.’

GREAT BANQUET

MANY INVITED

DO THIS

BECAUSE OF THIS

EXCUSES

I DID THIS

I MUST DO THIS

EXCUSE ME

I DID THIS

I MUST DO THIS

EXCUSE ME

I DID THIS

THUS I MUST

NOT COME

MASTER_GO

THE STREETS

FILL UP

SERVANT

I WENT

NOT FULL

MASTER_GO

TO HIGHWAYS

FILL UP

For I tell you (plural)

None of those men who were invited

THOSE INVITED

Shall taste my banquet

MY BANQUET

2. Jesus highlights his point by mentioning 5 pairs of oxen and specifically states that the agent is going to *test* them. As in the case of the real estate expert, the transparent nature of the excuse is unmistakable. Again Sa'id, our Arab Christian commentator who grew up in a small ME village catches this point. He writes, "this excuse is not reasonable, because the testing of the oxen takes place before they are bought and not after."
3. The point is not to look over them, but to test them and to see if they perform as yoked oxen. The Greek word, 'dokimazo' has this clear intent. There is a subtle difference between the first and second excuse. The 1st guest did not begin to go, he was only pleading his case to go out and see. The 2nd guest literally says, "I am going to test them." He doesn't state an intention, but an action. Fields are land, land is holy, oxen are animals and they are unclean. The 2nd guest is saying that these animals are more holy and important to me than my relationship to you. In spite of his rudeness and excess, he's still civil and requests to be excused. The same CANNOT be said of the 3rd guest that we will now examine.
4. 'And another said, I have married a bride, I DID THIS
And therefore-- THUS I MUST
I cannot come.' NOT COME

Patterned speech sets up expectations and those help us focus on changes in the pattern. In this one we have the 4th repetition of themes, I did this, line 1, then in the 2nd line, I must do this and then line 3, excuse me! The 3rd guest speaks in the past tense, "I married a bride." (The *gune*' can be a bride, Bauer). So did a lot of us. We can, however give him the benefit of the doubt and mean the recent past, "I have just married a bride." But the wedding wasn't that day. Had there been a wedding in that village the host would have not scheduled the GB for that day, no village can have two grand occasions at once. All the guests would be at the wedding, and the competition would be pointless. (Ever tried to compete with city's emphasis?). Even if the recent past is indicated, the speech is still crude. ME society maintains formal constraint when speaking about women. In Arabic, the word, *harim* is women and *haram*, sacred and *haram*, forbidden, but all are of the same root. Thomson indicates that a father away from home, who only has daughters, would address that letter to a son he would yet father as

a letter to a woman would seem inappropriate. He also talks about the extreme reluctance of past men in the ME to talk about females of their families. In intertestamental times Ben Sirach, wrote a long list of successful and famous people, and they are all men. (Sir).

5. More than that the main meal of the day was in the middle of the afternoon (Jeremias). Thus the guest is saying that I recently got married and I'm not coming as I'm spending time with my wife, and she is more important than your banquet. This excuse is rude in any society, but in the ME it is unprecedented and intensely rude! Plummer notes that a newly married man is exempted from military duty for a year, and believes this text is behind that reason. Such is not the case. Deuteronomy is talking about a year's military service away from home. Our passionate guest has accepted the invitation to the GB, there is no war and no reason to leave the village. The time away from home is no more than a few hours, and he will be back in his wife's arms (author's words), late that same night. Finally, he does not even need to ask to be excused. The entire response is guaranteed to infuriate the most patient of hosts, East or West. (Thompson) What does this all mean?
6. The listeners can easily identify the theological movement of this story. The messianic banquet has been announced. Indeed, the hour of the banquet has come. Those invited (The Jewish leaders of the community) are told, "All is ready!" Thus in the person of Christ Jesus the Kingdom of God in some sense is at hand! Those who seek to 'eat bread in the Kingdom of God,' must first seek to eat bread with Him (Manson). Yes, suddenly, there is a stream of excuses. They claim that he eats with sinners and does not keep the Sabbath in strict fashion. Deeper reasons for his rejection may be that He does not fulfill their theological and nationalistic expectations of the Messiah. The p. says that as they reject Jesus (with these unacceptable excuses) they are rejecting the GB of salvation promised by God in Isaiah. That is, in some sense, even now set for them through the presence of Jesus in their midst. But not only do they reject the host, they also prefer other things. Manson writes; "God gives the Kingdom; but the accepting of God's gift means the rejection of many other things. The Kingdom of God offers the greatest gifts; but it demands exclusive loyalty and whole-hearted devotion. The great feast is a feast and not a distribution of free rations. Those who wish

to enjoy it must come in. They cannot have the portions sent out for them to enjoy while they busy themselves with other things.”

7. With these theological implications in mind, we return to the text.

STANZA FIVE__THE OUTCAST’S INVITATION:

‘So the servant came and reported to the
Master. Then the householder in anger said
To his servant, ‘Go out quickly, into streets MASTER_GO
And the lanes of the city, Bring in the poor, THE STREETS
Maimed, blind and lame.’ FILL UP

The host’s anger is natural—he has been publicly insulted. But his response is grace, not vengeance. He turns to invite the outcasts of the village. These poor, maimed, blind and lame are from the city. They are part of the community, although ostracized from the community life. Clearly these categories symbolize the outcasts of Israel that were attracted to and welcomed by Jesus.

8. We noted above that the Qumran community anticipated a rejection from the messianic banquet of everyone who was “smitten in the flesh...or lame or blind.” For centuries commentators have observed that the poor are not invited to banquets, the maimed to not get married, the blind do not go out to examine fields and the lame do not test oxen. The word, “poor” in Biblical literature often has the theological overtones meaning, humble and pious. Let’s look us Isaiah 66:2 and Matthew 5:3. Whether or not such meanings are intended here, we cannot determine, but it is clear that there is a radical reversal. The original guests (assuming to be worthy peers of the host) refuse to respond to the good news that the GB is ready. They are confident that the banquet cannot proceed without them and the entire event will thus be a humiliating defeat for the host. But not so—unworthy guests are invited. The host isn’t indebted socially in the poor, the maimed, blind, & lame, and they won’t be able to respond in kind.
9. His offer is what we have described elsewhere as an “unexpected visible demonstration of love in humiliation.” (Bailey). The dramatic, visible nature of the demonstration is clear. It is unexpected and breaks in upon the new groups of undeserving guests as a stunning surprise. The host may anticipate suffering since the original guests will be infuriated that their attempt to abort the banquet has failed, and they will taunt the host as one who is unable to put together a banquet w/o bringing in ‘this riffraff.’ See Luke 15:2. “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”