



# Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

PSA 23:3

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JUNE 2022

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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# **RESTORING MY SOUL**

*A Five Day Devotional Guide*

**June 2022**

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## The wedding feast

Jesus used several different parables during His earthly ministry to focus on the importance of the fellowship of the *agape* meal. In these parables, Jesus often described the fellowship of the *agape* meal as '*a wedding feast*'. **Luk 14:8**. When we consider these parables, it is important to understand that there are *four phases* to the wedding feast before the coming of the new heavens and new earth.

In the book of Revelation, the apostle John recorded that he saw the new Jerusalem 'coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband'. **Rev 21:2**. We know that the marriage between Christ and the church occurred on the day of His crucifixion. In the same way that the Lord God formed the woman from the side of Adam in the beginning, the Father fashioned the church from the physical body of Christ to become His bride. **Gen 2:21-23. Joh 19:34. Eph 5:30-32**. The first manifestation of the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God as a bride adorned for her husband, was seen on the Day of Pentecost.

The apostle John saw that the wall of the bride city is built upon the foundation of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. **Rev 21:14**. In the early church in Jerusalem, the apostles publicly proclaimed the word of life from Solomon's Portico within the temple precinct. **Act 5:12**. This word was the foundation of the *agape* fellowship for all the believers in Jerusalem. We read in the book of Acts that 'they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers'. **Act 2:42**. The key point is that, as they continued in the fellowship of the *agape* meal, they were participating in *the first phase of the wedding feast*.

## The first to the second phase

The *first phase* of the wedding feast is the fellowship of the *agape* meal for the church age. The *agape* meal is a public and house to house fellowship. The early believers in Jerusalem gathered 'daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart'. **Act 2:46**. Significantly, the fellowship of the *agape* meal continued among the elect when they were dispersed, or scattered, from Jerusalem. **Jas 1:1. 1Pe 1:1-2**. The elect have been scattered to all nations, in the fellowship of lampstand churches. The Lord's lampstand churches are still subject to the administration of Babylon that rules over the nations of the world.

The *first phase* of the wedding feast began on the Day of Pentecost and will continue for the duration of the church age. When the Father places His throne in the middle of the heavenly Jerusalem, and Jesus Christ stands up as the Lamb, it will initiate *the second phase* of the wedding feast. **Rev 5:6**. During this phase, the administration of the Father's throne will be revealed through the apostolic administration of Christ; the presbytery with its twenty-four courses; and the 144 000, who will be sealed as the firstfruits of the true Israel of God. **Rev 7:3-4**. During the *second phase* of the wedding feast, the mountain of the Lord's house will fill the whole earth. It will be established with dominion over all the kingdoms of the world. **Isa 2:2**.

We read in the book of Isaiah concerning *the second phase* of the wedding feast, 'The Lord will create over *the whole area of Mount Zion* and over her assemblies a cloud by day, even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory *will be a canopy*. There will be a shelter to give shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain.' **Isa 4:5-6. Rev 7:15-17**.

## Two groups

When the Father places His throne in the middle of the Jerusalem from above, He will stretch His tabernacle, or temple, over all the inhabitants who belong to Mount Zion. This means that every assembly, or dwelling place, that belongs to the heavenly Jerusalem will be under the shadow of His wings. **Psa 91:1.** The citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem will begin to experience the same miraculous provision and protection that the nation of Israel enjoyed when the Lord God brought them out of Egypt on eagles' wings. **Exo 19:4. Rev 12:14.**

Two groups will participate in *the second phase* of the wedding feast when the Lamb will lead them to 'the springs of the water of life'. **Rev 7:16-17.** The *first group* comprises all the overcomers from the seven lampstand churches, who will move from the Son's throne to the Father's throne when the Father takes His seat. **Rev 3:12.** The *first group* of overcomers will include the apostolic administration, the presbytery, and the 144 000, who will be sealed as the firstfruits of the true Israel of God. **Rev 7:4. Rev 14:1-5.**

The *second group* who will participate in *the second phase* of the wedding feast is the 'fruit' of the evangelistic ministry of the church when the gospel of the kingdom is proclaimed in all nations. **Mat 24:14.** It is the great multitude which no man can number from every tribe, nation, people and tongue. **Rev 7:9.** The great multitude will come out of the great tribulation, which is the hour of testing that will come upon the whole world during the opening of the seals. The apostle John saw that this great multitude will be clothed in white garments because they have embraced their unique participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. **Rev 7:13-14.** The palm branches in their hands signify that they are ready to join the fellowship of the wedding feast as the true Feast of Tabernacles.

## The third and fourth phase

The *third phase* of the wedding feast is the time when Jesus Christ will nourish and protect the church in the wilderness for 3½ years during the reign of Antichrist in the world. **Rev 12:6,14**. During the blowing of the trumpets, Christ will send His messengers to gather His elect from the four winds of heaven in readiness for this phase of the wedding feast. **Mat 24:31**. The parable of the wise and foolish virgins reveals that there will come a time when the door to this phase of the wedding feast will be shut. **Mat 25:10**. The door to the *third phase* of the wedding feast will be shut when the altar of incense in the true temple is measured, and the outer court is delivered to the Gentiles to be trampled underfoot for 3½ years. **Rev 11:1-2**.

The *fourth phase* of the wedding feast will occur during Christ's millennial reign on the earth. The wedding feast during the millennium will include the resurrected believers from all ages, because it will commence after the day of resurrection. Jesus was referring to this phase of the wedding feast when He said that 'many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven'. **Mat 8:11**. This phase of the wedding feast will include the final group of martyrs who will be killed during the emergence of the eighth world kingdom. **Rev 20:4**. **Rev 14:9-13**. **Rev 13:11-15**.

Following the *fourth phase* of the wedding feast in the millennium, the present heavens and earth will be dissolved by fire, and the Lord will establish the new heavens and new earth. **Rev 20:11-15**. **Rev 21:1**. The new heavens and the new earth will be the context in which the righteousness of sonship, in the *agape* fellowship of Yahweh, will increase forever and ever. **2Pe 3:11-13**. **Isa 9:7**. **Dan 9:24**.



## The parable of the wedding feast

The parable of the wedding feast covers the entire period from the earthly ministry of Jesus, all the way to the invitation to join the third phase of the wedding feast in the wilderness at the end of the age. Jesus likened the kingdom of heaven to a certain king who had arranged a marriage for his son. In this parable, the king is evidently God the Father. The Son is Jesus Christ. He is the Bridegroom. We know that the bride is the church. **Eph 5:25.**

Jesus said that the king sent out his servants to call all of those who were invited to the wedding, but *they were not willing to come*. **Mat 22:2-3.** This first group of messengers refers to all the prophets of old who were sent by God to the nation of Israel. The last and greatest of all these prophets was John the Baptist. **Luk 7:28.** It was John the Baptist who announced that Jesus Christ had come as the Bridegroom. John described himself as 'the friend of the Bridegroom'. **Joh 3:29.** The nation of Israel did not receive the ministry of John the Baptist and, likewise, they rejected the ministry of Christ Himself. Jesus said, concerning the Jews, 'How often I wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but *you were not willing!*' **Mat 23:37.**

Significantly, following the offering of Christ, the Father sent out *other servants* to the Jewish nation. In contrast to the first group of messengers who invited the Jews to a future wedding feast, the next group of messengers were instructed to tell the people that everything was *now ready*. The king said to this next group of servants, 'Tell those who have been invited, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and *everything is ready; come now* to the wedding feast!'" **Mat 22:4.** The wedding feast was ready because the offering of Christ was complete.

## Many rejected the invitation

The first manifestation of the bride city coming down out of heaven from God, as a bride adorned for her husband, was seen on the Day of Pentecost. **Rev 21:2**. The second group of servants included the twelve apostles who were the living foundation of the new Jerusalem. **Rev 21:14**. It also included all of the elect, who continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers. **Act 2:42**. Many of the Jews did accept the invitation to join the fellowship of the *agape* meal. **Act 6:7**. However, the response of most of the religious leaders, and of the Jewish nation, was the same as it had been prior to the offering of Christ. They rejected the invitation to come to the wedding feast.

Specifically, Jesus said that many 'made light' of the invitation. **Mat 22:5**. This could also be translated that they 'paid no attention to it'. They did not recognise or appreciate the significance of the *agape* meal; nor the imperative for them to accept the invitation. Rather than responding with faith and obedience to the call of God through His messengers, they 'went their ways'. They were preoccupied with their own goals and activities in the world. For example, one went to his own farm and another went to his business.

In addition to those who were ambivalent toward the invitation to the wedding feast, there were religious zealots who treated the servants spitefully, and killed them. Prior to his conversion, we know that Saul was one of those zealots who was 'breathing threats and murder' against the believers in the early church. **Act 9:1**. Stephen said to the Jews, 'You stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers.' **Act 7:51-53**.

## Go into the highways

The book of Acts recorded that Stephen was the first martyr who was killed by the Jews following the offering of Christ. In the parable, the king was furious with those who persecuted and killed his messengers. He sent out his armies, destroyed the murderers, and burned their city. **Mat 22:7**. We note that this was fulfilled in history when the armies of Prince Titus destroyed the city of Jerusalem in AD70. The city was, literally, burned with fire. The destruction of Jerusalem was the judgement of God upon the Jewish nation.

The king said to the servants who had been sent initially to the Jews, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited *were not worthy*.' **Mat 22:8**. The king's statement that they 'were not worthy' reminds us of the words of Paul to the Jews in Pisidian Antioch. After the word that he proclaimed in the Jewish synagogue was rejected, he said, 'It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves *unworthy of everlasting life*, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.' **Act 13:46**.

In the parable, when those who had been invited were not worthy, the king instructed his servants to go into the highways and to invite every person whom they could find, to come to the wedding feast. **Mat 22:9**. They gathered both the bad and the good. **Mat 22:10. Mat 13:47-48**. The result is that the wedding hall was filled with guests. Throughout the entire church age, God the Father has been sending messengers into the world to invite all men to join the fellowship of the *agape* meal. However, it is in the time of the end that there will be a great harvest. A great multitude which no man can number from every tribe, nation, people and tongue will come into the kingdom of God. **Rev 7:9**.

## No wedding garment

The great harvest is the highpoint of the parable. However, the parable does not conclude with the wedding hall being filled with guests. When the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man who was not wearing a wedding garment. **Mat 22:11.** The king said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? The man was speechless.' **Mat 22:12.** Remarkably, the king was still inviting this man to join a discussion regarding his participation in the wedding feast. However, the man refused to respond! He was speechless because he had not learned a culture of fellowship in the household of God. The word of faith was not in his heart or in his mouth. **Rom 10:8.** He had *no testimony* as a son of God.

The king then instructed his servants to bind the man hand and foot. He told them to cast the man into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. **Mat 22:13.** We know that Jesus was referring to the eternal torment that will be experienced by all those who are cast into the lake of fire for eternity.

The man who had no wedding garment had responded to the invitation to join the wedding feast, but he did not accept or embrace the culture of the *agape* meal. He did not belong to the elect. **Mat 22:14.** Rather, he was guilty of the sin of presumption as he sat down to eat and drink at the feast 'without fear'. **Jud 1:12.** The presumption of this man demonstrates that he did not fear God. He did not honour or respect the king. We are reminded that God addressed this same sin of presumption among the priests and the Jewish nation. He declared through the prophet Malachi, 'A son honours his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, where is My honour? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence?' **Mal 1:6.**

## When you are invited

The Gospel of Luke recorded that Jesus went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath. **Luk 14:1**. This should have been an *agape* meal. However, we know that many of the Pharisees had already conspired to kill Jesus and were trying to ensnare Him. They may have used the case of the man with dropsy as a test to see what Jesus would do. Jesus asked the lawyers and the Pharisees who sat at the table, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?' **Luk 14:2-3**. When they remained silent, He called out the man and healed him. In this interaction, Jesus demonstrated that the fellowship of the *agape* meal is the context for the ministry of restoration and healing.

Having healed the man with dropsy, Jesus then addressed those who are invited to an *agape* meal, because He noticed that those who had been invited to this meal had desired to sit in the best places at the table. **Luk 14:7**. He said to them, 'When you are invited by anyone to a *wedding feast*, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honourable than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, "Give place to this man," and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place.' **Luk 14:8-9**.

This is a *complementary parable* to the parable of the wedding feast and addresses the same issue. We recall that, in the parable of the wedding feast, Jesus illustrated the sin of presumption by referring to the man who did not have a wedding garment. In this parable, he addressed *the same sin* by speaking to those who presume to 'sit in the best places' at the table. This presumption demonstrates that they are not aware of their own sanctification; nor do they honour and respect the sanctification of others. **Php 2:1-4. Rom 12:3**.

## When you host an *agape* meal

Jesus said, 'When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbours, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.' **Luk 14:12-14**. Jesus was emphasising that the *agape* meal is not a social occasion; and nor is it a 'trading' exercise. All trading dynamics are a violation of the fellowship of the *agape* meal.

The *agape* meal is fellowship in the tree of life. It is fellowship in the word of the Father that is proclaimed to us as the fruit of the tree of life in each season. **1Jn 1:3**. When this word is in our heart and in our mouth in the fellowship of the *agape* meal, it ministers grace for edification and healing to one another. This includes the maimed, the lame and the blind. Referring to this fellowship, the wise man proclaimed, 'A wholesome [lit. 'curative, healing'] tongue is a tree of life.' **Pro 15:4. Eph 4:29**.

Jesus explained that a son of God who participates in the fellowship of an *agape* meal in a worthy manner, not looking to derive any earthly benefit in this lifetime, will be repaid in the resurrection. They will be raised at the last day. We recall that Jesus said to the multitude who followed Him after He fed the five thousand, 'Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.' **Joh 6:54**. It appears that one of the guests at the dinner table in the Pharisee's home received a flash of illumination as Jesus spoke about the resurrection at the end of the age. He suddenly declared, 'Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!' **Luk 14:15**.

## I have bought a piece of land

In the parable of the great supper in the Gospel of Luke, we can liken the 'certain man' to God the Father. **Luk 14:16-17**. We can also liken the 'servant' to Jesus Christ. We note that Jesus referred to a singular servant in this parable, whereas, in the parable of the wedding feast, He referred to the sending of *many* servants. The prophet Isaiah declared that Jesus Christ would come as *the Servant* of the Father. **Isa 42:1**.

The first man in the parable said to the servant, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' **Luk 14:18**. This man had evidently made a choice to buy a piece of land that did not previously belong to him. His decision may have been motivated by his own desire for a certain lifestyle; to increase his generative capacity; or even to help someone else who had fallen upon hard times. Regardless of the motive, it was the expression his own initiative.

We observe, however, that the expression of the man's freedom of initiative to purchase this land led him into bondage. That is, the ownership of this land immediately imposed certain obligations upon him. We don't know whether these obligations were real or perceived, but we know that the bondage upon the man was real. He said to the servant, 'And *I must go* and see it.' He probably viewed this course of action as being a legitimate expression of 'accountable stewardship'.

Believing in the veracity of his own decisions and the expression of his own stewardship, the man felt fully justified in refusing the invitation that he had received from the servant. **Pro 14:12**. He did not recognise the importance of the invitation to the agape meal. **Jer 17:5-6**. The man believed that he had legitimate grounds for being excused from the supper. He expected that the servant would readily grant his request. This presumption demonstrated his pride.

## Our allotted portion

Before the Israelites went into the promised land, the Lord commanded Moses to say to the people, 'When you come into the land of Canaan, this is the land that shall fall to you as an inheritance – the land of Canaan to its boundaries.' **Num 34:2**. Having identified the overall boundaries of the land, He appointed Joshua and Eleazar as the men who would divide the land among the tribes of Israel. **Num 34:17**. Each tribe was to receive a unique portion of the land as their inheritance. Furthermore, the Lord appointed a leader from each tribe who would divide the tribe's inheritance among the families who belonged to the tribe. **Num 34:18-29**.

In this way, each family was to receive an inheritance in the land. The land was then to be passed down from generation to generation. The Lord instructed the nation, 'The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me.' **Lev 25:23**. However, if a person became poor, and needed to become the servant of another, they were able to sell their land until the year of Jubilee. The price was determined in relation to the year of Jubilee, which occurred every fifty years. **Lev 25:15-16**. That is, as the year of Jubilee approached, the price of the land diminished. The price needed to be reduced because, when the year of Jubilee arrived, the land was to be returned to its original owners.

If a person became poor because they did not steward their inheritance properly, they did reap the consequences of their failed stewardship. However, the year of Jubilee ensured that this judgement did not continue upon the family for generation after generation. Every fifty years, the land was to be restored to its original owners. **Lev 25:13**. The year of Jubilee restored the lines of sanctification that belonged to each family, according to the original division of the land.



## Selling parcels of land

It is important to understand the division of the promised land, because the man in the parable of the great supper had evidently bought a piece of land that did not belong to him as an inheritance. Even if he had bought this land to help someone who had become poor, it would only belong to him *temporarily*. The land had not been given to him by the Lord. His desire to make the most of the purchase, while he had the opportunity, was nothing more than an expression of covetousness. **Luk 12:15.**

This principle draws our attention to an important point. The legitimate stewardship that belongs to a son of God in this world will not impede that person's capacity for participation in the fellowship of the *agape* meal. If a person's perceived responsibility, or stewardship, in the world has become an impediment to their participation in the *agape* meal, it is the sure indication that they have gone beyond the limits of their sanctification. Such a person has become entangled with 'a yoke of bondage'. **Gal 5:1.**

When the man in the parable received the invitation to the *agape* meal, he should have seen that his land purchase was outside the lines of his sanctification, because it was preventing him from accepting the invitation. Rather than excusing himself from the fellowship of the *agape* meal, he should have delivered himself from the entanglement. **Pro 6:3.** He should have sold the land, because it was not part of the inheritance that he had received from the Lord.

When we consider the fellowship of the church in Jerusalem, we observe that many of the believers did sell parcels of land. We read in the book of Acts, 'Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need'. **Act 4:34-35.**

## Pruning to reality

When the early believers sold parcels of land and houses, it does not mean that everyone sold the land and the house where they were living. We know that, in the early years of the church in Jerusalem, the believers were not homeless and nor did they live together in a kind of commune. Rather, they listened to the apostles publicly proclaiming the word of life in Solomon's Portico, and then they met daily from 'house to house' for the fellowship of the *agape* meal. The book of Acts recorded, 'So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread *from house to house*, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart'. **Act 2:46.**

Initially, the believers were probably selling any additional land or houses that they had accumulated as investments. Having been born as sons of God and baptised into Christ, they knew that their citizenship was now in heaven. **Php 3:20. Heb 11:9-10.** They readily relinquished the desire to accrue property or wealth in this world. In stark contrast to the man in the parable of the great supper, they willingly pruned to the reality of their own sanctification as sons of God. This was part of their commitment to the fellowship of the *agape* meal. Significantly, the proceeds from the sale of these additional properties ensured that there was no need or lack among the believers in the church in Jerusalem. **Act 4:34-35.**

Following the death of Stephen, which may have been a few years later, great persecution arose against the church in the region of Judea and Samaria. **Act 8:1.** At that time, all the believers in Jerusalem were scattered to other regions. Only the twelve apostles remained in Jerusalem. There is little doubt that the believers who were scattered during this persecution would have been thankful that they had already sold their additional parcels of land, houses and many of their possessions.

## I have bought five yoke of oxen

The second man in the parable said to the servant, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' **Luk 14:19.** This man was not a farmer who had personally trained his own oxen for use on his own farm. He was most likely a businessman who was running teams of oxen as a contractor. He had just purchased another five yoke of oxen. We don't know whether he was intending to use all five yoke of oxen to pull a very large plough or whether he wanted to mobilise another five smaller ploughs, using one yoke of oxen for each plough. Either way, this purchase was a significant expansion to the generative capacity of his business.

The man needed to test the reliability of the oxen before he could use them in his business. He needed to know whether they were well trained and would respond appropriately to his commands or to the commands of his staff. He needed to do this promptly; otherwise, he would incur all of the extra costs to maintain the oxen, without being able to use them to generate income. Perhaps he had also borrowed money from the bank to purchase the five yoke of oxen, and was under pressure to generate income to cover his loan repayments.

The man believed that he had a good economic reason for purchasing the oxen, and he also had valid reasons for needing to test them. He obviously felt justified in excusing himself from the fellowship of the *agape* meal when he was invited by the servant. However, by refusing the servant's invitation, it demonstrated what he most valued, and what he served. Even if he was not consciously motivated by a love of money, he clearly valued the success of his business and had become enslaved by the needs of his business. **1Ti 6:10. Mat 6:21. Luk 18:22-23.**

## No one can serve two masters

The man who had purchased the five yoke of oxen had become a servant to the market forces within his industry. He then despised God by rejecting Christ's invitation to the *agape* meal. This demonstrated what he valued the most in his life. **Mat 6:21**. Jesus warned us that 'no one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.' **Mat 6:24**.

We can contrast the response of the businessman in this parable, with the response of Elisha when he was called by Elijah. Elisha was also a businessman who likely went from field to field as a contractor with multiple teams of oxen. We read in the Scriptures that he was ploughing a field with *twelve yoke of oxen*. He may have had employees who were driving the various pairs of oxen so that they could plough this large field in a short period of time, before moving onto the next field. Elisha was probably directing his employees or servants while, at the same time, he was personally working with the twelfth pair of oxen. **1 Ki 19:19-21**.

We can only assume that it had been appropriate for Elisha to run this business for a season of his life. This may well have been a family business because of the way that Elisha asked to kiss his father and mother farewell. **1 Ki 19:20**. Significantly, as soon as Elijah called him to become his disciple, he willingly let go of his share in the business and all of its potential future earnings. In contrast to the man in the parable of the great supper, the response of Elisha demonstrated that he was a man who served God, and not mammon. **Mat 6:24**. As soon as there was a conflict between his business and the sanctification of his calling as a disciple, he delivered himself hastily from the business. **1Ki 19:21**.

## I have married a wife

The third man in the parable said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' **Luk 14:20**. This seems like an unusual excuse! Why would getting married preclude the man from accepting the invitation to the great supper? Couldn't he simply bring his wife along with him? Why did the man resolutely believe that this was not an option? While this man's excuse does appear to be unusual, when we read the account of *the first marriage* in the Scriptures, we find that it is the oldest excuse of all. Getting married was not the man's problem. The problem was the fallen culture of his marriage covenant. **1Co 7:33**.

We recall that Eve was deceived when she engaged in a conversation with Satan at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. **Gen 3:1-5**. In the fellowship of Yahweh, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil belongs only to God, who is the origin of the creation, and the source of the identity and name of every person. Eve was deceived by Satan into believing that she could use the fruit from this tree as a resource to be *like God* in the context of her own marriage and family.

Eve expressed her desire to be *like God* when she reached out her hand to take the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In a state of delusion, she then presumed to take the place of God by offering this same fruit to her husband. **Gen 3:6**. Eve genuinely believed that the food which she gave to Adam would feed his identity as a person, make him look good, and give him the necessary wisdom to be successful in relation to his work in the world. Eve did not mean to cause hurt or to inflict harm upon her husband. We could say that her action was well intentioned, but it was the expression of a self centered motivation and a deceived perspective.

## The same old excuse

When Adam took the fruit from Eve's hand, she perceived this to be a verification of her aspiration to be *like God*. It fed the projection that she had created for herself as being the source of life and direction in her marriage and family. We know that this transaction had no substance for Adam or Eve because, as soon as he ate the fruit, their eyes were opened, and they immediately became aware of their alienation from the fellowship of Yahweh. **Gen 3:7.**

Motivated by shame and fear, they worked together to make coverings for themselves in a desperate attempt to establish their own autonomous household that was self sufficient, and no longer reliant upon fellowship with Yahweh at the tree of life. **Gen 3:7.** Furthermore, when they heard the Father walking in the garden, looking for fellowship with them, they both hid themselves from Him among the trees of the garden. **Gen 3:8.** The Father called to Adam and said to him, 'Where are you?' **Gen 3:9.** We could liken this question from the Father, as He walked through the garden, to *the invitation* that Christ, as the Servant of God, now extends to every man to come and join the fellowship of the *agape* meal.

Notably, we observe that the man's response to the servant in the parable of the great supper *was the same* as Adam's response to the Father in the beginning. When the Father asked Adam if he had been disobedient, he replied, 'The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.' **Gen 3:12.** In the same way, the man replied to the servant, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' **Luk 14:20.** The man could not come to the great supper because he had chosen to eat what his wife was now feeding him, instead of receiving the Lord's provision in the *agape* meal. **Gen 3:17. Gen 16:2.** He had committed himself to serving his wife's agenda and meeting her expectations.

## The failure to choose sonship

Adam made a deliberate and accountable decision to eat the fruit from his wife's hand because he had not yet *chosen* to be a son of the Father. **1Ti 2:13-14**. He had not yet *chosen* to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, even though he was the beneficiary of fellowship with the Lord every day at the tree of life. **Mat 4:4**. If Adam had already made this choice, he would not have viewed Eve's proposition as a viable alternative.

The failure to *choose sonship* was also the underlying problem for the man in the parable of the great supper. The man rejected the provision of the *agape* meal because he had chosen to eat the food that his wife offered him and to serve her agenda. This food was more *palatable* for him. He believed that he would receive the necessary energy from this food to achieve his goals and aspirations in the world, including a happy and harmonious marriage. **1Co 7:33**. He was reliant upon his success in the world, and upon his wife's affirmation, to verify the projection that he had created for himself.

There may have been many more reasons why this man considered his wife's food to be a more palatable option than accepting the invitation to the great supper. Perhaps he was an *independent man* who did not want to be constrained by obedience to the word of God and to the relational obligations of true friendship among brethren. **Joh 15:4-5**. Perhaps he was a *lazy man* who did not want to apply himself to the word of God or to the offering that is required in speaking in the fellowship of the *agape* meal. **Rom 12:10-11**. Perhaps he was a *proud man* who believed that he would be humiliated because of his inadequacy if he took his place at the Lord's table. **Psa 10:4**. Perhaps, he was a *cowardly man* who did not want to risk any form of conflict with his wife. **Pro 29:25**.

## A personal invitation

When we consider the third man in the parable of the great supper, we do not need to know the exact nature of the man's profile, or his marital circumstances. Regardless of his specific situation, we can be assured of one foundational truth. When the servant invited him to the great supper, the word was accompanied by the prevenient grace of God. As the invitation was extended to him, the prevenient grace of God released the man from his bondage to the law of sin in his own life and in his marriage. He was completely free to choose whether he would accept or reject the invitation. **Gal 5:1. Joh 8:36.** The assertion that he had no choice, when he said to the servant, 'Therefore, I cannot come,' was a denial of the truth and a repudiation of the grace of God. The word that had been proclaimed to him was imbued with the faith and grace that was necessary for him to accept the Lord's invitation. **Rom 10:17.** This is true for every one of us. **Rev 22:17.**

Jesus used the parable of the great supper to highlight that He is, personally, as the Servant of God, extending an invitation to every person to join the fellowship of the *agape* meal with Him. In this regard, we are reminded of the words of Jesus to the presbytery in Laodicea. He said, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.' **Rev 3:20.** There is no reason or valid excuse for any person to harden their heart and reject this invitation. It is sobering to consider the way in which Jesus finished the parable. He said that the Father, who is likened to the master, will proclaim, 'I say to you that none of those men who were invited [and made excuses] shall taste My supper.' **Luk 14:24.**





Restoring  
my Soul