



4

DIVE DEEPER

YES
NO
MAYBE

1 The person sitting next to me (other than my spouse!) is more wealthy than me.

2 I'd rather stay home than go to a fancy party.

3 Heaven will not be crowded.

4 Only Christians will go to heaven.

5 People who don't know God will be in heaven.

^| What is the most exclusive banquet or restaurant that you've ever gone to?

READ Luke 14:12-24

Î THE BANQUET THAT EVERYONE WAS TALKING ABOUT...

‡ When Jesus tells the Parable of the Great Banquet, he participates in a conversation that had begun over 700 years earlier.

° **The setting: The Messianic Banquet** (φάγεται ἄρτον) phágetai arton - Literally, "to eat food/bread."

° **The expectations** - Those around the table would expect Jesus to say something such as, "Oh, that we might keep the law in a precise fashion so that when that great day comes, we will be counted worthy to sit with the Messiah and all true believers at his banquet." The reclining guests would then have nodded approvingly and thought to themselves, "Fine, he passed that exam. Now let's move on to the next topic." But Jesus responds with a very different view of the messianic banquet of the end times from the views current in the community.

° **700 Years Earlier...** - This 700-year-old conversation begins in **Isaiah 25:6-9** where Isaiah dreams of a great banquet to be held at the end of history.

‡ **The most recent change** - around the time of Jesus - An Aramaic translation of Scripture began to emerge, called the Targum. It was an expanded version, much like *The Living Bible* or *The Message* versions today. Here is what the Targum does to Isaiah's vision of the great banquet: "*Yahweh of hosts will make for all the peoples in this mountain a meal. And although they supposed it is an honor, it will be a shame for them and great plagues, plagues from which they will be unable to escape, plagues whereby they will come to their end.*"

° **2nd Century BC** - A document emerged called the **book of Enoch**. This book speaks of a great banquet with the Messiah and affirms that the Gentiles will be included. But the angel of death will be present and will use his sword to destroy those Gentiles. The banquet hall will run with blood and the believers will be obliged to wade through the gore to reach the banquet hall where they sit down with the Messiah!

° Around the same time - Another voice emerged from the Qumran Community, which wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls. That community was composed of pious Jews, presumably of the Essene branch of Judaism, and one of its scrolls, called *The Messianic Rule*, discusses the famous banquet. The Qumran community was certain that no Gentiles would be present. Only pious Jews who observed the law would be allowed to attend. The text says:

"And then [the Messiah] of Israel shall [come] and the chiefs of the [clans of Israel] shall sit before him, [each] in the order of his dignity, according to his place in their camps and marches."

Earlier in this same scroll the text affirms that no one can attend the banquet who is "smitten in the flesh, or paralyzed in his feet or hands, or lame, or blind or deaf or dumb or smitten in his flesh with a visible blemish."

↑ THEN ALONG COMES JESUS, TALKING ABOUT THE GREAT BANQUET...

- ~ Why did Jesus tell this parable. Do we today need to change some of our views about who gets to go to heaven, according to Jesus' parable here?
- ~ How are the excuses that the guests gave similar to the excuses we give?
- ~ How does the noble man respond when the guest go away?
- ~ What does the noble man really want in the end, and what appears to be his greatest fear?
- ~ What does all of this reveal about God's character.

1 How many excuses have I been making lately in regards to God's invitations?

2 What keeps me from believing that God wants me with Him?

3 What do I understand more clearly about God's character, now that I've looked at this Kingdom Tale?

MY
PRAYER

NOTES