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Luke Chapter 14

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Abstract: A commentary on the events of Luke 14, accompanied by parallel columns of the King James translation of the chapter alongside a new rendition.



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Luke Chapter 14

INTRODUCTION

What do we see? The Sabbath day. The home of a chief Pharisee. A special meal. Many invited guests. Heightened curiosity. The famous stranger. A most memorable day.

On the occasion of a special meal, whose reporting fills two-thirds of chapter 14 and takes place in “the house of one of the chief Pharisees” (14:1), who must have met the Savior only hours before, Jesus asks exactly the same question—as it is in the Greek text—that he asks in 6:9, “Is it lawful on the sabbath day . . . ?” (14:3). He thus again creates a courtroom scene in an unexpected place and sets himself up both as a legal contestant in the case and as its judge. The setting seems important as well, occurring in a home. By Luke’s account, Jesus has just expressed his hopes for Jerusalem, but he laments that “your house is left unto you desolate” (13:35). Hence, there exists a clear connection to *house* and *household* in Jesus’ words at the end of chapter 13 and in what takes place in 14:1–24.¹

Other features appear in the early verses of chapter 14. In the healing episode (14:1–6), Jesus sets himself off as *the* judge who can then speak about those who, in an ultimate sense, will be “abased” and “exalted” (14:11), about those who will “be recompensed at the resurrection” (14:14), and about those who, though invited, “shall [not] taste of my supper” (14:24). These judgments by Jesus, of course, all have to do with the end-time, the *eschaton*. Importantly, each of these sayings ties in some way to his observations about the supper to which he is invited. In effect, Jesus the guest becomes the temporary, but real, host of the supper, showing that he is the one now in charge and anticipating that he will yet host the heavenly supper, another feature of the end-time.²

1. For the meanings *temple* and *household*, and the term *house*, see *TLOT*, 1:234–236; *TDNT*, 5:120–122.

2. Madsen, “Marriage Supper of the Lamb,” 2:860.

We wonder why the emphasis on home and household in 14:1–24, as well as in the middle and last parts of chapter 11, is largely missed by modern interpreters. It seems clear that, in these passages, Jesus worries publicly about the home. According to chapters 11 and 14, Jesus offers guidance to those who are willing to hear about eternal homes and families. For example, Jesus connects contrasting concerns about “a house divided against itself,” which “falleth,” and about “the kingdom of God [which] is come upon you” (11:17–20). In that instance, the underlying theme seems to be unity in the home, which is a feature of the kingdom of God. Immediately thereafter, Jesus speaks of “a strong man [who] . . . keepeth his palace” until he is “overcome” by “a stronger than he,” allusions respectively to the devil and to himself (see the Notes on 11:21–22 and the Analysis on 11:14–28). Importantly, Jesus then makes the point that “He that is not with me is against me,” implying that he alone possesses the power to prevent the devastating actions of the “strong man” who takes over a person’s “palace” (11:21–23).

We can make similar points (1) about the “unclean spirit” who returns to the home whence it is forced out (11:24–26); (2) about the unpleasant dining scene in the home of “a certain Pharisee” (11:37–52); (3) about the healing in a home on a Sabbath (see 14:1–6); (4) about a wedding, which inaugurates a home and family (see 14:8–11); (5) about how a person opens the home to become a place of gathering for “the poor, the maimed, and the halt” (14:15–24); and (6) even about having to turn one’s back on family members, if necessary, in order to become a worthy disciple (see 14:26–27, 33).

The last part of the chapter has to do with discipleship, particularly because of the Joseph Smith Translation of these verses (see 14:25–35; JST 14:25–38). In this respect, these sayings connect with both Jesus’ earlier discussion about discipleship and his words that will follow (see 9:23–27, 57–62; 18:31–34). What is different here is the twist of counting the cost of discipleship: “whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (14:33). Further, “Wherefore, settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you” (JST 14:28, an expansion of the text). In a clear manner, Jesus’ words in this context also tie to our house and household, that is, to matters of property and to our deepest personal relationships.

How do Jesus’ sayings about the cost—not the rewards!—of discipleship (see 14:26–35) tie to the first part of the chapter? It may simply be that an invitation to a dinner bears some similarities to an invitation to discipleship. One must acknowledge the sharp differences between such

invitations, of course, including the intensity of the resulting relationship between the parties who are joined together in the two circumstances. Even so, the acceptance of an invitation to join either a dinner party or a group of committed disciples entails a certain level of commitment. However, Jesus' point, both in his remarks about the wedding (see 14:7–11) and in his story of the supper (see 14:16–24), is that one should willingly extend the invitation to anyone who may become a part of the group. In addition, the guests' rejection of the invitation to the supper in Jesus' story leads to a result similar to the one for failed disciples: "none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper" (14:24).

HEALING A MAN WITH DROPSY DURING A MEAL (14:1–6)

King James Translation

1 And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him. 2 And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy. 3 And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? 4 And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go; 5 And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day? 6 And they could not answer him again to these things.

New Rendition

1 And it came to pass, while he was going to the home of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread, they were closely observing him. 2 And behold, a certain man was before him who had edema. 3 And answering, Jesus spoke to the Pharisees and teachers of the law, saying, "Is it permitted to heal on the Sabbath or not?" 4 But they kept silent. And he took hold of him, healed him, and sent him away. 5 And he said to them, "Who among you, should his son or cow fall into a pit, would not immediately pull him up on the Sabbath day?" 6 And they were not able to respond to these things.

Notes

14:1 into the house: The setting for events and stories in this chapter is a home. Because of its placement, at the first of these accounts, this point is emphatic.

one of the chief Pharisees: The expression leads to the conclusion that the Pharisees organize themselves in a hierarchical way, a notion that

Josephus affirms, although he pens a different term for *chief* (*archōn* versus *prōtos*).³ Concerning Jesus' ongoing contacts with Pharisees, even though he moves on to another town and the ramifications of the rancorous incident recorded in 11:37–54 fade, some scribes and Pharisees continue to pursue grounds “that they might accuse him” (11:54).

to eat bread: Jesus accepts an invitation to join a group of guests who are strangers to him, presenting an obvious opportunity for him to interact with others (see 7:36; 11:37). Customarily, this meal is prepared the day prior and eaten after the synagogue service.⁴

on the sabbath day: This story is one of several that brings forward the response of Jesus to popular, established notions of Sabbath-keeping (see 6:6–10; 13:10–17). It becomes clear from all of them that God justifies a person who finds a way to relieve suffering, even if it means that a person engages in “work” as it comes to be defined. In this case, Jesus makes a comparison with how people treat animals (see 14:5 and the Note thereon).

they watched him: The pronoun “they” is initially ambiguous. The term likely does not refer to any in his traveling party because the verb translated “watched” (Greek *paratēreō*) carries the sense of “hostile observation” (see 6:7; 20:20).⁵ Rather, the pronoun points to the “lawyers and Pharisees” invited to the meal (14:3) and perhaps even to “certain of the Pharisees” noted in 13:31.

14:2 a certain man before him: If Jesus is reclining at a triclinium table, as is the custom, the “man” evidently stands within the U-shaped table and faces Jesus across the table. Whether the man is among the invited guests remains unclear.

dropsy: This condition is most likely edema, an excess of fluids in the body.⁶

14:3 Jesus answering: One asks, whom is Jesus answering? Evidently, no one speaks in anything more than a whisper in this gathering of guests, for they are intently watching him (see the Note on 14:1). Yet he addresses “the lawyers and Pharisees.” We conclude, therefore, that either the suffering man is a plant and Jesus is answering the guests' act of trying to get him to break custom, or he is answering the guests' thoughts.⁷ In this latter connection, we further observe that individuals are answerable for

3. Josephus, *Life* §21; BAGD, 113, 732–34; Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 251.

4. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1040–41.

5. TDNT, 8:146–48; Johnson, *Luke*, 223.

6. Marshall, *Luke*, 578; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1041; Johnson, *Luke*, 223.

7. Morris, *Luke*, 252.

their thoughts (see 16:15—“God knoweth your hearts”; also Matt. 5:28–29; Mosiah 4:30; Alma 12:14).

Is it lawful: Addressing “lawyers and Pharisees,” Jesus is asking those who should know the law. As becomes clear from later rabbinic law, because Jesus’ actions do not intervene in a case that needs immediate or extraordinary attention, their legality is questionable.⁸ What is more, as when healing the man with the withered hand at 6:9–10, Jesus stands here as both lawyer and judge and then produces the evidence that solves the question. In this way, not surprisingly he mirrors Jehovah’s unusual dual role as both legal contestant and judge (see LXX 1 Kgs. 2:10; Isa. 41:11; the Note on 6:9).⁹

to heal: The issue that Jesus raises here is more narrowly focused than that in 6:9 where he asks in broad terms whether it is lawful “to do good, or to do evil.” In addition, the matter of healing stands on a different footing than that in 6:9 where Jesus questions whether it is lawful “to save life, or to destroy it.” But taken together, these two occasions, when Jesus raises the question of the legality of Sabbath activities, help readers to grasp Jesus’ idea of the Sabbath. First, he sees the Sabbath as a day of action. This observation does not counter the Sabbath as a day of rest. But Jesus’ action-filled responses to his own questions underline his view that doing good and saving life (see 6:9, the man with the withered hand) and healing others (see 13:11–16, the bent-over woman) are activities appropriate for the Sabbath. Second, Jesus shows that the Sabbath is his to define. After all, he is “Lord also of the sabbath” (6:5) and is thus empowered to make of it what he will. To be sure, his definition, which is shaped as it were in the bodies of those who receive his healing powers, may cut against the prevailing views of the day. But it is important for him to establish how the Sabbath will be honored in his kingdom (see the Notes on 6:9; 13:10; the Analysis on 4:31–37).

14:4 *they held their peace:* The expression hints that at least a whispered conversation has begun, evidently focused on Jesus, when he disturbs it and draws attention to the man standing in the middle of the triclinium. If the guests, who sense an awkward situation, openly hold that healing a person is unlawful on the Sabbath, they open themselves to a charge of indifference to suffering.¹⁰

he took: What is the sense? Does Jesus position the afflicted man as if he is standing before a judge? Or does he escort him to such a position

8. *TDNT*, 7:14–15.

9. *TDNT*, 1:374.

10. Morris, *Luke*, 252.

as if he were the bailiff? Marshall suggests that in 9:47 the verb (Greek *epilambanomai*) has to do with Jesus placing the child next to himself in a position of honor, whereas in this passage the verb may be “Semitic redundant style,” that is, adding an unnecessary but helpful detail.¹¹ The verb, however, is more vivid than in this view.¹² At base, it means “to take hold of” and thus conveys the image of Jesus holding the man as he heals him, that is, putting his hands on or wrapping his arms around the man.¹³ If so, Jesus shows his concern by rising from his place at the table and coming around to meet the man who stands across the table from him (see the Note on 14:2). The Joseph Smith Translation strengthens this scenario by changing the expression to “he took the man” (JST 14:4).

healed him: As in the instance of the man with the withered hand (see 6:10), Jesus heals the person as a proof that his view on Sabbath activities is correct and mirrors the divine view (see also 13:11–16). He will set out his expectations for proper observance again when affirming anew the Sabbath, on Sundays (see D&C 59:9–13, a revelation received on a Sunday).

14:5 an ass or an ox: The earliest texts, \mathfrak{P}^{45} and \mathfrak{P}^{75} , and other manuscripts read “a son or an ox,” a line which offers a more striking contrast in Jesus’ words. Later Jewish law does not specifically allow such a rescue operation as Jesus notes; this sort of action must have been done as a matter of custom in his day, or of necessity, without an official ruling on this sort of Sabbath action.¹⁴

14:6 they could not answer: With this expression, Luke underscores the sheer inability of Jesus’ quieted but self-confident critics to answer his Sabbath conundrum.

Analysis

As in his stories about the man with the withered hand (see 6:6–10) and the bent-over woman (see 13:10–13), Luke again leads us inside a room where the Savior spends part of his Sabbath. In the earlier stories, Jesus stands in a synagogue. In this latest account, Jesus evidently rises from his place at the table and stands with the afflicted man, placing his hands on him as he heals him. Besides Jesus’ obvious compassion that weaves itself brightly through this report, including this set of actions, another personality trait

11. Marshall, *Luke*, 396, 579.

12. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 642; BAGD, 295.

13. *TDNT*, 6:362; 9:431.

14. *TDNT*, 7:14; Marshall, *Luke*, 579–80.

enters the pattern. Jesus simply takes over the conversation, just as he does in the home of Simon the Pharisee when dealing with the penitent woman (see 7:36–50; the Note on 7:40; the Analysis on 5:27–32).

Jesus' willingness and ability to dominate a situation—hinted at long ago: “he taught in their synagogues” (4:15)—here jump out at a reader. In Luke's portrayal, no one is his match. The observation that Jesus' dominance arises within a group of “lawyers and Pharisees” (14:3), people who have thought about and taught religious principles throughout their lives, underscores Jesus' irrepressible character. And he exhibits his dominance not in casual conversation, discussing the latest news from the town, but with his own, definite purposes in mind. He does not spin away time in the small talk that often arises at dinner parties. As the evident expectation of the other guests underscores, he already enjoys a reputation of seizing whatever occasion presents itself and turning it into a teaching moment.

Only Luke records this report, as well as the following parable about humility (see 14:7–14), each a part of Jesus' effort to steer the dinner conversation. With this story of the man with dropsy, of course, Luke underscores again Jesus' powers to heal long-term illnesses, as he has with the leper (see 5:12–14), the paralyzed man (see 5:18–25), and the woman afflicted twelve years with the issue of blood (see 8:43–48).

But unlike these earlier miracles, this one occurs on a Sabbath day, raising the question of proper observance of the Sabbath, just as other accounts do, such as the healing of the man with the withered hand (see 6:6–10) and the bent-over woman (see 13:10–13). As noted in the Analysis on 6:6–12, for centuries the Sabbath serves as “a sign” that graces “a perpetual covenant” between God and his people. Any act that dishonors the Sabbath leads to “death” for the offender (Ex. 31:13–17). By Jesus' era, traditions about Sabbath observance have become entrenched deep in people's lives and they help to explain the rancorous responses from Jesus' detractors. Jesus is marching against old, established views, and he knows it. Because of the Sabbath's centrality in religious life, his calculated efforts to push forward fundamental questions about this holy day allow him to bring his own agenda into the consciousness of his hearers with unforgettable strength. And as with the other accounts, this report establishes Jesus' lordship over the Sabbath.¹⁵

At the heart of this story lingers Jesus' compassion in contrast to established custom. His Sabbath action in effect elevates the needs of people

15. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:606; Marshall, *Luke*, 233.

over the perceived requirements of programs or customs, establishing a pattern that his observers are expected to emulate. But his deed does not sabotage the Mosaic law. The question, at base, is how one interprets and responds to the law, not whether to reject or reframe the law itself. Jesus leaves intact the Sabbath, and that is how matters are to remain. His act dramatically introduces the guests to a higher, more noble way to celebrate the sacred Sabbath, by offering deliverance instead of turning a blind eye.

PARABLE OF THE MARRIAGE FEAST (14:7–11)

King James Translation

7 And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, 8 When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; 9 And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. 10 But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. 11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

New Rendition

7 And he spoke a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they selected the prime seats, saying to them, 8 “Whenever you are invited by someone to a wedding, do not recline in the place of honor, lest at some time someone more honorable than you is invited there by him, 9 and the one who invited you and him comes and says to you, ‘Give place to him.’ And then you will begin with shame to take the last place. 10 Rather, when you are invited, go and recline in the last place so that when he who has invited you comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ Then honor will be yours before everyone with whom you recline for dinner. 11 Because he who lifts himself up shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be lifted up.”

Notes

14:7 *a parable*: The term is Luke’s. Why call it this? For at first glance Jesus’ words embody straightforward instruction about the behavior of guests. But taken within the usual definition of parables, his story “presents one single point of comparison” that here has to do with ambition and humility

(see the Notes on 4:23; 5:36; 8:4).¹⁶ A similar saying of Jesus is preserved in Codex Bezae, and a few late manuscripts, and inserted after Matthew 20:28 just as Jesus and his followers depart Jericho for the last time. Here may be another example of Jesus teaching a similar lesson in a different setting.¹⁷

those which were bidden: To be on the guest list, as Jesus' story will disclose, is a distinct privilege. On a metaphorical level, Jesus may be pointing to those who will be invited to his future celebration and consequently to their improper behavior.¹⁸ Thus, an invitation to the messianic banquet is no guarantee of a place at the table (see 14:24). The Joseph Smith Translation changes this expression to a markedly theoretical story: "concerning those who were bidden to a wedding" (JST 14:7).

he marked how they chose out: According to Luke, Jesus arrives early enough that he observes some guests jostling for the favored spots at the table. Either he is not the guest of honor, who typically arrives last and is thereafter placed next to the host (see 14:8–9),¹⁹ or he arrives earlier than expected, which is more likely here. According to an adjustment in the Joseph Smith Translation, Jesus is already well aware of how guests behave at dinner parties: "for he knew how they chose out the chief rooms and exalted themselves one above another" (JST 14:7).

chief rooms: Jesus' reference is to the places of honor at a meal, places adjacent to the host (see 20:46; Prov. 25:6–7).²⁰

saying unto them: Now Jesus becomes a social critic of sorts, though his words frame rules of etiquette rather than a major social issue.

14:8 to a wedding: Even though Jesus' reference may be to a more general celebration, such as a banquet (see the Note on 12:36), more than likely he envisions a wedding.²¹ We ask, Why does Jesus appeal to a wedding as an example? The meal at which he is reclining is not connected to a wedding because the day is the Sabbath and, according to later rabbinic law,

16. Dodd, *Parables*, 18; also Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 295–99; Plummer, *Luke*, 125–26; *TDOT*, 9:64–67; *TDNT*, 5:744–61.

17. Plummer, *Luke*, 437; Jeremias, *Parables*, 107–8, 115, 122; Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, 71; *TDNT*, 2:631, n. 29; 4:326; Marshall, *Luke*, 701; Morris, *Luke*, 299; Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 286.

18. Madsen, "Marriage Supper of the Lamb," 2:860; Marshall, *Luke*, 581.

19. Marshall, *Luke*, 581; Morris, *Luke*, 253–54; Dennis E. Smith, "Table Fellowship as a Literary Motif in the Gospel of Luke," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106, no. 4 (1987): 617–19.

20. Josephus, *A.J.* 12.4.9 (§210); Johnson, *Luke*, 224.

21. *TDNT*, 1:648–49; Marshall, *Luke*, 536, 582.

“A virgin should be married on a Wednesday and a widow [remarried] on a Thursday.”²² Moreover, Jesus’ reference to “a great supper” (14:16) seems more general. But weddings will be familiar to all and are among the most important of celebrations. We also ask whether Jesus alludes to himself as the bridegroom in this passage. For it is he who has power to exalt and abase (see 14:11), to recompense (see 14:14), and to withhold taste of his supper (see 14:24). There is more. A wedding begins a home for a couple, a point of emphasis. And Jesus’ insistence that a person adopt the dress of humility may be more than a message to a wedding guest. It may also have to do with how one conducts oneself in the home, beginning with the wedding and continuing thereafter (see the Note on 12:36).

sit . . . down: The passive voice, which is the mood of this verb, means “to recline” (Greek *kataklinō*; see 9:14; 24:30; the Notes on 5:29; 7:36; 14:8, 10; 22:14).²³ The point is that New Testament culture is not widely a chair culture. If they have room in their homes, people typically recline at a low-lying table during a meal.²⁴

a more honorable man than thou: Jesus’ words reflect the practice of placing a guest of honor in a prominent spot, usually next to the host (see the Note on 14:7).

14:9 *and him:* The Joseph Smith Translation makes these words point even more sharply to the honored guest: “with him who is more honorable” (JST 14:9).

Give this man place: Within Jesus’ words the ordering of society is plain, and all will understand Jesus’ reference to this order, including seating arrangements. In addition, implicit within his example lies the proper and full ordering of his kingdom.

the lowest room: The last place, which is farthest from the host, is usually reserved for the least honored person, the one who carries the least influence.²⁵

14:10 *sit down in the lowest room:* The verb here (Greek *anapiptō*) means to recline, generally on pillows with the feet extended away from the low-lying table (see the Notes on 11:37; 17:7; 22:14).²⁶ On the surface, Jesus is counseling a person to take the place at the table most remote from the host. But beneath, he is reminding listeners about proper humility.

22. *Mishnah Ketuboth* 1:1; Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:98.

23. BAGD, 412.

24. *TDNT*, 3:654–56.

25. Josephus, *A.J.* 12.4.9 (§210); Smith, “Table Fellowship as a Literary Motif,” 617–19.

26. BAGD, 59; also *TDNT*, 3:654–56.

he may say unto thee: Although the verb stands in the future tense (“he will say”), its sense is more tentative, as in the subjunctive mood, when following the Greek term for “so that” (*hina*).²⁷ Hence, as in the KJV translation, there is only a remote chance that the person who reclines in the most remote spot will be invited to move closer. We find no sense that a person can feign humility in order to receive an invitation to move up.²⁸

then shalt thou have worship: The term translated “worship” (Greek *doxa*) means “honor” in this context, pointing to the respect in the eyes of others that is bestowed on someone who is invited to join the host.²⁹ The Joseph Smith Translation adjusts the term “worship” in a most interesting way, substituting the phrase “honor of God” (JST 14:10). The phrase seems to link honor among one’s acquaintances and honor from God, moving Jesus’ point onto celestial soil.

14:11 whosoever exalteth himself: As elsewhere (for example, 14:13–14; see the Note on 18:14), Jesus draws both an eternal principle and an eventual judgment out of a workaday situation (see Prov. 11:2). In all, the self-exalting person stands at cross purposes with God, even acting as a hindrance (see also 10:15; Isa. 2:11–17; D&C 112:3, 15).

shall be abased: Jesus’ language echoes that of Ezekiel 17:24 and 21:26 and is repeated in Doctrine and Covenants 101:41–42. The pseudepigraphal *Letter of Aristeas*, likely composed in the second century BC, features more lethal language: “God destroys the proud.”³⁰ The passive voice of the verbs, “shall be abased” and “shall be exalted,” certifies that God will do the abasing and exalting,³¹ as does the passive “thou shalt be recompensed” in 14:14 (see the Note below and the Notes on 12:50; 18:31; 22:37; 24:31, 44).

he that humbleth himself: Jesus envisions a person who has shed pretensions and “hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity” (Ps. 24:4). As Ben Sirah reminds readers, “The greater you are, the more you must practice humility.”³² The issue of humbling oneself versus being compelled to be humble lies at the heart of one of Alma’s famous sermons to the Zoramites (see Alma 32:12–16, 24–25; also D&C 124:114).

27. Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §369.

28. Plummer, *Luke*, 357.

29. BAGD, 203.

30. *Letter of Aristeas* 263, in Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 2:117; and in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:30.

31. Johnson, *Luke*, 227.

32. *The Wisdom of Ben Sirah* 3:18, in Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Apocrypha: An American Translation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), 229.

shall be exalted: God will do the exalting, as the passive voice indicates (see 1:52; 18:14; the Notes on 12:50; 13:32; 16:11; 18:31; 22:37; 24:31, 44; also Acts 2:33; 5:31; James 4:10; 1 Pet. 5:6; D&C 112:3, 10; 124:114).³³ Thus, Jesus' words capture an ultimate reality, not simply a social nicety.

Analysis

The Savior, having taken over the conversation and now animatedly guiding it, turns to chastise some at the dinner party for boorish behavior—pushing and jostling their way into the more honorable places at the table, close to the host.³⁴ This scene does not feature Jesus as a social critic, except in a very limited and minor way. But the behavior of some opens the door for him to comment on an aspect of social etiquette and then, most pointedly, as is his custom, to apply it to eternal questions, those of God exalting and abasing people. Although some have opined that Luke adds the lesson in 14:11 from another source, no substantial reason has been advanced to convince us that Jesus does not utter these words on this occasion.³⁵ The pattern is consistent: he makes a set of observations from the surrounding, workaday world, and then draws out lasting lessons from them.

That Jesus chooses a wedding celebration is notable. For his illustration adds flesh to the growing perception that he concerns himself deeply and repeatedly with the home and family (see the introduction to this chapter; the Note on 14:15; the Analysis on 11:14–28). For a wedding sets up a home and family, those anchoring elements that allow a society to survive and flourish, those molded pieces that graciously give meaning to the lives of individuals and communities. In his hands, weddings should not be events where rank and self-importance are on display. Implied is the sense that the newlyweds are to remain the heart and soul of the celebration, not the guests, not the relatives.

The issue arises because Jesus inaugurates a conversation—almost entirely one-sided—that rests on a custom tied to the most honored guest, a natural outcome to what he is witnessing in the Pharisee's home. Even today, as in antiquity,³⁶ Middle Eastern society functions in this manner,

33. Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §§313 ,(1)130; Jeremias, *Parables*, 122, n. 33; Marshall, *Luke*, 898; Johnson, *Luke*, 227.

34. Morris, *Luke*, 253–54.

35. Bultmann, *History*, 103–4; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1044; in contrast, Jeremias, *Parables*, 107–8.

36. Marshall, *Luke*, 581.

with the guest of honor arriving last so that all others are present to greet that person. But Jesus’ chief point does not gain its sharpest meaning in his comments on customary etiquette but in its application to how the divine world functions: God is the one who exalts and abases. No one holds the right to make claim to a position of divine honor.

As with so many other accounts, Luke alone leads us to Jesus’ clarifying illustration about rank and place in society, once again underscoring the significance of his account. Without these polishing words from Jesus, which disclose customs of his day and, especially, reveal his thoughts about humility and self-importance, a reader stands on a rougher, diminished surface. The fact that the Risen Savior later chooses to quote verse 14:11 to a modern audience, and also repeats it to introduce a parable, as he does in this chapter, underscores the significance of what Luke preserves for us (see D&C 101:42–43).

THE PROPER GUEST LIST (14:12–14)

King James Translation

12 Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. 13 But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: 14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

New Rendition

12 And he also spoke to the one who invited him, “When you make a breakfast or supper, do not call your friends, nor your brothers, nor your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you and a returned favor come to you. 13 Rather, when you host a banquet, invite the poor, the deformed, the lame, the blind. 14 And blessed will you be because they do not have anything to give you in return; for you will be repaid in the resurrection of the just.”

Notes

14:12 *him that bade him:* Jesus now turns from the guests, “those which were bidden” (14:7), and publicly addresses the host. The weight of his words now shifts from his general observations about behavior to lofty principles that govern how a person reaches out to others. This expression, when adjusted in the Joseph Smith Translation, carries the biggest

surprise about the setting for chapter 14: “him that bade to the wedding” (JST 14:12), tying Jesus next remarks back to the previous illustration (see 14:7–11).

a dinner or a supper: The two terms (Greek *ariston* and *deipnon*), deriving in part from the custom of eating two meals per day, point to the first meal and the later, main meal. The second word, particularly, has to do with banquets.³⁷ The first term appears at 11:38 (see the Notes on 11:37–38) and the second occurs at 14:16, 17, 24 and 20:46.

kinsmen: The word translated here is the same as that translated “cousin” in 1:36 and 1:58 (Greek *syngenēs*),³⁸ indicating a larger circle of relatives than “thy brethren” (see the Note on 1:36).

lest they also bid thee again: Although socially a person naturally seeks to establish relationships with others by mutual actions and invitations, Jesus lifts the view of his host to a nobler plane of interacting with those who in their lives will rarely enjoy a good meal, particularly in the presence of honored people (see 6:32–34). The real payoff, as he affirms, does not lie in “a recompense” or a complementing invitation from a guest but comes “at the resurrection of the just” (14:14), as well as in a soothed conscience.

14:13 call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: This listing of persons reflects, first, Jesus’ interest in the poor who have not the means to meet their needs (see 6:20–21; 14:21; 18:22) nor to deal with special circumstances (for example, facing a law suit, as hinted about widows in 18:2–5 and 20:47),³⁹ and then his interest in those who are unable physically to do for themselves because of illness or permanent injury (maimed, lame, blind). In his concern, Jesus lines up precisely with Isaiah’s words about a proper fast: “Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house?” (Isa. 58:7). In modern times, the Lord appoints a man, Vinson Knight by name, to “lift up his voice . . . to plead the cause of the poor and the needy” (D&C 124:75; also 124:89). Moreover, these disadvantaged people will join the Savior in his messianic banquet at the end-time (see D&C 58:11). A strangely opposite view, which excuses people from nurturing such individuals, arises among the Essenes according to both the Damascus Rule and the Rule of the Congregation: “No madman, . . . no blind man, or maimed, or lame, or deaf man . . . shall enter into

37. BAGD, 106, 172; Marshall, *Luke*, 493–94.

38. BAGD, 780.

39. For Samaritans, widows, and the poor, see John R. Donahue, “Tax Collector,” in *ABD*, 6:337–338, esp. 338.

the Community, for the Angels of Holiness are with them” (15:15–17).⁴⁰ In a different vein, Jesus’ words hint that the host is a person of means, as does the fact that the man is able to invite a large number of guests.

14:14 recompensed at the resurrection of the just: Jesus does not allow the discussion to remain on a terrestrial level, but raises the sights of all, especially the host, to celestial reasons for performing certain earthly tasks (see Matt. 25:34–40). Moreover, we sense in his words the hint that the recompense will include heavenly association with the formerly disadvantaged guests, now restored to full ability. In another vein, Jesus’ pointer to the resurrection in the home of a Pharisee carries its own appeal because Pharisees believe in the resurrection. But by calling it “the resurrection of the just,” Jesus adds a qualifier that embraces only those who do justly by his standards, including welcoming “the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind.”⁴¹ The passive voice of the verb (Greek *antapodidōmi*) points to God as the one who recompenses (see the Note on 14:11).

Analysis

The Savior’s pithy statement about how his host should craft a guest list turns the social world upside down. Who has ever considered inviting anyone but one’s acquaintances to a dinner party? Who has ever thought of bidding those on the bottom rung of society to a private supper? Who has ever imagined sharing a meal with the dirty and unkempt? To be sure, men in the tribe of Levi who suffer from physical blemishes are not allowed to serve at the temple, and are thus excluded (see Lev. 21:17–21). But this circumstance applies only to those of the priestly ranks. Even more exclusive is the Essenes’ forbidding of the blemished from joining with them in their principal meals because, it is written, during such meals “the angels of holiness are among [the Essenes’] congregation.” In this view, the blemished are unworthy to even be in the presence of the angels. What is more striking, according to the Dead Sea Scrolls, such persons will be excluded from the messianic banquet at the end of time.⁴² Plainly, Jesus turns firmly and robustly against such views.

More than the prior parable (see 14:7–11), Jesus’ words cut against the social norms of insiders versus outsiders. In his kingdom, no one will

40. Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 3d ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 92, 102; García Martínez, *Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 39, 54, 127.

41. Green, *Luke*, 554.

42. *Rule of the Community* 2.5–9, 11–17, in García Martínez, *Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 127; Johnson, *Luke*, 225.

possess an edge because of friendships, no one will receive special favors because of family ties, no one will hold onto influence and power because of long-time connections among the elite. Instead, the downtrodden receive equal treatment, the despised stand in places of honor, and the humble find themselves exalted. Such a view offers a universal appeal and reverses the debilitating status quo, promising reward and meaning to all.⁴³

Continuing a pattern, Luke alone preserves these words from Jesus. But their authenticity is therefore not to be questioned.⁴⁴ Rather, as in the case of Jesus' parable about taking the lesser places at a wedding celebration (see 14:7–11), Luke's repetition of Jesus' saying enriches our store of wisdom and celestial vision that derives from the Christ.

THE GREAT SUPPER

(14:15–24)

(Compare Matt. 22:1–14)

King James Translation

15 And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. 16 Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: 17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. 18 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. 19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. 20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

21 So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master

New Rendition

15 But one of those listening to these things and reclining at the table said to him, "Blessed is he who eats bread in the kingdom of God." 16 And he said to him, "A certain man made a great meal, and invited many. 17 And he sent his slave in the hour of the feast to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for all is now prepared.' 18 And all began at once to decline. The first said to him, 'I have bought a farm, and I need to go out to see it. I beg you to excuse me.' 19 And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to examine them. I beg you to excuse me.' 20 And another said, 'I have married a wife, and because of this I cannot come.'

21 "And when the slave returned, he reported to his master these things.

43. Green, *Luke*, 553.

44. Jeremias, *Parables*, 107–8.

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. 22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. 23 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. 24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

Then the owner of the house in anger said to his slave, ‘Go swiftly into the streets and the alleys of the city, and bring here the poor, the deformed, the blind, and the lame.’ 22 And the slave said, ‘Lord, it has been done as you ordered, and yet there is still room.’ 23 And the lord said to his slave, ‘Go out into the roads and hedges and compel them to come in so that my house might be full. 24 For I say to you that not one of those men who were invited shall taste of my meal.’”

Notes

14:15 *one of them that sat at meat with him:* A reader is still to envision a group of men reclining at the low-set table, as the verb indicates (Greek *synanakeimai*).⁴⁵ Plainly, one in the group, an unidentified man, feels uncomfortable surrendering the conversation to the stranger.

Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God: The individual brings up the messianic banquet wherein the Messiah will host the righteous. Jesus himself refers to this event elsewhere (see the Notes on 4:3; 12:37; 13:28; 22:16–18, 30; the Analysis on 4:1–13; 9:10–17).⁴⁶ If we can trust that the Gospel writers preserve stories because some important piece lies in them, then we are safe in observing that this person seems to be responding, likely in a critical way, to Jesus’ insistence that we invite those who “cannot recompense [us]” (14:14). The man apparently holds the view that entering “the kingdom of God” will winnow out the unworthy and thus will not include “the poor, and the maimed, and the halt” who, in contrast, will be included in Jesus’ kingdom (14:21; we compare the attitude of the Pharisee who “trusted in [himself] that [he was] righteous” and who despises “this publican”—18:9, 11). Moreover, the man’s mention of the kingdom of God leads Jesus to repeat a story that takes place in a home. Hence, he seems to be emphasizing that the kingdom of God must be seen in terms of, or as an extension of, one’s home.

45. BAGD, 792.

46. Madsen, “Marriage Supper of the Lamb,” 2:860; Smith, “Messianic Banquet,” 4:788–91.

14:16 a great supper: That this meal possesses heavenly, eschatological connections appears in the beatitude that one of the guests utters immediately before about “eat[ing] bread in the kingdom of God” (14:15). Thus the following story has to do with the end-time.

bade many: Plainly, the guest list includes people of means, as Jesus’ following descriptions of a man who purchases land and a man who buys “five yoke of oxen” will illustrate (14:18–19). Such people are the very sorts of guests whom he asks the host not to invite (see 14:12).

14:17 sent his servant: The verb points to sending out official representatives (Greek *apostellō*) and thus is applicable to the leaders of Jesus’ coming church whom the servant effectively represents (see the Note on 14:32).⁴⁷ The sense of many leaders finds reinforcement in the Joseph Smith Translation which changes the singular *servant* to the plural *servants* (JST 14:17). In another vein, this contact with the invited guests is at least the second; the initial invitation constitutes the first. The pattern of multiple contacts and follow-up is typical of the Middle East. This principle, one of leadership, is important: a person must be willing to keep contacting others in order for something good to happen. A second precept has to do with all persons receiving more than one chance to accept the invitation of the Lord before they are excluded (see 14:24).

at supper time: The Greek term is *deipnon* and has to do either with the later, main meal of the day or with banquets (see the Note on 14:12). This second notice comes just before the dinner and hints at both the guests’ acceptance of the initial invitation and the host’s confidence that all his guests will arrive.

14:18 with one consent: The translation is awkward. It would be better to say “uniformly” or “similarly,” meaning that all the guests uniformly decline.

began to make excuse: The excuses have to do with a person’s most prized earthly connections: to property (14:18), to goods (14:19) and to spouse (14:20). Ominously, all of these will be forfeit if the individual does not come when “bidden” and “taste of [the Lord’s] supper” (14:24).

I have bought a piece of ground: It may be significant that the reasons or excuses of the invited guests match rather closely the reasons for excusing a man from military service. Such reasons include a recently built home, a freshly planted vineyard, and his betrothal to a wife (see Deut. 20:5–7). If Jesus’ story indeed alludes to this sort of Mosaic exemption—and it stands very close—the story forms part of his message that those who continue

47. BAGD, 98; *TDNT*, 1:398–406; Jeremias, *Parables*, 57–58.

to embrace the old law, and find excuses or exemptions therein, will find themselves excluded from his supper or kingdom.⁴⁸ There is another point. It has to do with Jesus responding to an apparent view that those who eat bread in the kingdom of God are blessed (see 14:15). Each of the exemptions of Deuteronomy 20:5–7 are justifiably legal and acceptable. But Jesus seems to be saying that, even though the excuses enumerated in the story are justifiable under the law of Moses, in his kingdom they will not be. In his words, “none of those men who were bidden shall taste of my supper” (14:24; compare JST 14:35–36).

14:19 *I have bought five yoke of oxen:* The wealth of this guest is obvious. Jesus’ words bear an inherent critique of people who allow property or goods to interfere with responsibilities within human relationships.

14:20 *I have married a wife:* Of all the reasons for not attending the banquet, this one stands as the most justifiable. A person’s family connections not only become richer through marriage but they must take account of a larger set of demands and relationships. Even so, because Jesus frames his story in light of entering “the kingdom of God” (14:15), refusing the invitation is to be measured against the backdrop of eternity.

14:21 *lord:* The term is the same as that which is frequently applied to Jesus (Greek *kyrios*) and, in certain contexts, ties him to Jehovah (see the Notes on 13:8, 15). Here, the word bears a general meaning of master or owner (see 14:22).⁴⁹

master of the house: The title (Greek *oikodespotēs*) is frequent in Jesus’ sayings and ties to a person who enjoys an abundance of possessions (see 12:39; 13:25; 22:11).⁵⁰

being angry: The anger of the master is directed toward those who accept his invitation and then, in a reversal, refuse to follow through. But it is not his pique that mainly drives the master to reach out to the disfavored in the town. Rather, he shows his generosity toward all and, though he would likely not mix upper and lower classes together because of social norms, he demonstrates his ready willingness to bring the poorer class into his home.

the streets and lanes of the city: At the time of the main meal, the servant will not find the disadvantaged members of society in their hovels but

48. On the exemptions, see Baruch A. Levine, “Farewell to the Ancient Near East,” in *Privatization in the Ancient Near East and Classical World: A Colloquium Held at New York University, November 17–18, 1994*, Peabody Museum Bulletin 5, ed. Michael Hudson and Baruch A. Levine (Cambridge: Peabody Museum, 1996), 235.

49. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1013; *TDNT*, 3:1042–46; *TLNT*, 2:341–44.

50. BAGD, 560.

along the roadways of the town. Most of their life is spent out of doors, not inside.

the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind: The list mirrors that in 14:13, except in the Greek text the last two are reversed: “the blind and the lame.” For the significance of this listing, see the Note on 14:13. Plainly, the master in the story gladly accepts into his company the disfavored people of society (see D&C 58:11).

14:22 *commanded:* This verb (Greek *epitassō*),⁵¹ which appears elsewhere, ties the story to Jesus, specifically to his powers to control both the demons of the unseen world and natural forces such as the wind (see 4:36; 8:25, 31).

14:23 *highways and hedges:* Jesus’ words point to areas outside the city, and hence potentially to people of mixed background, whereas those in 14:21 obviously come from areas within the town. On a metaphorical level, he is evidently pointing to those outside the Jewish community.⁵²

compel: Although the verb (Greek *anangkazō*) frequently carries the sense of “to force,” here the meaning has to do with “urging strongly.”⁵³

that my house may be filled: Although the master’s words may lead us to conclude that he seeks chiefly to fill his house with guests to avoid embarrassment, and therefore any guest will fill the master’s need, we may see this further invitation as one extended to Gentiles, those outside the city as it were.⁵⁴ Not incidentally, we notice that a person’s past behavior does not disqualify him or her from being invited or accepted into the master’s home, as the parable of the prodigal son demonstrates (see 15:11–32). Thus, the story does not feature an indiscriminate invitation, for elsewhere Jesus shows care in those whom he invites to his meals and whom he serves (see 22:27–30).⁵⁵

14:24 *I say unto you:* Jesus’ authority to make divine pronouncements rests in these words. The expression first appears in John’s address to a gathered crowd and then continues in Jesus’ authoritative declarations (see 3:8; the Note on 6:27). Further, because of the plural “you,” the master is addressing more than one servant, underscoring the point that the story has to do with Jesus’ kingdom (see the plural in JST 14:17; the Note on 14:17). Effectively, Jesus is addressing all at the meal, for they have become his audience,

51. BAGD, 302.

52. TDNT, 5:68–69; Jeremias, *Parables*, 64.

53. BAGD, 51.

54. TDNT, 5:68–69; Jeremias, *Parables*, 64.

55. Jeremias, *Parables*, 65, 121.

not just the man to whom he replies at the beginning (see 14:16). By this device, Jesus places himself within the story as the master.⁵⁶

none . . . shall taste: Not only does this verse pronounce a verdict on those who have declined the master's invitation but it also contains a veiled condemnation of the religion of the privileged, which the remarks of the man point to (see the Note on 14:15).

Analysis

With a wrenching twist intended to bring the Savior's words back into the channels of tradition-laden expectations, a guest in the chief Pharisee's home corrects Jesus' painting of God's kingdom that teems with "the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind" and inserts himself and others of his kind into that kingdom by declaring boldly, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God" (14:13, 15). He is taking back the divine territory for those of influence and wealth. But he does not reckon that Jesus, the irrepressible teacher, will turn his remark into a foil for driving home his point that the kingdom welcomes all, embraces the poor and disadvantaged, offers succor to more than the upper classes, and opens its doors to more than Jews.⁵⁷ With the story of the supper, Jesus changes the entire celestial landscape.

The shocked reaction of the guests must be, How can this man allow the scum of the earth into God's kingdom? Does he not grasp that their lowly circumstance discloses perfectly their status before God? In response, Jesus' stories and lessons unveil a kingdom that is infinitely more accepting, is fundamentally full of grace and graciousness, and is bathed in warm and cleansing waters. For those who have grown up asking the question, "are there few that be saved?" (13:23; also 18:26) and have the impression that only few really are saved, Jesus' answer through his vivid words comes as a breeze sweetened by the scent of spring flowers (see the Note on 13:23).

That Jesus recites a story about activities in a home fits a now established pattern of concern for home and family (see the introduction to this chapter; the Notes on 6:48–49). In this story, of course, he turns a bright light on the kind of generosity that can emanate from a home toward outsiders, demonstrating the strength of a home to reach out and touch the lives and affairs of those not within its normal circle of influence. This story also features the relationship between master and servant, between two people

56. Green, *Luke*, 555.

57. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 452; Morris, *Luke*, 257.

who bear responsibility for the home, though in very different roles. Jesus' narration continues his interests in the home, opening with the miraculous catch of fish that provides sustenance and a living for his disciples' families (see the Note on 5:6), and continuing into his visit in Martha's home (see 10:38–42) and his sayings about homes under siege in chapter 11 (see the Analysis on 11:14–28; 12:35–40).

The relationship of master—called “lord” in the story—and servant bring into the open the metaphorical character of Jesus' story: it applies to his church, to his growing community, as the plural “you” in 14:24 indicates (see the Note on 14:24). Jesus the Lord directs the affairs of his kingdom; those within it, his servants, do his bidding. But his bidding does not reek with the unsavory, with unrestrained power and cowering servility. On the contrary, the servant in the story acts as the master's authorized agent for inviting and welcoming outsiders into the master's home for a grand banquet. Those invited include the downtrodden of society and point up the master's genuine compassion and concern for them—he does not invite them just for show. Jesus, though firm with resolve and clear in his objectives, will not govern his kingdom as a despot.

The metaphorical nature of the story persists into the hints of the messianic banquet at the end-time. Specifically, the broad set of invitations, the splendid nature of the feast, the ban on those who have refused the initial summonses, and the status of the master as “lord” and host—all these elements point to meaningful connections with this expected, unequalled occasion (see the Notes on 13:28; 14:7; 22:16–18, 30; the Analysis on 4:1–13; 9:10–17).⁵⁸

The similarities of this story to one repeated by Matthew and to one that appears in the apocryphal *Gospel of Thomas*, saying 64, has led some to conclude that the three go back to a common source (see Matt. 22:1–14). To be sure, the grand occasion for the banquet, the invitations to prominent people, the sending of the servant, the variety of excuses for not coming, and the invitation to those along the roads outside the city all point to commonalities. And the differences between the three versions may result from the ancient authors' efforts to fix meaningful contexts to Jesus' story.⁵⁹ These same differences, however, may also point to Jesus' independent retelling of a meaningful story in varying settings and ways, a view that

58. Madsen, “Marriage Supper of the Lamb,” 2:860; Smith, “Messianic Banquet,” 4:788–91.

59. Beare, *Earliest Records of Jesus*, 177, 210; Jeremias, *Parables*, 63; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1050–52.

most scholars will not accept. But the differences are striking enough that such a conclusion is not unreasonable.⁶⁰ After all, in Matthew’s version, the banquet is a wedding feast, a detail, on the surface, that would have been natural for Luke to pick up because he has just related a saying of Jesus that involves a wedding banquet (see 14:8–10). Moreover, rather than simply banning the original invited guests from any further events, as in Luke’s version (see 14:24), Matthew’s account has the king—the host—ordering the execution of those who refuse to come because they have, horribly, killed the servants whom he sends to remind them (see Matt. 22:6–7). In addition, Matthew rehearses both the discovery of a guest who is not wearing an appropriate wedding garment and his banishment “into outer darkness,” aspects that are completely absent in Luke’s report (see Matt. 22:11–13). Furthermore, the interlocking connections between the prior sayings about the nature of the kingdom (see 14:7–14) and this story of the supper underline a fundamental unity that can only go back to one mind and one occasion, not to an imaginative author who is stitching together strands of tradition and memory that come to him in a disconnected fashion.⁶¹ In a different vein, the story in 14:16–24 may be a recasting of the famous story of Bar Ma’jan, a rich tax collector, who is reported to have done a single good deed in his life by inviting poor people to a banquet when other prominent persons refuse to come.⁶²

TRUE DISCIPLESHIP (14:25–35)

(Compare Matt. 5:13; 10:37–38; Mark 9:49–50)

King James Translation

25 And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, 26 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

New Rendition

25 And large crowds flocked to him, and turning he said to them, 26 “If someone comes to me, and does not hate his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, and even his own soul, he cannot be my

60. Plummer, *Luke*, 437; Jeremias, *Parables*, 107–8, 115, 122; *TDNT*, 2:631, n. 29; 4:326; Marshall, *Luke*, 701; Morris, *Luke*, 299; Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 286.

61. Plummer, *Luke*, 359–60; Morris, *Luke*, 255; Green, *Luke*, 557–58.

62. Jeremias, *Parables*, 178–80; Donahue, “Tax Collector,” 6:338.

cannot be my disciple. 27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? 29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, 30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. 31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? 32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. 33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

34 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? 35 It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

disciple. 27 Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

28 “For who among you, desiring to erect a tower, does not first sit down to reckon the expense, whether he has means to complete it? 29 Lest, after he has laid its foundation but cannot finish it, all who see this begin to mock him, 30 saying, ‘This man began to build, but cannot finish.’ 31 Or what king goes to war against another king without first sitting down to take counsel as to whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose him who comes against him with twenty thousand? 32 And if not, he will send an embassy to plead for peace terms while he is still far off. 33 So then, everyone of you who do not take leave of all your possessions cannot be my disciple.

34 “Salt is good; but if the salt also becomes tasteless, how will it be seasoned? 35 It is fit neither for the earth nor for the dunghill; they throw it out. Let him who has ears to hear hear!”

Notes

14:25 *great multitudes*: This note from Luke mirrors his earlier notice of how crowds react to the coming of Jesus into their midst as he travels toward Jerusalem (see 11:29; 12:1, 54). At base, Luke keeps the focus on Jesus’ journey as well as on the possibility of his calling more disciples and setting out his expectations for them.⁶³ To achieve this, Luke abruptly takes Jesus out of the Sabbath gathering and places him on the road. The Joseph Smith Translation, showing an awareness of the difficulty, offers a better transition to what follows: “And when he had finished these sayings, he departed thence” (JST 14:25; see the Notes on 9:51; 10:38; 11:53; 17:11; 18:35; 19:28).

63. Green, *Luke*, 564.

he turned: This sort of notation about Jesus’ small actions points to an eyewitness memory of this scene (see also 9:55; 10:23; 18:40; 22:61; 23:28; John 8:6–8; the Notes on 7:9; 7:44).

14:26 *If any man come to me:* Beginning with this verse, one reads of “counting the cost” of discipleship. This set of sayings about discipleship is the third of four in Luke’s Gospel (see 9:23–27, 57–62; 18:28–30). Usually, they are paired with Jesus’ predictions of his coming death (see 9:22, 44; 18:31–33). Incidentally, the masculine cast of Jesus’ saying is inclusive, embracing both men and women.⁶⁴ Significantly, the Joseph Smith Translation makes important additions that clarify Jesus’ intentions (see the Notes on 14:30; 14:34; and below).

hate: Here the Savior seems to take up his topic by hyperbole, that is, by overstating the case so that his point will be clear and memorable. Further, here the verb “to hate” (Greek *miseō*) has to do chiefly with turning against whatever distracts a person from his or her primary loyalties (see 16:13; Matt. 6:24).⁶⁵

father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters: A typical household or family, this description includes the nuclear family that shares a home, even in the modern Middle East. Hence, it embraces all with whom a person shares a close relationship inside a home. Immediately at the end of this listing, the Joseph Smith Translation adds “or husband,” indicating that Jesus’ words are also, and substantially, aimed at married women who, in his society, are brought into the husband’s home and family (see JST 14:26).⁶⁶ In essence, Jesus is not souring family ties but simply framing the question whether those links should stand on more enduring ground than a person’s links to him. The issue revolves around a person’s life consecrated to the Savior and his purposes, within which family ties become stronger and more meaningful, as Jesus’ following words will demonstrate (see the Notes on 4:38; 6:48; 18:20; the Analysis on 11:14–28).⁶⁷

his own life also: Jesus now challenges the most precious of possessions as the seat of loyalty, a person’s life. In effect, he challenges a person’s sense of self-preservation as a proper response in the light of ultimate choices, a meaning that the Joseph Smith Translation underlines when it adds at this

64. Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §§3)138 ,(3)136 ,134).

65. *TDNT*, 4:686–87, 690–91.

66. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 368.

67. Balla, *Child-Parent Relationship*, 116, 127, 136; Terryl L. Givens, “‘Lightning Out of Heaven’: Joseph Smith and the Forging of Community,” *BYU Speeches of the Year 2005–2006* (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 2006), 3–4, 7–8.

point, “or in other words, is afraid to lay down his life for my sake” (JST 14:26; see the Note on 9:24).

cannot be my disciple: In the first of three identical statements that summarize the main challenges of becoming a consecrated follower—family concerns, lack of commitment, and worries over property and goods (see 14:27, 33)—Jesus flags the impossibility of facing the vicissitudes that go with membership in his kingdom without total commitment, much as he does in his saying about a camel squeezing through the eye of a needle (see 18:25). Each of the three statements appears at the end of a Christ-centered requirement, set off prominently by the JST addition to this verse, “or in other words, is afraid to lay down his life for *my* sake” (JST 14:26; emphasis added).

14:27 *bear his cross:* Jesus’ allusions point, first, to the practice of a condemned person carrying the crosspiece on which he will be hung and, second, to his own death, thus centering the Atonement firmly as the anchor for one’s discipleship and introducing a sense of inevitability into the goals of the disciple (see the Note on 9:23; also D&C 112:14). Said another way, a disciple must be willing to give up all (see the Notes on 18:22; 18:27).

come after me: The sense is “walk behind me,” that is, to become a disciple who possesses a “self-commitment . . . which breaks all other ties.”⁶⁸

cannot be my disciple: To this second and same declaration (see 14:26, 33) the Joseph Smith Translation adds words of Jesus that acknowledge the mental and emotional struggles that people will face both during and after they make the decision to follow the Savior at all hazards: “Wherefore, settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you” (JST 14:28; also 21:14).

14:28 *a tower:* Though the term (Greek *pyrgos*) regularly denotes a tower in a defensive wall, here it carries the meaning of a private structure—“which of you [individuals]”—but, because of its cost, not one that simply stands as a watchtower in a field or vineyard. The word seems to point to a tower-like home of several stories.⁶⁹ If Jesus is referring to the recent erection of an important structure, he may have in mind Herod’s residence in Jerusalem, built on a foundation abandoned by his father, whose three opulent towers are renowned across the ancient world—Hippicus, Phasaël, and Mariamme.⁷⁰

68. *TDNT*, 1:213; Marshall, *Luke*, 593; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:569.

69. *TDNT*, 6:955.

70. Josephus, *B.J.* 5.4.2–3 (§§142–71); Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1065.

sitteth not down first: For some of Jesus’ followers, such as Peter and his partners, the response to Jesus’ call is instantaneous and complete, even though they do not know all the outcomes (see 5:10–11). But for others, Jesus acknowledges the mental and emotional reflecting that will need to take place before they commit themselves wholly to him and his kingdom (see the Note on 14:27; JST 14:28).

counteth the cost: Although the expression on the surface ties to the simple act of anticipating a major expense, on another level Jesus asks his hearers to count the cost of coming after him with full purpose of heart. The question embraces more than a simple calculation; rather, it is one of total commitment.

14:29 is not able to finish: Jesus’ words capture the main point: for the one who undertakes a life consecrated to him, completion of this lifetime commitment stands uppermost (see the Note on 14:30).

all that behold it begin to mock him: Though this expression features the public response because all can see the incomplete structure and thus the failed purpose, on a metaphorical level the mocking is generally kept private by persons who are aware of an individual’s announced but failed discipleship.

14:30 not able to finish: The repetition of words from 14:29 adds emphasis to Jesus’ point. Further, the Joseph Smith Translation draws in clearly and forcefully the link to discipleship when it adds at this juncture, “And this he said, signifying there should not any man follow him, unless he was able to continue” (JST 14:31).

14:31 what king: Jesus now pushes the analogy into the realm of royalty, although his prior saying about building a tower may allude to the building activities of King Herod (see the Note on 14:28). To be sure, none in his audience will ever be involved in the kind of decision making that a king goes through. But their lives, both as potential soldiers—Jews are exempt but the Gentiles in Jesus’ audience are not⁷¹—and as landowners, whose crops may be confiscated for an army or whose land may be fought over, will be impacted by a king’s decision to go to war.

sitteth not down first: Jesus’ repetition of this expression (see 14:28) brings ballast to his point about the mental and emotional commitment that underlies full and complete discipleship (see the Notes on 14:27, 28).

14:32 Or else: Jesus unlocks his point that, without sufficient forethought and resources, a person will fail in pursuing his or her purposes. In the deep creases of discipleship, where one’s commitment is tested again and

71. Schürer, *History*, 1:272–73, 362–63; 2:474–75; 3:22, 120–21.

again, personal planning and personal resources such as faith and determination allow one to succeed.

sendeth an embassy: The abstract noun (Greek *presbeia*), which bears the meaning of embassy, here points to ambassadors or official representatives.⁷² It is worth noting that the verb (Greek *apostellō*) is the same as that in 14:17 and has to do with sending an authorized representative; such a sense underlies the meaning of the office of Apostle (see the Notes on 6:3; 9:2; 14:17).⁷³

14:33 *all that he hath:* The sweeping character of Jesus' declaration lies in the literal meaning of this expression: "all his goods" or "all his property," a point that he will reinforce in his later encounter with "a certain ruler" (18:18).

he cannot be my disciple: This third and final declaration (see 14:26, 27) is followed, in the Joseph Smith Translation, by an extended statement from Jesus to the effect that Moses and the prophets point to him as the source of eternal life. The addition bridges deftly between Jesus' specifics about discipleship and those about salt. Presumably, the people who question Jesus in this scene stand outside the Twelve: "Then certain of them came to him, saying, Good Master, we have Moses and the prophets, and whosoever shall live by them, shall he not have life? And Jesus answered, saying, Ye know not Moses, neither the prophets; for if ye had known them, ye would have believed on me; for to this intent they were written. For I am sent that ye might have life. Therefore, I will liken it unto salt which is good" (JST 14:35–36). The portrait of the Old Testament as "Moses and the prophets" arises only in Luke (see 16:29; 24:27; also Acts 26:22), making this JST addition consistent with Luke's style. Significantly, Jesus' reference to "Moses and the prophets" as prophetic sources for his anticipated work matches the wider claim that "all the holy prophets" spoke of the coming Messiah (see Jacob 4:4; Mosiah 13:33). Paul's observation that the mystery of Christ has remained hidden in God from the beginning has more to do with the eye of faith than with God hiding Jesus before his arrival on earth (see Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:26; 4:3–4; also Rom. 11:25; 16:25; Col. 2:2–3). The declaration, "I am sent that ye might have life," rests close to Jesus' words in John's Gospel, though not identical: "I am come that ye might have life" (John 10:10). Other sayings in Luke resemble those in John, hinting at a shared body of information (see 10:16, 21–22; 12:8–9; the Analysis on 10:21–24).

72. BAGD, 706; Marshall, *Luke*, 594.

73. BAGD, 98; *TDNT*, 1:398–406.

14:34 *Salt is good:* In an apparent sudden shift in topic, Jesus turns to a discussion of the character of salt. The Joseph Smith Translation softens the sudden switch by adding an entire paragraph before Jesus' saying on salt: "Then certain of them came to him, saying, Good master, we have Moses and the prophets, and whosoever shall live by them, shall he not have life? And Jesus answered, saying, Ye know not Moses, neither the prophets; for if ye had known them ye would have believed on me; for to this intent they were written. For I am sent that ye might have life. Therefore, I will liken it unto salt which is good" (JST 14:35–36). This addition offers a completely different setting for Jesus' saying on salt. In a different vein, certain sacrifices require salt (see Lev. 2:13; Ezek. 43:24), thus bringing salt within the patterns of Israelite worship; and salt, as the most important of preservatives, comes to symbolize covenants between individuals and between a person and God (see Num. 18:19; 2 Chron. 13:5).⁷⁴ Jesus' reference to salt, therefore, draws strong and vibrant covenantal dimensions into his discussion about discipleship. And modern scripture affirms this covenantal sense (see D&C 101:39–40). Moreover, salt ties back to Jesus' story about the supper because, as a highly desired flavoring agent, it has to do with table fellowship, extending even to table fellowship with God.⁷⁵

if the salt have lost his savour: Jesus' statement has generated much discussion about how salt, a stable chemical compound of sodium and chlorine, can lose its taste. No easy answer appears. The salt that comes to the tables of Jesus' contemporaries is gathered from the edges of swamps and the shore of the Dead Sea, where it is left as a byproduct of evaporation. This salt naturally carries impurities which cannot be separated out but remain in the salt. When the salt is dissolved, of course, only the impurities remain.⁷⁶ Another observation may be relevant. One source for salt, less pure, lies at the south end of the Dead Sea in a formation called Mount Sodom where layers of salt three meters deep appear at the surface of the ground. These salt layers are infused with soils and other impurities which make it unfit for foods but leave it suitable for fertilizing purposes.⁷⁷ We cannot know whether either of these circumstances or locales is in Jesus' mind. But his memorable image is so strong that it comes into modern

74. *TDNT*, 1:228–29; *TDOT*, 8:331–33; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 191–92.

75. *TDNT*, 1:228, n. 3; *TDOT*, 1:333; Homer, *Iliad* 9.214; Plato, *Timaeus* 60E.

76. Jeremias, *Parables*, 168–69.

77. Aviva Bar-Am and Yisrael Shalem, *Israel's Southern Landscapes* (Safed, Israel: Yisrael Shalem, 1995), 204.

scripture as the opposite of enlightenment (see D&C 103:9–10). In another vein, the verb translated “to lose savor” (Greek *mōrainō*) means at base “to be foolish”⁷⁸ but in its Hebrew adjectival form (*tāpēl*) carries the senses of “insipid” or “tasteless” (see Job 6:6; Lam. 2:14; D&C 101:39–40).⁷⁹

14:35 *for the land*: Salt, in proper portions and when sown onto the beds of certain plants, can act as a fertilizing agent and thus aids the growth and life of the plants.⁸⁰ In this connection, Jesus on one occasion calls his disciples “the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13), an apparent allusion to this use of salt. Of course, when too much salt is sown onto the soil, it renders the ground sterile, as in the effort to sow the soil with salt in and around the rebellious town of Shechem (see Judg. 9:45; also Deut. 29:23; Jer. 17:6; Zeph. 2:9).⁸¹

***for the dunghill*:** Jesus’ words capture an apparently common but otherwise undocumented practice—at least in Palestine, though it is known from Egypt—of scattering salt on manure piles as an aid to fertilizing, before the dung is spread across fields and gardens.⁸²

***He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*:** Jesus ties off his remarks by repeating what he says when ending the parable of the sower. In the earlier context, Jesus’ point has to do with hearing and obeying (see the Note on 8:8). Here the meaning is the same, and is aimed at both long-time disciples and disciples who recently begin to follow him. Those who truly hear Jesus’ words about consecrated commitment, and respond fully and totally, will not be cast off as useless salt.

Analysis

When the Savior turns his attention to salt at the end of his discussion on discipleship, he creates a thunderclap. How so? Because the change of subject is abrupt (see 14:34). Further, salt stands as a most vivid symbol of life and death, of flourishing and fading. In addition, salt is the customary companion to a host of sacrifices and represents a needed and fundamental substance of covenants struck between individuals and entered into by God and his worshipers (see Lev. 2:13; Num. 18:19; Ezek. 43:24; 2 Chr. 13:5).

78. BAGD, 533.

79. BDB, 1074; *TDOT*, 15:741–44; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1068–69.

80. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1069.

81. The sowing of Carthage with salt by the Romans appears to be a modern fiction. See R. T. Ridley, “To Be Taken with a Pinch of Salt: The Destruction of Carthage,” *Classical Philology* 81, no. 2 (1986): 140–46.

82. Marshall, *Luke*, 596–97.

Focusing first on salt as a symbol of life and death, this dimension presents itself in salt's ability to change the taste of simple foods, a mere pinch making them more delectable, as will doubtless be the case at the banquet that Jesus pictures (see 14:16–24). But if too much salt makes its way into foods, they become foul and inedible. Similarly, salt carries a like impact “for the land” (14:35). In limited and proper portions, it acts as a stimulant to growth for certain plants, effectively as a fertilizer.⁸³ Its presence, therefore, in “the dunghill” should not surprise us, for it will act as an enlivening agent for plant life. On the other hand, when salt is sown too abundantly across a field, the ground becomes sterile and unproductive, at least until the rains rinse it out of the soil. Hence, the mutinous town of Shechem is sown with salt so that nothing would grow there (see Judg. 9:45).

Moving into the spiritual realm, salt forms a natural symbol for covenant relationships. How so? Because, as with foods, salt in proper metaphorical proportions enhances the flavor and the sweetness of one's agreements with others. In contrast, when lacking in salt, speaking symbolically, the flavor of a covenant becomes dull and insipid. What is worse, when salt is sown against a covenant in large amounts, as when the covenant is breached, the quality and strength of the agreement withers and dies, leaving the covenant lifeless. In this light, then, salt represents a natural indicator of the flavor of our life of consecration, of our willingness to stand as a disciple.

Moreover, salt is a reminder of indestructibility.⁸⁴ The saltiness of salt does not change. A person can dissolve it, but the taste permeates the dissolving agent, whether water or wine. In its solid state, it always keeps its essential flavor. Even in its diminished state, when “men cast it out” (14:35), the fundamental character of salt remains. Hence, on a metaphorical plane, it stands for the indestructibility and consistency that are to frame and give eternal meaning to our discipleship to the Savior.

In another vein, because salt makes meals more flavorful, Jesus' pointer to this substance also brings his hearers inside the home where people enjoy their meals. By doing so, he continues his focus on the home, a theme that has been running throughout this chapter (see the introduction to this chapter and the Analysis on 14:7–11 and 14:15–24). Thus, deftly and subtly, by hinting at a common home scene, Jesus adorns salt with meaning that reflects the loyalties and shared joys within a family and leads directly to the loyalties and shared joys of discipleship.

83. Marshall, *Luke*, 597.

84. *TDNT*, 4:838.

Indirectly, this connection responds in part to the tension between loyalties to family members and loyalty to the Savior: “If any man come unto me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters . . . he cannot be my disciple” (14:26). The Joseph Smith Translation adds “or husband” in an apparent effort to balance the reference to one’s wife and to underscore a wife’s loyalties to her husband’s family when she marries. Beyond this, Jesus burrows inside a person’s most deeply held loyalties, those to family, and effectively declares that loyalty to him ultimately stands on a higher peak (see the Analysis on 9:23–27). Such a lofty requirement, of course, does not undercut his concern for families, which shows up often, but simply gives loyalty to him its proper celestial profile. Besides, the verb “to hate” (Greek *miseō*) here carries a strong hint of hyperbole, that is, of overstating the case so that his point will be clear and memorable. Moreover, in this context “to hate” concerns turning against whatever competes for a person’s highest loyalties (see 16:13; Matt. 6:24).⁸⁵

This concern, in Jesus’ listing, stands as the first of three main challenges to becoming a consecrated follower—family worries, lack of commitment, and troubles over property and goods (see 14:26, 27, 33). Resolution does not come easily. And his notations about the mental calculations of the landowner and king—“sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost” and “sitteth not down first, and consulteth” (14:28, 31)—point sharply in this direction. Remarkably, the Joseph Smith Translation adds an expression from Jesus that undergirds this notion of mental and emotional weighing: “Wherefore, settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach and command you” (JST 14:28). Plainly, Jesus knows that he is asking a lot from followers and conveys his sensitivity to their dilemmas: “whosoever . . . forsaketh not all . . . cannot be my disciple” (14:33). On one level, Jesus’ words expect that many will declare themselves as his disciples and then will abandon their commitment, or covenant, because of the high cost. Such persons are therefore as “salt [that] have lost his savour” and are, in his parlance, “neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill” (14:34–35).

But his words find compelling continuity with what he discusses at the Sabbath meal with his host and the other guests.⁸⁶ For there he requires that they change how they see themselves relative to others, not seeking honors but seeking humility (see 14:7–11). In addition, he demands that

85. *TDNT*, 4:686–87, 690–91.

86. Green, *Luke*, 563–64.

they turn their minds and hearts in a totally different direction, seeking out “the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind” and forgetting their old friends and associates who can do favors for them in recompense (14:12–14).

However, would-be disciples do not possess the luxury of taking a long time to make up their minds. The fact that Jesus is moving, is passing through towns and villages, means that a person cannot dally. The choice cannot wait long. More to the point, the story about the king confronting an enemy army that far outnumbers his own, and the almost immediate need to resolve the conflict, bring forward the necessity of making a decision about discipleship in proper time (see 14:31–32).