

Luke 14 • Coming to Terms with Christ

Introduction

In the course of each person's life they are going to come to a decision as to whether they will accept Christ on His terms or reject Him according to their own. It is notable that since Christ Himself is the Word, the most evident proof of accepting Him on His terms is if it takes place in accordance with the Word. This is a very clear issue for the unsaved who have never embraced God's Word and ways, but there is another problematic group with those who say they seek God's Word and ways but who don't actually live according to them. In every case, near or far, the issue most often comes down to whether we will accept and live by His terms or live in rebellion in our attempt to ignore or redefine them.

¹It happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread, they were watching Him closely. ²And there in front of Him was a man suffering from dropsy. ³And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" ⁴But they kept silent. And He took hold of him and healed him, and sent him away. ⁵And He said to them, "Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?" ⁶And they could make no reply to this.

[Read v.1-6]

Q: As the chapter opens, what is the role Christ finds Himself in?

A: He is Christ the guest. He is not an uninvited visitor.

Q: But why are those at the meal characterized as "watching Him closely"?

A: They have not invited Him for any other reason than to find some kind of fault either by His actions or words.

Q: What is particularly important about the Sabbath where the Old Testament was concerned?

A: It was the sign of the covenant. Just as the sign of the covenant with Noah was the rainbow, and the sign of the covenant with Abraham was circumcision, the visible sign of adherence to the covenant through Moses was to keep the Sabbath.

Q: What are all the references in these verses to the Law?

1. In attendance were Pharisees and lawyers. (v.1-2)
2. Jesus asks regarding the man's needs, "...It is lawful..." (v.2)
3. Jesus answers the point of law they refuse to answer. (v.5)

Q: What did it really mean for someone at that time to suffer from "dropsy"?

A: At that time it was an incurable disease.

Point: In chapter 4 Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath "possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon". In chapter 13 He healed a woman on the Sabbath "who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit". Here it is "a man suffering from dropsy", what is perceived to be a purely physical illness. Their observance of the Law had become so perverted that it would not allow either a person's spiritual or physical need to be addressed.

Q: What is the greater issue behind Christ's question, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?"

A: It goes to the heart of the Law which was intended to show one's love both for God and others.

Q: How does Jesus reveal the true source of their problem in his examples of helping a son or an ox in trouble on the Sabbath?

A: Their problem is that they will make an exception for themselves or their personal property, but they will not make a similar allowance to show their love for others.

Application: There are those who only invite Christ and the Law in as long as they can keep them on their own terms. In reality, the quality of our righteousness is betrayed by how we treat others.

⁷And He began speaking a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table, saying to them, ⁸“When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, ⁹and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this man,’ and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place. ¹⁰But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you. ¹¹For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

[Read v.7-11]

Q: How is this issue about seating actually an extension of the previous discussion about what is lawful on the Sabbath?

A: It shows the degree to which they have elevated themselves over others. Their observance of the Law was not only wrong in the way they dealt with others, it was wrong in how they wanted others to deal with them.

Q: Why should this teaching have already been very familiar to them?

A: As the reputed experts of the day in the Law, they would have known it was a variation of God’s Word given in Proverbs.

*Do not claim honor in the presence of the king,
And do not stand in the place of great men;
For it is better that it be said to you, “Come up here,”
Than for you to be placed lower in the presence of the prince,
Whom your eyes have seen.
— Proverbs 25:6–7*

Q: Extra bonus points if you get this one: Where else was this standard published which was of particular importance to these experts in the Law?

A: In the Talmud, what Jesus ultimately calls “traditions of men”, by which they gave equal force to the Law it states, “whosoever shall humble himself, the holy blessed God shall exalt him; and whosoever shall exalt himself, the holy blessed God shall humble him.”

Point: *Jesus is not attempting to make them accountable to a new standard, but illustrating how far short they are failing even by their own. They not only elevated their selves above the standard of God’s Word, but even their own additional rules and traditions. They made themselves the center of everything.*

Q: How is this particularly ironic considering that they have invited Christ to dine with them?

A: Instead of exalting Him to the highest place of honor in their home and hearts, they revealed the quality of their own spirituality in exalting their selves over Him, even attempting to trap Him in something they could use against Him.

*Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.
— James 4:10*

Application: *There are those who only wrap themselves in spiritual things as long as it keeps the focus on them. The quality of our spirituality can be measured in the proportion to which we give way to Christ at the expense of self.*

¹²And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. ¹³But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means

[Read v.12-14]

Q: How is this a particularly powerful statement directly addressing their refusal to allow people to be healed on the Sabbath such as the man with dropsy?

A: Not only have they refused to meet the legitimate needs of others which fulfills the greater requirement of the Law to love others, but they are really only interested in how this meets their perceived need to elevate their self. They not only refuse to pay their debt in the Law to others, they actually seek to be paid themselves on top of that.

to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Q: What might be the greater spiritual issue at work in the contrast to the earthly rich of the day who invited Jesus to this meal versus the needs of the earthly poor?

A: By allowing the needs of the earthly poor, crippled, lame, and blind to go unaddressed, the earthly rich are effectively rendering themselves spiritually poor, crippled, lame, and blind.

Q: What is the payment which the spiritually rich seek?

A: That which comes at “the resurrection of the righteous” is going to be the kind of riches approved by God for having come from a right heart of love for others more than for self.

Application: How might this particular teaching alter your definition of biblical “fellowship”?

Overall Application To This Point:

- Do you keep God’s Word according to your terms or Christ’s? The answer is in the degree it is applied with love for others.
- Do you see the things of God as an opportunity to promote yourself? The answer is in the degree to which you elevate yourself over others.
- Do you only give in order to get in return? The answer is in the degree you are willing to wait for repayment in eternity rather than in this life.

If we have truly invited Christ the Guest into our life for the purpose of accepting Him on His terms instead of our own, one of the primary proofs will be in a decreased love for self in direct proportion to a rise in love for others.

[Read v.15-24]

¹⁵When one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this, he said to Him, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”

¹⁶But He said to him, “A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many; ¹⁷and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come; for everything is ready now.’

¹⁸“But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.’

¹⁹“Another one said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.’

²⁰“Another one said, ‘I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.’

²¹“And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, ‘Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’

²²“And the slave said, ‘Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’

²³“And the master said to the slave, ‘Go

Q: What do feasts like this represent repeatedly throughout Scripture?

A: They are the final celebration of salvation, probably best illustrated in “the marriage supper of the Lamb”. Jesus is using an earthly feast as a springboard for teaching about the ultimate feast.

Q: Why did the guests not automatically know the time when they should arrive at the feast? Why did they have to be invited at the very hour of the feast?

A: In those days a host planned a feast and told the guests the day it would take place, but not the hour. They would provide a commitment to come in advance because he needed to know how many were coming so he could butcher enough meat and prepare all the food. His servants would then go out near the hour of the feast and tell them it was ready.

Point: It is important to understand that all the guests had **ALREADY** agreed in advance to come but backed out. It is not like they are hearing this invitation for the first time. They know that the feast is coming.

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”

— Matthew 24:36

Q: What is overwhelmingly ironic in the assertion, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God”?

A: Jesus is the Bread of Heaven.

out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled. ²⁴For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.’”

“I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.”

— John 6:51

Q: What might be another irony when it comes to the teaching of bread and those at this meal, the lawyers and Pharisees?

A: Bread being a repeated biblical metaphor for teaching, Jesus specifically warned against the “bread” – the teaching – of this very group.

And Jesus said to them, “Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” They began to discuss this among themselves, saying, “He said that because we did not bring any bread.” But Jesus, aware of this, said, “You men of little faith...How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

— Matthew 16:6–12

Q: How has Christ’s position changed in these verses compared to those leading up to it?

A: Previously Christ spoke from the position of “guest”; here He speaks from the position of “host”, or the master of the dinner.

Q: What is wrong with the one seeking an excuse for having just purchased land? (v.18)

A: He represents those who are overtaken by the cares of this world to the point of covetousness.

Q: What is wrong with the one seeking an excuse for having just purchased oxen? (v.19)

A: He represents those who have been overtaken by the deceitfulness of riches.

Q: What is wrong with the one seeking an excuse for having just married? (v.20)

A: He represents those who have been overtaken by the pleasures of this life.

Application: Notice that no one says they do not want to go, but that they all want to go on their own terms. It is an illustration of v.11, “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Q: What might be a lesson for us in the fact that the messengers unsuccessfully attracted those to whom the master initially sent them?

A: Realistically not everyone with whom we share the Gospel will respond. Our responsibility is to provide the message regardless of what is done with the message.

Q: How might the command to invite the poor and sick have been fulfilled by Jesus to the consternation of those present?

A: Those purporting to be the religious elite in Jesus’ day such as the lawyers and Pharisees at this meal were the most well-off in almost every earthly respect. This dinner is but one of many attempts on Jesus’ part to reach out to them. Having overwhelmingly rejected Him, He was

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accepted to a much larger degree by the lower classes of the day, people the Pharisees generally looked down upon because they measured spirituality according to one's material wealth.

Q: How was the command to go out into the highways and so on fulfilled?

A: Having been rejected in principle by the majority of Israel, He goes to the Gentiles.

Q: What does every single person in this parable have in common?

A: They were all invited. They either responded on their own terms or according to the Master's.

Q: So what is the answer to the opening statement, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God"? (v.15)

A: Blessed, yes, provided that Christ the Bread of Life is accepted on His terms and we do not allow ourselves to be sidetracked by the things of this life, thus sacrificing our bid for the things of the next life.

[Read v.25-33]

²⁵Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, ²⁶"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

²⁸"For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, ³⁰saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

³¹"Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³²Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.

Q: Whereas Jesus was previously cast in the roles of Guest and Host, how is He now designated?

A: Master.

Point: In this chapter we have a progressive process of inviting Christ in and ultimately coming into full submission to Him alone.

Q: What is the key phrase repeated three times in these verses which reveal the greater spiritual teaching that is being presented not just here, but this entire chapter?

1. "...he cannot be My disciple". (v.26)
2. "...cannot be My disciple." (v.27)
3. "...none of you can be My disciple..." (v.33)

Application: In all the teaching in this chapter Jesus is providing the definition of what it takes to not just be a convert, but a disciple. In His teachings it is repeatedly contrasted against those who love themselves more than others and love the things of this world more than the things of Christ.

Q: How might this be contrasted to the situation described in the Parable of the Feast?

A: When it comes to salvation, God invites everybody; but when it comes to discipleship, He wants only those who will pay the price. Jesus is the Host at "salvation's supper", but He is the Master of our spiritual walk.

Application: After we "come in" and find salvation (v.23), we must "come to" Him for our cross (v.26), and then "come after" Him in obedience to His Word and ways. (v.27)

Q: Just for fun...the examples of the builder and the king are most often suggested to apply to us personally. What might they mean if the builder and the king represented Christ instead?

A: Christ the Builder knows the cost and as such we are assured through faith in Him that everything will be completed; Christ the King knows the coming battle and how it will end and as such we are assured through faith in Him that we will overcome.

Application: *We can only come to Christ on His terms alone.*

³⁴“Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? ³⁵It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

[Read v.34-35]

Q: How does this place the final exclamation point on the overall teaching of this chapter?

A: We must not only come to Christ on His terms, but live this life on His terms. It is the only way to truly be spiritually successful