

Luke 14:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

Analysis

And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. This verse is the second excuse in Jesus' parable of the Great Supper, illustrating rejection of God's kingdom invitation. The Greek *ezēgoras* (ἐζήγορας) means "I have bought," indicating a completed transaction. Five yoke of oxen (ten animals) represents significant wealth—such a purchase would cost approximately 500-1000 denarii (over two years' wages for a laborer).

The phrase *poreuomai dokimasai auta* (πορεύομαι δοκιμάσαι αὐτά, "I am going to test them") reveals the excuse's absurdity. No shrewd businessman would purchase oxen without first testing them. The urgency implied by "I go" suggests a manufactured crisis. The request *erōtō se, eche me parētēmenon* (ἐρωτῶ σε, ἔχε με παρητημένον, "I beg you, have me excused") uses polite language masking hard refusal.

This excuse represents the priority of business, commerce, and economic advancement over God's kingdom. The oxen symbolize productivity, investment, and financial security—legitimate goods that become idols when elevated above God. The man's decision to "test" his oxen rather than accept the invitation reveals misplaced priorities. His excuse exposes how prosperity and the pursuit of wealth can blind people to eternal realities.

Historical Context

In first-century agrarian Palestine, oxen were essential capital investments for farming. A single ox could cost 50-100 denarii, making five yoke (ten oxen) an enormous purchase indicating substantial wealth. Wealthy landowners used multiple ox teams for plowing large fields; five yoke could plow approximately 100 acres. This detail in Jesus' parable would immediately communicate to His audience that this excuse-maker was a person of considerable means.

Jewish custom dictated that purchasing livestock required careful inspection beforehand (Deuteronomy 25:13-16 emphasized honest dealing). The claim of needing to "test" oxen after purchase reveals either dishonest dealing or a fabricated excuse. The audience would recognize the absurdity—no one bought oxen sight unseen.

The parable's context (Luke 14:1-24) occurs at a Pharisee's dinner, where Jesus addresses the religious elite about the kingdom of God. His audience consisted of wealthy, influential people who prided themselves on Torah observance. This excuse would strike close to home—many of them prioritized business expansion and wealth accumulation while claiming devotion to God. Jesus exposes how the pursuit of prosperity, even through legitimate means, can become the very thing that excludes people from God's kingdom.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What legitimate pursuits or responsibilities do we use as excuses to delay or avoid full commitment to Christ?
2. How does the pursuit of financial security and business success compete with our response to God's invitation?
3. In what ways do we convince ourselves that our priorities are urgent when they're actually manufactured excuses?
4. How should this parable shape our understanding of the cost of discipleship and kingdom priorities?
5. What does this verse reveal about the danger of allowing good things (productivity, investment) to become ultimate things?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἕτερος εἶπεν Ζεύγη βοῶν ἡγόρασα πέντε καὶ
And another said yoke of oxen I have bought five And
G2532 G2087 G2036 G2201 G1016 G59 G4002 G2532

πορεύομαι δοκιμάσαι αὐτά· ἐρωτῶ σε ἔχε με
I go to prove them I pray thee have me
G4198 G1381 G846 G2065 G4571 G2192 G3165

παρητημένον
excused
G3868