

Luke 14:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

Analysis

And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. This third excuse in the Great Supper parable is the most absolute—he doesn't even request to be excused (parēteō, παραιτέω) as the previous two did. The Greek *gunaika egēma* (γυναῖκα ἔγημα, "I married a wife") uses the aorist tense indicating a recently completed action. His assertion *dia touto ou dunamai elthein* (διὰ τοῦτο οὐ δύναμαι ἔλθεῖν, "therefore I cannot come") claims absolute impossibility rather than inconvenience.

Yet Deuteronomy 24:5 exempted newlyweds from military service and business obligations for one year—but not from worship or religious duties. A wedding feast invitation would include the new wife, making this excuse particularly revealing. The man chose marital intimacy and domestic pleasure over divine invitation. This represents the third category of worldly attachment: after possessions (field) and productivity (oxen) comes personal relationships and sensual pleasure.

Jesus exposes how even the God-ordained institution of marriage can become an idol when it displaces proper priority to God's kingdom. This excuse carries particular force because it sounds legitimate—yet it reveals a heart that values human companionship above fellowship with God. The progression from polite excuses to blunt refusal shows increasing hardness of heart.

Historical Context

In first-century Judaism, marriage was highly valued and newly married men received special consideration under Mosaic law (Deuteronomy 20:7, 24:5). However, these exemptions applied to military campaigns and certain civic duties, not to religious obligations or social invitations. A proper wedding feast would last seven days and include the entire community—the new wife would naturally accompany her husband to such events.

The cultural context makes this excuse particularly offensive. In Greco-Roman and Jewish culture, banquet invitations were extended to households, not merely individuals. The man's claim that marriage prevents attendance is therefore both culturally absurd and theologically revealing. Jesus' original hearers would recognize this as a deliberate rejection, not a legitimate conflict. The excuse exposes how personal desire can masquerade as duty.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. In what ways do legitimate, God-given relationships (marriage, family) become excuses for avoiding full devotion to Christ?
2. How does this verse challenge the tendency to compartmentalize life into 'sacred' and 'secular' spheres, exempting personal life from kingdom demands?
3. What does the progression from polite excuses to blunt refusal reveal about the trajectory of a heart that prioritizes earthly attachments over God?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἕτερος	εἶπεν	Γυναῖκα	ἔγημα	καὶ	διὰ	τοῦτο
And	another	said	a wife	I have married	And	therefore	
G2532	G2087	G2036	G1135	G1060	G2532	G1223	G5124
οὐ	δύναμαι	ἐλθεῖν					
I cannot		come					
G3756	G1410	G2064					

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 24:5 (Parallel theme): When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken.

1 Corinthians 7:33 (Parallel theme): But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.