

Session 6: The Bride in Matthew 22

I. Jesus' Two Triumphant Entries

- a. In this session and the next, we will continue to examine key New Testament passages that address the bride of Christ. More specifically, in these two sessions we will look at two parables of Jesus which He spoke during the last week of His walk on the earth—The Parable of the Marriage Feast (Mt. 22:1-14) and The Parable of the Ten Virgins (Mt. 25:1-13). Both of these teachings from Christ Himself offer valuable insights into the bride of Christ and the Lord's expectations about the bride making herself ready. Before we dig into the details of The Parable of the Marriage Feast, let's set the context in which these two parables appear and how they relate to Jesus' second coming.

1. The context in which these parables are spoken is important to understand as the setting adds great significance to the words of Christ recorded in these parables.

- a. Let's first remind ourselves from the last session about Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem when He returns at His second coming. In the last session, we spoke of Jesus second coming processional (Rev. 19:11-21). When Jesus returns, He will ride triumphantly on a white horse as He defeats every enemy who opposed Him and His purposes. After vanquishing His enemies, He will triumphantly enter to the accompaniment of much praise and adoration through the gates of Jerusalem and take His place on the throne of David so as to reign over the earth as King of kings and Lord of lords.
- b. Also riding on white horses, He will be accompanied by His mighty angels and the saints who made themselves ready during their life. As we saw clearly in the last session, as Revelation 19:7 tells us, the saints who accompany Christ are those who made themselves ready during the church age and more specifically during their life.
- c. The white horses on which Christ and His saints ride is significant for setting the context for our study in this session and the next. I will repeat a quote from John Walvoord that I shared in the last session,

[The triumphant entry] follows the pattern of a Roman triumphal procession. When a general returned from a successful campaign, he and his legions were granted the right to parade up the Via Sacra, the main street of Rome that led from the Forum to the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill. *Mounted on a white horse*, the general rode at the head of his troops, followed by the wagonloads of booty that he had taken from the conquered nation.ⁱ

- d. Christ along with His saints and angels riding on white horses is symbolic of their coming in triumph indicating that when this takes place, the battle will have been won and, accordingly, Christ's march through the land will be one of great victory and celebration. As we also stated, Christ's grand processional will be His marriage processional as He brings His bride to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Thus, his second coming processional will have a twofold purpose—that of a conquering king and of a loving Bridegroom.
- e. When Christ returns in His glorious second coming triumphal entry, the offer of salvation or to make oneself ready will be no more, just as the author of Hebrews wrote, "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered

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once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him" (Heb. 9:27-28).

- f. In other words, at the end of the church age, the invitation to make oneself ready as a bride for Christ will end. Those who accepted Christ's invitation to make themselves ready will enter into the fullness of their eternal destiny as the eternal wife of Christ. With that as the context for Christ's second coming, Christ's first triumphant entry is of utmost importance.

2. In His first triumphant entry, Christ came in humility inviting people to get ready for His second coming.

- a. As discussed, when Jesus returns, He will enter Jerusalem as a victorious King riding on a white horse. In great contrast, when Jesus triumphantly entered Jerusalem the first time for the last week of his earthly life before going to the cross, He came riding on a donkey. The donkey symbolizes Him coming in humility (Zech. 9:9) as a suffering servant preparing to give His life as a dowry to redeem His bride from the kingdom of darkness.
- b. During the week between His entry into Jerusalem to the shouts of "Hosanna in the highest" and His going to the cross to die for the sins of mankind, He taught, confronted, and ministered with an overriding theme of get ready for His second coming. As you glance through Matthew Chapters 21-25, you will notice that He went to the temple to cleanse it; He performed wonderful works of healing and ministry; He confronted the Jewish leadership so as to give them another opportunity to receive Him; He spoke to His disciples extensively about His second coming; and He called all to make themselves ready for His second coming. Included in His teaching about His second coming were the parables of the Marriage Feast and the Ten Virgins—both of which being about the bride making herself ready for His second coming.

3. The predominant theme of His teaching to His disciples during the last week of His earthly ministry was a call to get ready.

- a. The idea of getting ready for Christ's second coming is the theme of both the Parable of the Marriage Feast and the Parable of the Ten Virgins as well as the theme of the majority of the rest of His teaching to His disciples during His last week of ministry. These words of Jesus spoken during this last week summarize His call to readiness,

Therefore *be on the alert*, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, *he would have been on the alert* and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason *you also must be ready*; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom *his master finds so doing* when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,' and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 24:42-51).

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- b. There is a lot contained in this section of scripture, but for now notice the italicized phrases about being alert and ready for Christ's second coming.

4. The bride is given the church age to make herself ready for Christ's second coming.

- a. Summarizing the issue of readiness, when the bride is made ready in sufficient numbers, Christ will return in His grand processional concluding with His second triumphant entry into Jerusalem as King of kings and Lord of lords. When He returns, it will not be in respect to salvation but rather judgment and reward.
- b. However, when Christ entered Jerusalem in His first triumphant entry, He came with a great burden that His people wake up, recognize the day of their visitation, and devote themselves to getting ready for Him. Note this passage recorded in Luke that also took place as He entered Jerusalem that fateful week,

When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. "For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation." (Lk. 19:41-44)

- c. Likewise, He came with an invitation to readiness, and especially an invitation to His betrothed bride to make herself ready to be the eternal wife of the Lamb and to be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Therefore, the bride has been given the church age to make herself ready. For us individually, we are given our lifetime or until Christ returns—whichever comes first—to make ourselves ready.
- d. It is in this context that the Parable of the Marriage Feast and the Parable of the Ten Virgins appear in a prominent role in the book of Matthew. Let's devote the rest of this session to analyzing the Parable of the Marriage Feast and the next session to the Parable of the Ten Virgins.

II. The Parable of the Marriage Feast Explained

1. Let's begin our discussion by reviewing the text of the parable in order to gain understanding of what it is saying.

- a. The Parable of the Marriage Feast is recorded in Matthew 22:1-14. I have presented it below and included the verse references so as to help with our analysis of the text. It reads as follows,

22 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, 2 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.

3 "And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come.

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4 "Again he sent out other slaves saying, 'Tell those who have been invited, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.'" 5 "But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, 6 and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. 7 "But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire.

8 "Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy.

9 'Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.'

10 "Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests.

11 "But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, 12 and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And the man was speechless. 13 "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 "For many are called, but few are chosen." (Mt. 22:1-14)

- b. Beginning with verses 1 and 2, let's now walk through each section of the parable in an attempt to understand its meaning. In verse 2, Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for His son. Throughout the gospels, the kingdom is compared to different things. It is like a seed sown in a field, leaven that spreads imperceptibly, hidden treasure that must be discovered, a pearl of great price that is purchased, and a king who came to settle accounts. Central to the theme of this session, it is here compared to a wedding feast given by the heavenly Father for the eternal Son. Each of these comparisons highlight important principles about how the kingdom of heaven operates. As such, when Jesus compares the kingdom to a wedding for the king's son, He is making the point that there really will be a wedding and a marriage feast given for the Son.
- c. Even though we will discuss verses 11-14 in more detail in a moment, there is a point to be made now. Verses 11-14 refer to the end of the church age "when the king came in to look over the dinner guests". Thus, the marriage feast that Jesus referred to is the marriage supper of the Lamb which will take place following His return. Said differently, this parable refers to a real wedding and a real feast to be celebrated between the eternal Son and His followers; and, accordingly, the principles shared in the parable refer to real issues that must be seriously considered by us all.
- d. Continuing on in the parable, let's discuss who the king sent out to issue the invitations. On three different occasions, the king sent out slaves to invite people to the wedding feast (Mt. 22:3, 4, and 9). Of importance to our study, the New American Standard Bible translation uses the word "slaves" as noted here whereas the English Standard Version (ESV), New International Version (NIV), New King James (NKJV), and King James (KJV) all use the word "servants". The Greek word used here is *doulos* which literally means a slave in the lowest form of servitude. This word came to mean "one who gives himself up for the will of another".ⁱⁱ It is used of the apostle Paul to describe his service to the Lord, "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God" (Rom. 1:1). In the context of a servant of Christ, it means one who is free to serve Christ or not, but because of great love for Christ choose to surrender his or her life completely to serve Him. In doing so, they become much like a slave for Christ to do his bidding and His alone.

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- e. Therefore, the king sent out his bond-servants who had freely devoted their life for the king much like one who out of love for the king voluntarily became a slave to invite people to the marriage feast. This is important to understand because as forerunners we must become a truly committed bond servant—or slave to Christ—to invite people to the marriage supper of the Lamb.
- f. Moving on, there are three different invitations issued by the king's slaves. The first two went to those who had been invited previously suggesting that Jesus was speaking to the Jews both throughout the history of Israel and those who were alive during His earthly ministry. Confirming the first two invitations went to Israel, The New American Commentary on Matthew includes this explanation, "The people originally invited to the banquet clearly represent Israel."ⁱⁱⁱ Of importance, the first group "were unwilling to come" (Mt. 22:3) and the second "paid no attention and went on their way to his own farm, another to his business" (Mt. 22:4).
- g. Continuing to verse 6, we see that some of those who the slaves invited seized them, mistreated them, and even killed them. Thus, some who were invited were completely unwilling to come; others paid no attention to the invitation; and some opposed, mistreated, and even killed the servants of the king.
- h. Coming to verse 7, we see that the king sent his armies to destroy the murderers and set their city on fire. There is a twofold application of this verse. First, it refers to the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem by Roman armies; moreover, it refers to the second coming of Christ when He destroys the antichrist, the false prophet, and the kings of the earth and their kingdom. Blomberg in the New American Commentary on Matthew writes this about verse 7, "The Roman invasion of Jerusalem may be seen as a partial fulfillment of the principles enunciated here, even if Jesus had Judgment Day more prominently in mind."^{iv}
- i. In verse 8, Jesus tells His listeners that the wedding is ready but those invited were not worthy. There are two primary points to make here. First, the Lord was ready for the wedding of Christ to His bride even at the time of His resurrection; likewise, throughout the church age the wedding is ready but the bride was and is not yet ready. Second, verses 8-10 mark a transition in the parable in which the focus is no longer on Israel but the world. Here the third invitation is given and this time it is to as many as could be found—that is, to Jew and Gentile and lost and saved.
- j. In response to the slaves' invitations to as many as they could find, the wedding hall is filled with those who have been invited to the marriage feast. At this point, the king enters to examine the dinner guests. Most are dressed in proper wedding attire, but, of course, he discovers one not dressed in wedding clothes. The king coming to "look over the dinner guests" speaks of the judgment seat of Christ which will take place at the end of the age when the Lord will examine every believer to determine if they are clothed in proper wedding garments.
- k. While inspecting the dinner guests, the king sees a man not dressed in wedding clothes. The king addresses this man, greeting him with the word "friend". Understanding the word translated "friend" is important. The Greek word translated "friend" in this verse is *hetairos* which means: a comrade, mate, or partner. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* states that *hetairos* is used as a term to express a kind greeting and as such expresses comradeship.^v This Greek word is to be distinguished from *philos*, which is used by Jesus in John 15:15 as a term of endearment. In other words, the word used here for friend does not express a sincere friendship, but instead, is a general introductory greeting.^{vi}

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- i. Of course, this man had said “yes” to the invitation to attend the marriage feast, but had not put on wedding garments. All of the other attendees did clothe themselves in wedding clothes. Most likely, the king had provided the festive clothing necessary for the occasion which was the normal custom for royal festivities. Therefore, the man who was not properly attired was given the opportunity to put on wedding clothes but did not do so.
- m. When confronted by the king, the text says that the man was speechless. In other words, he was both shocked and had no defense for his lack of preparation. As a result, it is said that he was bound and cast into the outer darkness where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth. Because of the significance of the last two verses, we will explore them in the following section.

2. Understanding the meaning of “throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.”

- a. We pick up our analysis of this parable in verse 13. Beginning with verse 13, the remainder of the story is as follows:

13 "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 "For many are called, but few are chosen." (Mt. 22:13-14)

- b. Like we said earlier, the king had come into the banquet hall, saw the man not dressed in wedding clothes and sent his servants to bind the man hand and foot. Binding the man in such a way makes the powerful point that the man was helpless to stop the king’s servants from casting him out of the wedding hall. Previously, he was speechless when confronted by the king suggesting he had no defense for not having put on wedding clothes. He had somehow found his way into the wedding feast. He had either not known of the requirement to put on wedding clothes or he had known but chose not to put them on. In either case, he did not clothe himself properly for a royal wedding. As a result, he was bound hand and foot and cast out of the hall.

Outer Darkness

- c. Let’s next look at the phrase “outer darkness”. The man was cast into the outer darkness. This raises a question of where is the outer darkness? Many commentaries say he was cast into hell. For example, Blomberg in his commentary writes this,

So the king is understandably amazed and he rebukes this man with the distancing form of address, *hetaire* (friend), asking him why he has behaved as he has. The man offers no excuse (v. 12). Only imprisonment and punishment—eternal judgment—remain in store for such people (v. 13).^{vii}

- d. Because this is such an important phrase to understand, we will devote some time to analyze it. My interpretation of the phrase “throw him into the outer darkness” is as follows. The phrase “outer darkness” appears three times in the scriptures, all of which are in the book of Matthew. Other than the passage we are discussing, the two passages in which it appears are as follows:

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(Related to the healing of the Centurion's son) Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 8:10-12).

(Related to the Parable of the Talents) Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 25:28-30).

- e. It is important to note that all three of the places where the phrase "outer darkness" is used are in the context of a banquet. Looking first at Matthew 8:10-12, the word translated *recline* has a basic meaning of "lean back".^{viii} Additional definitions of the word are "of those reclining at a table and at feasts"^{ix} and "to recline at a table". Also, a footnote in my New American Standard Bible adds an explanation of the word *recline*, describing it as *dine*. Therefore, Matthew 8:10-12 is set in the context of a time of dining such as a dinner of some fashion.
- f. Although not specifically referenced as such, the Parable of the Talents is also set in the context of a banquet or feast. The man in this parable who went on a long journey was wealthy enough to have servants to whom he could entrust large sums of money. Those familiar with Jewish traditions say that most likely when a man of this stature returned home from his journey, there would be a banquet given for the man at his return. This suggests that this parable too is in the context of a banquet. Therefore, all three places where the phrase "outer darkness" appears are or very possibly could be in the context of a banquet.
- g. Now that we have established that all three passages in which "outer darkness" appears quite possibly are in the context of a banquet, let's look a little deeper at the literal meaning of the phrase "outer darkness". Literally, the phrase "outer darkness" means "darkness that is outside". The Complete Jewish Bible translation captures this meaning, "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him *outside in the dark!*' In that place people will wail and grind their teeth..." (Mt. 22:13, CJB). Thayer's Greek Lexicon notes this about the Greek word translated "outer": it refers to "the darkness outside the limits of the lighted palace".^x Another interesting point is that the Greek word translated "outer" is used 12 times in the Greek translation of the Old Testament in the book of Ezekiel. In these instances, it refers to the outside court or the outer court of the temple.^{xi}
- h. Another point about the outer darkness is that at that time like today most banquets were held at night. We see this illustrated in the Parable of the Ten Virgins in which the wedding feast took place at night. Of course, at that time in history, there were no electric street lights and very little lighting if any at all outside a banquet hall; therefore, it was dark outside the banquet hall.
- i. One more point about outer darkness. Several prophetic voices of this generation have spoken of the outer darkness as being a reference to the outer court of heaven or a lower level of heaven. For example, Rick Joyner in his book *The Final Quest* shares a prophetic encounter in which he was caught up to heaven. In his encounter, he was led on a journey from the lowest level of heaven to the highest. He wrote this concerning outer darkness, "When I was still not even halfway to the

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throne, what had been the indescribable glory of the first rank [*those in the lowest level of heaven*] now seemed to be the outer darkness in comparison to the glory of those I was now passing.”^{xii}

- j. Summarizing this information about “outer darkness”, we believe what is being stated in Matthew 22:13 is that the man not properly dressed in wedding clothes was cast out of the banquet hall where it was dark, not into hell. In this parable, this refers to the man being removed forcibly from the wedding hall and the marriage feast.

Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth

- k. Let’s next look at the phrase “weeping and gnashing of teeth”. As a complete phrase, “weeping and gnashing of teeth” appears in seven different verses in the New Testament (Mt. 8:12, 13:42, 13:50, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30; Lk. 13:28). As you look at each of these verses, you quickly see that some refer to the weeping and gnashing of teeth that will occur when one is thrown into hell (Mt. 13:42 and 13:50). Other references do not refer to being cast into hell. A clear example is Mt. 25:30 where in the Parable of the Talents the worthless slave was thrown into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. In this situation, to say this slave was thrown into hell, you would have to say that one is thrown into hell if they do not use the talent they have been given. This would be inconsistent with other places in the scriptures that state that one is born again through faith and faith alone.
- l. Therefore, let’s look a little deeper at the meaning of the words “weeping and gnashing of teeth”. “Weeping” is a word used to express very strong and intense emotions of great remorse of one being excluded from the place of blessing being spoken of in the specific passage in which it appears. In that context, weeping refers to an attitude of intense sorrow and mourning over what was lost. Gnashing of teeth is a phrase used to describe the grinding or striking together of the teeth in rage, pain or the misery of disappointment.^{xiii} It is a vivid representation of the misery of disappointed expectations.^{xiv} It denotes rage, anger, sorrow, or fear.
- m. Therefore, the phrase does not refer specifically to a particular place such as hell or outside a banquet hall in the darkness. Rather, it refers to an emotion deep within the heart of intense pain associated with being excluded from a particular blessing.
- n. Therefore, summarizing the use of this phrase in the parable of the Marriage Feast, when the person not properly dressed in wedding garments is cast outside of the banquet hall and the marriage feast into the darkness outside the hall, he experienced intense sorrow, fear, pain, and misery at the knowledge of what he had lost.

Many called, few chosen

- o. Now, let’s look at the last phrase in the passage recorded in verse 14, “For many are called, but few are chosen.” Let’s begin by looking at the definition of the word translated “called”. Since both “called” and “chosen” are the same Greek words used in Revelation 17:14 which we discussed in the last session, we will repeat much of what we shared about them in the last session. The Greek word translated “called” is *kletos*. Strong’s concordance defines this word as invited, appointed, or a saint.^{xv} Abbott-Smith Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament adds “called or invited as to a banquet”.^{xvi} In the context of this passage, the word should be defined *as being invited to an event*, that is to the marriage feast. Therefore, many were invited to the feast. Of course, we know that to

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be true. The king sent out his slaves three different times to invite people to the feast. Many said “no” to the invitation; others paid no attention to the messengers; but some said “yes”. In fact, enough said “yes” to fill the banquet hall.

- p. Next, let’s look at the word “chosen”. The Greek word translated *chosen* is *eklektos*. Strong’s Concordance defines this word as select or favorite.^{xvii} Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words states that this word comes from *ek* meaning “from” and *lego* meaning “to gather or pick out” and thus defines the word as “picked out or chosen from a larger group”.^{xviii} The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament by Gerhard Kittel states this about how this word is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, “In the LXX [*Septuagint*] the general meaning is for choice products, e. g., plants, animals or minerals. With reference to persons we find it for select troops.”^{xix} The Expository Dictionary of Bible Words by Lawrence Richards offers this, “The words in this word group [*the group in which chosen is found*] are common in the Greek language. They imply options from which one can choose.”^{xx} Summarizing, the chosen are those selected from the group which was invited—but a smaller number than those invited. This is consistent with Jesus’ statement that many are called but few are chosen.
- q. Now that we have analyzed the text to see what it teaches, let’s apply it to the topic of the bride and the bride making herself ready. We will approach our applications in two ways. First, we will apply it to the people who are being invited to the marriage feast to see what the parable teaches for today. Following this analysis, we will apply the parable to the slaves of the king so as to get an understanding of the role of forerunners in today’s church.

III. Truths from the Parable of the Marriage Feast

In this section we will present ten truths from the text which apply to believers in general and to forerunners who will be inviting people to the marriage feast.

Truths for those invited

1. This parable confirms that there will be a wedding between Christ and His prepared bride accompanied by the marriage supper of the Lamb.
 - a. As noted earlier, this parable begins with these words, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king, who gave a wedding feast for his son” (Mt. 22:2). The king in this parable represents the heavenly Father and the son represents the eternal Son, Christ Jesus. By beginning the parable with this statement, Jesus is saying to His followers that there will be a wedding of Christ to His creation and a marriage supper which will accompany the wedding. One note of explanation is that even though the parable doesn’t speak directly of the marriage of Christ to His bride, it is understood because the Father would not host a wedding feast for Christ without an accompanying wedding.
 - b. Jesus’ purpose in sharing this parable as well as the Parable of the Ten Virgins during this last week of His earthly ministry was to make the point clear to His followers that when He returns, one aspect of His return will include an actual wedding between Himself and His bride who makes herself ready accompanied by an actual feast called the marriage supper of the Lamb. If you will recall from Session 3, we highlighted several views about the bride. One view which is held by quite a number of people is that there really is not going to be an actual wedding or an actual bride for Christ. Those

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holding this view believe that discussions about the bride are merely to point out principles that describe a walk with Christ. As we stated in prior sessions, there will be a real wedding between Christ and His bride who has made herself ready and a wedding feast of invited guests---who have clothed themselves with bridal garments.

- c. As the angel told the apostle John, "...Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' And he said to me, 'These are true words of God'" (Rev. 19:9). The angel told John that the words he spoke are "true words of God". The wedding will be real and those who make themselves ready are invited to it.

2. From heaven's perspective, the wedding is ready but the people are not.

- a. Again quoting from the parable, Jesus spoke these words, "Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy'" (Mt. 22:8). Even during the New Testament era, the wedding was ready and Christ could have returned for His bride. However, the bride was not prepared in sufficient numbers for Christ to return.
- b. The same is true today. When Christ's bride is fully made ready, the Lord will return. Therefore, we are not looking for a fixed date at which time Christ will return regardless of whether the bride is ready or not. Instead, Christ's return is dependent on the bride being made ready in fullness. Everything is ready in heaven, but the people are not. As this is a school for forerunners, this is an important point for us to consider. Our assignment as forerunners is to invite and help prepare a worthy bride for Christ.

3. Not every believer will be a part of the bridal company or invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

- a. After noting that the Jews rejected the king's invitation, the king sent out his slaves to the main highways to invite all they could find both good and bad, that is, the invitation went out to many people--both saved and lost. Many responded positively to the invitation, and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests. Among those who filled the hall, one accepted the invitation but did not put on wedding garments. This man was removed from the wedding hall. This man represents a Christian—because he did say "yes" to the slaves' invitations to attend the marriage feast. However, he represents a Christian who did not make Himself ready by putting on wedding garments. We learn from this fact that not every believer will be allowed to be a part of the marriage feast or a part of Christ's bridal company. Only those who make themselves ready by clothing themselves in spiritual bridal garments will become the eternal wife of Christ and be an accepted guest at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Of course, this truth is confirmed in Revelation 19:7-8 as well.
- b. The passage also says about this man that he was speechless when confronted by the king. The man had no defense for not having put on wedding clothes. He had somehow found his way into the wedding feast and either did not know of the requirement to put on wedding clothes or he had known but chose not to put them on. In either case, he did not clothe himself properly for a royal wedding. As a result, he was bound hand and foot and cast out of the hall. On that day when Christ inspects His church, some will be speechless because they were never told of the need to put on bridal garments. Others will be speechless because they were taught but did not put sufficient effort into making themselves ready.

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- c. Whatever the reason, not every believer will be the eternal wife of Christ or be allowed to celebrate at the marriage supper of the Lamb.
4. The invitation given is not for salvation but to become the wife of Christ and to be allowed entry into the marriage supper of the Lamb.
 - a. The invitations given by God's servants were not just for salvation. Instead, they were invitations to the wedding feast. Applying this parable to today's church, the invitation is to get ready as a bride and to be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. As we stated previously, Jesus said that this parable is about a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. Therefore, the parable is about a wedding and a wedding feast—not about entering the kingdom of God through salvation. Of course, salvation is the first step of the preparation process; but the parable is not focused, as many commentators believe, on salvation. Rather, it is an invitation from the heavenly Father Himself to wake up to and get ready for the marriage of the eternal Son to His creation.
 - b. It is of utmost importance that we realize that this parable is not about a call to salvation. It is a parable about the heavenly Father inviting a people to prepare themselves to become the wife of His Son and to celebrate with the Godhead at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Understanding this important distinction should motivate us to make ourselves ready as a worthy bride for Christ.
 5. Everyone who wants to be a part of the bridal company and to be allowed entry into the marriage supper must say "yes" to the invitation.
 - a. The parable calls for both believers and unbelievers to say "yes" to the invitation to be the eternal wife of Christ and accompanying the marriage supper of the Lamb. Some said "no" to the invitation to the wedding feast but many said "yes", and ultimately the wedding hall was filled with guests. Even though many did and will say "yes", many others will decline the invitation. As the parable tells us, some will outright reject the invitation. Others will pay no attention. Still others will be too busy to take the invitation seriously, and some will take offense at even being invited at all.
 - b. Jesus spoke another similar parable that addresses the excuses people make,

When 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!" But He said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many; and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.' 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.' Another one said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.' Another one said, 'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.' 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.' "And the slave said, 'Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled. 'For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner'" (Lk. 14:15-24).

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- c. As this parable tells us, many asked to be excused from attending the dinner. One had bought a piece of land which is similar to purchasing a house in our day; another bought a yoke of oxen much like a job or business venture to us; another placed his wife and family above the invitation. Stating their many excuses, they each said “please consider me excused”. They each declined the invitation. However, the poor, crippled, blind, and lame came. This is much the way it is today. Many allow blessings and prosperity provided by the Lord as an excuse to not make themselves ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb. Whereas the wise and humble will say “yes” and be prepared to eat at the King’s dinner.
- d. As the parable states, there will be no excuse on that day and those who put issues above being made ready as a wife for Christ and for the marriage supper of the Lamb will not eat of it in the coming kingdom. The parable of wedding feast that we are considering is an invitation to say “yes” so as to devote our lives to making ourselves ready as a bride for Christ and to cloth ourselves in wedding garments.

6. Saying “yes” to the invitation is a lifetime commitment to making oneself ready as a bride for Christ.

- a. Throughout the scriptures and especially in the New Testament, the Lord uses the idea of being clothed in spiritual garments of righteousness as a picture for being made ready. We saw this spiritual picture in our discussion of the bride in the book of Revelation, and Jesus spoke of it here. In addition, there are a number of other references throughout the New Testament about being clothed in righteousness and bridal garments. It is a widely used illustration to explain being made ready as one prepared for Christ’s coming and to be made ready as a bride for Christ. The same theme appears in another familiar passage recorded by Luke. In it Jesus said,

Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit. Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them. Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect (Lk 12:35-40).

- b. Going back to the parable at hand, the people who were made ready as a bride for Christ and were able to enjoy the marriage feast were those who: 1) said “yes” to the invitation to the wedding feast and 2) put on the proper wedding garments. Both those who said “no” or said “yes” but did not prepare were excluded from the feast. The same is true for us. The only way to become the eternal wife of Christ and to enjoy the marriage supper of the Lamb is to say “yes” to the invitation to make oneself ready as a bride for Christ and then to devote our life to the lifelong task of making oneself ready.
- c. At the risk of being repetitive, saying “yes” is not a one time decision or a momentary emotional response to an altar call. It might begin that way, but the “yes” in our heart must be an ongoing “yes” that motivates us day in and day out to make ourselves ready for Christ. It is a “yes” that directs our life year after year until the day when the King comes in to look over us to see if we qualify to be one of his dinner guests.

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- d. Now that we have made application to those invited to the wedding feast, let's now look at the role of forerunners—those referred to as the king's slaves.

Truths for Forerunners

7. Forerunners are bond servants of Christ totally committed to follow Him and His directions.

- a. The parable is also a call to forerunners functioning as end-time messengers to invite people to make themselves ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb. In the parable, the king sent out his slaves to invite people to the wedding feast. As we noted earlier, the Greek word for slave used here is *doulos*. As applied to a Christian, it is a person who has been redeemed from the slave market through salvation and chooses to completely surrender their life to the Lord so as to become much like a slave for God's purposes. Therefore, the slaves in the parable are messengers who are totally surrendered to the king and totally obedient to his commands and His voice. They are his and his alone, and they exist to do his bidding. In the same manner, God's forerunner messengers in our generation are to be God's *doulos* completely committed to God's purposes.
- b. Although this is a call to every pastor, leader, and every believer. Most assuredly, it is a call to every forerunner. Forerunners are friends of the Bridegroom, and, as such, are to do the bidding of the Bridegroom. God has been sending out His messengers to call people to the marriage supper of the Lamb throughout the church age and will continue to do so until Christ returns. Forerunners must be messengers—friends of the Bridegroom—who awaken the church to bridal understanding and who invite people to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Also, they are to help those who say "yes" to be properly clothed in bridal garments which as Revelation 19:7-8 tells us are the righteous acts of the saints. In other words, end-time forerunners are given a major assignment as described in this parable --make the betrothed bride ready for the heavenly wedding day and the marriage supper of the Lamb.

8. Forerunners must carry the same burden for the church that Jesus expressed when He entered Jerusalem in His first triumphant entry.

- a. We repeat these words of Jesus recorded by Luke,

When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation" (Lk. 19:41-44).

- b. As He entered Jerusalem on His way to the cross, He knew that Israel had rejected Him and He knew what was coming because they had missed their day of visitation. He wept over the city and the Jews who inhabited it. In a similar way, Christ carries a deep burden for the church in our day. He knows that many in the church do not know the day that is coming when Christ will come and examine His people for their wedding garments. He knows that many will not be allowed into the

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marriage supper of the Lamb having to remain in the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. He knows that many will be speechless on that day because they either rejected, paid no attention, or did not recognize the invitation that they were being given.

- c. Jesus weeps over the condition of today's church. With Christ having this type of burden, He wants His messengers to carry a similar burden to see believers and non-believers alike for the church to be made as a worthy bride for Christ and to be prepared to enter the marriage supper of the Lamb. Therefore, forerunners must take up the same burden Christ has to see the bride made ready.

9. Forerunners must be bold to invite people to be made ready as Christ's bride.

- a. Jesus said the king was "enraged" at those who refused to make preparations to attend the feast. In other words, he was angry at the rejection of his invitation. Also, as stated previously, the one without bridal garments was speechless when his condition was revealed indicating he did not know what was expected of him or did not understand the seriousness of the consequences of not preparing. He was shocked without excuse at how he was being judged.
- b. Because of these attitudes which are common in today's church, forerunners must be bold as they announce the coming of the Lord and invite people to be ready. The consequences of not getting ready are monumental. Therefore, it is imperative that forerunners invite people to the wedding feast with great passion and boldness.

10. Forerunners must be prepared for opposition, rejection, and persecution as they invite people to be prepared as a bride for Christ.

- a. As the parable suggests, the message the slaves shared was received with joy by some and greatly opposed by others. The wedding hall was filled with dinner guests; therefore, many received their invitation and made the proper preparations for the king's examination. But many said "no" or just did not pay attention to the invitation. Some even attacked the slaves for sharing the invitation.
- b. Pastors, leaders, believers, and especially forerunners must be prepared for all of these reactions. As this class is a part of our Forerunner School, we will focus on forerunners. My experience in inviting people to be prepared as a bride for Christ is all of the above responses with the exception of persecution. Some will understand the need to make themselves ready and will eagerly and happily respond positively to the forerunner's invitation. Those who respond in such a way will become a source of great encouragement to those called as a forerunner.
- c. Others will just reject your invitation. Most likely they will be polite in declining the invitation, but they will refuse. Many will say they don't believe the bride has to be made ready in such a way. They will interpret parables like we are discussing as either saved or lost and will believe that just because they are born again, they are ready for the judgment seat of Christ.
- d. Still others will say "yes" to your invitation but will not prepare to become the bride made ready. From my experience, many fall into this category. They are like the one who came into the wedding hall without bridal garments.

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- e. Some will actively oppose you in your efforts to invite people to be the bride. For me personally, the only opposition I have received thus far is people debating me, telling me they don't believe the bride must make herself ready or speaking behind my back in the form of a word curse. However, as we approach the second coming of Christ, opposition to this message will be both greatly received and greatly opposed. The opposition will include physical attacks, persecution, and possibly even martyrdom.
- f. Therefore, as messengers of the Lord with this assignment to invite believers and non-believers to prepare for the marriage supper of the Lamb, we must truly become a bond slave of the Lord prepared to do His bidding regardless of the cost.
- g. Therefore, let's all be faithful to say "yes" to the bridal invitation to make ourselves ready and as forerunners, let's be faithful friends of the Bridegroom to invite others to be ready. I say "yes" once again. Will you?

ⁱ John Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1966, p. 274.

ⁱⁱ Strong's NT: 1401, *doulos*, Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2000, 2003, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.

ⁱⁱⁱ Craig L. Blomberg, *The New American Commentary, Matthew*, Vol. 22, B and H Publishing, Nashville, TN, 1992, p. 327.

^{iv} *Ibid*, p. 328.

^v Strong's, NT:2083 *hetairos*, Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2000, 2003, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved

^{vi} Friend, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.)

^{vii} Blomberg, p. 329.

^{viii} NT: 347, *heuron*, BibleSoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006, 2010 BibleSoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.)

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^{xii} Rick Joyner, *The Final Quest*, Morning Star Publications, Pineville, NC, 1996, p. 115.

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^{xiv} *Ibid*.

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^{xviii} NT:1588, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

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^{xix} Gerhard Kittel, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, William Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1985, p. 521.

^{xx} Lawrence Richards, *The Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1985, p.160.