

# Masterwork of the Messiah

## Expositional Study Of Matthew's Gospel

*Watch Out & Work Out*

*Matthew 25:1-10*

Written By

©Pastor Marty Baker

October 19, 2014



**P**reppers. Seems like they are everywhere nowadays. We've got prepper expos around the country, prepper books (favorites include Richard Duarte's *A Guide For Surviving An Urban Disaster*, Phyllis Hobson's *Build Your Own Underground Root Cellar* to name a couple of many more), prepper journals (like the Prepper Journal, where can get acquainted with prepping basics, food security, and survival basics), prepper products (like off the grid power systems, portable solar power, prepper forums (prepperforums.net), prepper networks (like the americanpreppersnetwork.net), and even prepper TV shows like the one on the National Geographic channel:

*Doomsday Preppers* explores the lives of otherwise ordinary Americans who are preparing for the end of the world as we know it. Unique in their beliefs, motivations, and strategies, preppers will go to whatever lengths they can to make sure they are prepared for any of life's uncertainties. And this season, the preppers are testing the limits of ingenuity as they develop extreme doomsday survival machines, high-tech shelters, and specialized escape routes. With customized features, super-secret locations, and home-spun engineering, these extreme Armageddon defense systems are ready for anything.

The description of the TV show gives you a good idea of what preppers do: they make sure they are adequately prepared for any type of man-made or natural calamity.

Is there anything wrong with being prepared for adversities which might come our way? I don't think so. Even Joseph, when he exercised rulership over Egypt next to Pharaoh, prepared for coming famine by storing grain (Genesis 41:4-57). Being prepared, to a certain degree, is simply a wise, prudent move ... but it can become an obsession, causing a person to live in fear and lose focus and to invest large sums of finances in prepping excesses, when those monies should be applied to more important life goals.

Spiritually speaking, I, on the other hand, have questions, which are really concerns: Are those who are prepping for earthly uncertainties equally prepping and preparing for spiritual certainties, viz., the Lord's arrival? I mean, are they ready to meet Him when He comes for them? Put differently, have they invested so much time and attention into possible physical future needs they have utterly neglected giving time and attention to present spiritual needs ... needs like salvation? Are you so distracted by the earthly situation around you, you have neglected the spiritual situation within you?

Speaking about the timing uncertainty concerning his Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation (Matthew 24:26-35), Jesus warns us, in Matthew 24:36-51, to prepared for His unexpected, sudden, surprising appearance by anticipating it and by doing the works of a faithful disciple prior to the cosmic event of all events. Surely, these two motifs are predicated upon a personal saving faith in that coming Messiah. When the Davidic King, the Messiah, arrives, He will find two types of people: those who have prepped properly and are ready to enter His Jerusalem based empire, and those who failed to prep as He prescribed. Which person are you is the question.

Being spiritually prepared for His unexpected arrival is so important, Jesus told another, lengthier parable, to drive home the point developed in Matthew 24:36-51. It is classically called *The Parable Of The Ten Virgins* and it is built on a wedding motif which generates this pointed, highly question:

## Are Your Prepped For The Feast Of All Feasts (Matthew 25:1-13)?

True, the parable addresses a spiritual situation at the end of the Tribulation; however, its spiritual concepts are certainly applicable to saints, like us, in this age of grace. The Rapture of the Church, as with the Second Coming, will be sudden and unexpected; therefore, we need to be properly prepped for the imminent event which entails making sure we have trusted Him as the Messiah and our Savior, and that we are currently living like His kingdom members (Matthew 5-7). So, my counsel is clear: don't check out on this passage just because the chronology of the eschatology is future. Look for what it says to you in our dispensation.

To ascertain our Lord's message in this picturesque parable, I think it best if we approach it from two form critical angles:

### The Particulars Of The Parable

Let's get started by first reading the instructive story for our Lord:

<sup>1</sup> Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> Five of them were foolish, and five

were prudent.<sup>3</sup> For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them,<sup>4</sup> but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps.<sup>5</sup> Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and *began* to sleep.<sup>6</sup> But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet *him*.'<sup>7</sup> "Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps.<sup>8</sup> "The foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'<sup>9</sup> But the prudent answered, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you *too*; go instead to the dealers and buy *some* for yourselves.'<sup>10</sup> And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut.<sup>11</sup> Later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.'<sup>12</sup> But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.'<sup>13</sup> Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

Did Jesus not have a way with words? He knew how to get your attention in order to drive home crucial, life-changing, and challenging spiritual truths. This memorable story is no exception. As we dig into it, we must analyze its particulars.

*The Comparison (v. 1).* The phrase "the kingdom of heaven" denotes the Messianic kingdom the Old Testament prophets foretold God would bring to earth, with His Son as the King of Kings. All Jews expected this kingdom because the inspired texts left them with no doubt. We've been over this ground before, so it is not my purpose to travel over it again in detail. Suffice it to point out its unconditional basis in the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants. To read through the Old Testament is to see how God promises a coming divine King from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:8-10; Psalm 2; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6) who would rule and reign over the whole earth, instituting a kingdom of peace and righteousness (Psalm 89:1-37; Isaiah 11, 24, 25, 54, 60, 61 ... describes various aspects of the kingdom). In Jeremiah 23:5-6, the prophet describes how the kingdom will come despite its current demise in his day due to divinely ordained Babylonian invasion of the Holy Land. Daniel 7:13-14 specifically speaks of the divine king who will come to institute His kingdom. Amos 9:11 promises a resurrection of the Davidic Empire beyond anything seen before; and Zechariah anticipates the Messiah's earthly arrival (Zechariah 14). Understanding this is utterly important for when the Messiah appears to establish His Kingdom at His Second Coming, He will populate it with the faithful while judging those who were faithless with eternal exclusion. All of this, of course, plays into the parable before us in a major fashion.

According to Jesus, the arrival and response to the messianic king and kingdom will be like ten virgins who attend a Jewish wedding of a friend. To effectively grasp Christ's teaching at this juncture, we need to delve into the cultural meaning of Jewish wedding at this time.

Ancient Jewish weddings typically had four parts.

One, the groom would travel from his father's house to the home of the prospective bride. While here, he negotiated a purchase price for the bride with the father (called a *mohar*), a covenant was then drawn up and legally the young man and woman were considered husband and wife. Before the groom left, the couple drank from a cup of wine to finalize the covenant, and a betrothal benediction was read.

Two, the groom then returned to his father's house and made preparations for his future bride's arrival. This could involve saving more money, securing a home and so forth. The time

away also gave the bride the opportunity to make practical plans for her new life away from home. The groom's hiatus could last anywhere from a few months to a year.

Three, at the end of the allotted time, the groom, accompanied by his best men and other male friends, came suddenly for his bride and it usually occurred at night. A loud shout from the groom's group notified the bride and her bridesmaids of his sudden arrival, and torches denoted their swift approach. The ladies were expected to drop everything, light their torches and head as one big festive group to the groom's father's home.

Four, upon arrival at the father's house, the bridal party encountered wedding guests, and shortly thereafter the bride and the groom were escorted into the bridal chamber (called a *huppah*) where they formally consummated the marriage. After this, the groom publically announced the consummation to the wedding party, while his bride stayed hidden for the next seven days in the bridal chamber (which is called 'the seven days of the *huppah*'). Upon reception of the news, the guests enjoyed a sumptuous wedding feast and at the end of this time period the bride, in all of her glory was presented for all to see.

You cannot help but see the relationship between this custom and prophetic relationship between Jesus, the Groom, and the Church. Yes, it is the Bride and Christ is the groom (Ephesians 5:22-33). Yes, the groom came to the home of the Bride to purchase her and He sealed the covenant with wine at the first communion. Yes, the groom, Jesus, has gone to His Father's house to make preparations for the Bride (John 14:1-6). Yes, the groom, Jesus, will suddenly come for His bride and take her to His home, where she will be hidden from view for a period of seven years (after the Rapture and before the Second Coming). Yes, the groom's arrival will be preceded by an angelic shout (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Yes, the Bride will be publically revealed at the end of the seven year period at the Second Coming of Christ to establish His kingdom (Colossians 3:4).

Contextually, however, we are looking at ten Jewish virgins, probably representing all of Israel, being prepared or unprepared for the arrival of the Groom, the Messiah at the end of the Tribulation period.

*The Contrast* (vv. 2-9). From these verses we readily see there are two equal groups: five foolish virgins who didn't bring enough oil to wait out the arrival of the groom, and five virgins who planned ahead by bringing extra oil for their lamps. The former group, obviously, is contextually linked with the unfaithful and evil slave of the previous pericope (Matthew 24:45-51), while the latter group represents the faithful servants who were looking for their Lord's arrival and working hard in the interim period of delay.

In this story, while the virgins all waited anxiously for the arrival of the groom, they eventually grew tired and went to sleep. At midnight, the loud shout came from the groom's wedding party for the ladies to come to the wedding with them. All the ladies quickly got up and trimmed the burned edges off their lamp wicks (oil soaked rags) and proceeded to head out with the wedding party. At that point is when five of the virgins realized they had no oil, making it impossible for them to see on the journey through the darkness. In desperation they asked to borrow oil from the five virgins who had prepared, but were rebuffed and directed to head into town and buy their own oil.

*The Closing* (v. 10). While the unprepared ladies headed into town in search for oil, the groom came with his entourage and they all headed back to his father's house. Once the door

was closed, the wedding festivities began. All of this is so reminiscent of the closing of the door on Noah's ark, isn't it? Once closed, it didn't open for any one person ... no matter how loudly they banged on that door as the torrential, relentless rain descended.

*The Cry (v. 12).* Eventually, the five foolish virgins showed up and wanted to gain entrance to the wedding of all weddings. They pleaded with the Lord of the wedding to gain entrance, but speaking through the door he informed them he didn't know who they were, leaving them standing in the darkness, cut off from the wedding feast.

*The Command (v. 13).* With the story complete, Jesus now utters an ominous, spin-stiffening command:

<sup>13</sup> Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

The hour, of course, is the moment of His Second Coming at the close of the Tribulation. From this parabolic story we can certainly glean some salient pragmatic points.

## The Principles Of The Parable

There are five core spiritual principles:

*One, the Messiah will come suddenly and unexpectedly ... so don't be caught napping.* Noah and his family were ready for the day of God's judgment and separation between the righteous and the unrighteous, and all saints, at all times, must be ready for His appearance and arrival as well. If He were to come today for you, would you be ready to face Him? How do you get prepared? Paul's words to the Philippian jailer in Acts 16 are clear enough:

<sup>29</sup> And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, <sup>30</sup> and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" <sup>31</sup> They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16).

When you, the sinner, turn to Christ, the Savior in faith in His ability to forgive and redeem you, you are saved at that precise moment. The five virgins who had ample oil merely represent sinners who have done what they needed to do to go with the Groom. They moved from sinner to saint status by placing their personal faith in that Lord. And once they were saved they stayed focused on Christian obedience and mission.

*Two, there are self-deceived people in the wedding party ... so please wake up.* The five foolish virgins said they wanted to see the Groom, they even were part of the Bride's wedding party. Judas is an excellent description of this level of deception. He was part of the Twelve Disciples, but he was never one of them in his heart of hearts. And so it is for all time. In any age, whether it is pre or post-Tribulation, there are always those who, for a variety of reason, draw close to Christians but not to Christ, who have a form of Christian religion, but deny its power, who love to be around people of the Word, but who aren't in the Word, who like the liturgy of the Church but have not faith relationship with the Lord of the Church, who enjoy the music of worship but don't enjoy the Lord of the music, who like to perform religious works but who put off making a

decision to be a disciple of Christ for later, who ... well, you can fill in the rest of the blank. They are very reminiscent of the religious people who come to Christ on the day of judgment:

<sup>22</sup> Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' <sup>23</sup> "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.' <sup>24</sup> Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock (Matthew 7).

These are folks who have religious works, be what they may, but no faith relationship with the Lord Jesus who is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). They think, in any given age, that they are part of the messianic wedding party, when in reality the Groom, Jesus, doesn't know them because they are not His. And He does know His own, as He states in John:

"I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know me" (John 10:14).

Does this all describe you? Are you holding a worthless religious torch lacking fuel, a predicament which leaves you in spiritual darkness? The Groom, Jesus, waits to make you a member of the wedding party right now, but you must come to Him on His terms, and His terms call for your faith in His redemptive work at Calvary coupled with a firm belief in His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-5). Unfortunately, as Christ reveals here, many people, Jews included, will not be adequately prepared for His arrival at His Second Coming. But for those who are prepared, they will walk into the feast of the millennial, messianic age. Right now, both groups are present among us. Which group are you in?

*Three, the door to the kingdom isn't open forever ... so don't waste time.* The Groom, viz., the Messiah, appeared at midnight. Interesting. This was the same time God appeared to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage. All of this underscores there is, in God's mind, a time when the age in which we live will close. Currently, we are in the Age of Grace. This time will close with the rapture of the Church and the institution of the Tribulation period. That time will close, after seven years, with the glorious arrival of the Groom, Jesus, with His bride. Once that occurs, the door for kingdom entrance will be closed forever, leaving second chances for entrance off the table forever. At this juncture, you will either be in or you will be out, you will either be for Jesus or against Jesus, you will either be in the kingdom, or in eternal punishment.

Please, don't deceive yourself thinking you have plenty of time to figure out if there are many roads which lead to heaven, or just one. You don't. Many people will be surprised in the Tribulation period, and even in our day, when God comes for them while they were convinced they had ample time to think through spiritual matters. I can think of nothing more horrifying than for the door the kingdom to be shut in your face, and you are left in the darkness forever.

You just might be able to tell if you are in this group by asking yourself a couple of questions. One, am I taken back by this discussion about divine finality? Two, do I think this concept of God shutting the door into the kingdom is insensitive to seekers and searchers? Do I feel like Christ's words here are too definitive and harsh? If so, you just might be in the group who get the door shut in front of you.

Four, Christ is coming to judge and erect His prophesied Kingdom ... so listen for Him. Just as the Groom's arrival is preceded by a shout, so, too, will Christ's coming. Interestingly enough, the word to "shout" (κραυγή) lexically can mean a shout to arouse troops for war. This is how its Hebrew counterpart is used in the Old Testament (תְּרוּעָה cf. I Kings 4:6; Amos 1:14; Zephaniah 1:16). We find the Greek word used in this fashion in Revelation 14:

<sup>14</sup> Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. <sup>15</sup> And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, <sup>2b</sup>"Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth<sup>3</sup> is ripe." <sup>16</sup> Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped. <sup>17</sup> And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. <sup>18</sup> Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe." <sup>19</sup> So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered *the clusters from* the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. <sup>20</sup> And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles (Revelation 14).

The description here is the inception of the Battle of Armageddon. The person sitting on the cloud, looking down at the earth, is called "a son of man," and the indefinite usage of this title elsewhere in the New Testament, like in John 5:22-27, clearly identifies this individual as Jesus. The crown merely speaks of His royal ability to judge the people of earth. The angel who shouts to Jesus presumably gets his direction from the Father, and the Son responds by coming in judgment ... as described, by Jesus, in the Olivet Discourse.

The point is the earth is ripening, even now, for divine judgment, and when divine judgment reaches its final climax at the end of the Tribulation an audible, angelic shout will be heard informing Jesus to judge the earth and letting the godless know their day of darkness is now coming to an end (Zechariah 14:1-8). For saints, that shout heard from the heavens will be one of joy and anticipation. For the non-Christians, it will be one of woe and fear. How will you hear the voice, should you be alive at that time? Will it be with the spirit of, "Yes, come Lord Jesus," or, "Oh, no, it's Jesus"?

Five, *spiritual life is received it is not loaned ... so get yours on your own.* The five foolish virgins asked for something from the five wise virgins they could never give them: salvation. If you are saved, you cannot, in turn, be a savior. You can point to the Savior. You can talk about the Savior. You can pray for some lost person to trust the Savior. You, however, can never be the Savior. Jesus is the Savior (Acts 5:31; 13:23; 2 Timothy 1:10; 2 Peter 1:11), and all who desire to be saved by Him so they are ready for the messianic kingdom wedding feast and eternity must come to Him on His term by themselves. Knowing godly people will not suffice to save. Having godly people in your family lineage will not save. Having deeply religious people in your life will not save. Only having a personal faith

relationship with the Savior, Jesus, can and will save you. As Jesus told Martha after the death of her brother Lazarus:

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,<sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?” <sup>27</sup> She said to Him, “Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, *even* He who comes into the world” (John 11).

Salvation, my friend, is a *you* thing. It’s highly personal. The moment you make that faith profession you are put down on the wedding feast list for the Messiah’s kingdom. Think about it. You, of all people, will have a personal place alongside Jesus in His kingdom. What could be better?

And for those of us who already know we are going with Jesus when He comes, may we be ever mindful to be living in such a fashion that our lives are ready for His arrival.