

Put On Thy Strength, O Zion

By Elder David A. Bednar

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Each of us should evaluate our temporal and spiritual priorities sincerely and prayerfully.

Marlene's Thoughts:

Parables are a defining feature of the Lord Jesus Christ's masterful approach to teaching. Simply defined, the Savior's parables are stories used to compare spiritual truths with material things and mortal experiences. For example, the New Testament Gospels are replete with teachings likening the kingdom of heaven to a grain of mustard seed,¹ to a pearl of great price,² to a householder and laborers in his vineyard,³ to ten virgins,⁴ and to many other things. During part of the Lord's Galilean ministry, the scriptures indicate that "without a parable spake he not unto them."⁵

The intended meaning or message of a parable typically is not expressed explicitly. Rather, the story only conveys divine truth to a receiver in proportion to his or her faith in God, personal spiritual preparation, and willingness to learn. Thus, an individual must exercise moral agency and actively "ask, seek, and knock"⁶ to discover the truths embedded in a parable.

I find it extremely interesting that Elder Bednar opened his talk by explaining what a parable is and what the purpose of a parable is. He explained how Christ used parables to teach to those who had ears to hear and eyes to see, or in other words, those who were awake and those who were diligently seeking or as Elder Bednar stated, "those who are exercising their moral agency to actively "ask, seek, and knock" to discover the truths embedded in a parable.

Matthew 7:7–8

7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:
8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

As Elder Bednar just did in his talk, Christ frequently did the same thing by prefacing or ending His parables with such words as, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." (Matthew 11:15), and "blessed are the eyes which see and the things that ye see." (Luke 10:23).

This was how Christ called the attention of those listening to Him letting them know that this is important and if you are diligently seeking, you will understand just how important these things are and you will come to understand what it is that you now need to do. This too is what Elder Bednar is doing. He is not giving us a talk explaining what parables are, but rather, he is calling our attention to a specific parable that is important for us to know and understand now. He is telling us that we will only understand the parable in proportion of our faith in God, our own personal spiritual preparedness, and willingness to learn. One who is not actively seeking to

“ask, seek, and knock”, will not understand the parable. It will only be a nice story that was told in conference once.

I earnestly pray that the Holy Ghost will enlighten each of us as we now consider the importance of the parable of the royal marriage feast.

The Royal Marriage Feast

“And Jesus ... spake unto them again by parables, and said,

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,

Christ often sought to explain to us the Kingdom of Heaven. The Kingdom of Heaven is ultimately the Celestial Kingdom but we will only obtain the Celestial through the building of Zion of which is what Christ was constantly giving us timelines and teaching us what it is that we need to do to become a Zion people.

The king we know then to be Heavenly Father and His son is Christ.

“And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

“Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.

“But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise.”⁷

Lamentations 1:4

4 The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness.

2 Peter 2:20-22

20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

Matthew 22:6-7

6 And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

7 But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

The remnant are the descendants of the 10 tribes of Israel. The servants are the prophets, including Christ himself and Joseph Smith. Christ is speaking in this parable of a people

who fail to build Zion. The people killed Christ and the prophets in his day and Jerusalem was burned. In our day, Joseph Smith was slain and the temple was burned. The saints lost their Zion and inheritance and were sent out to wander in the wilderness. In short, they did not build the tower as they were commanded to do.

In ancient times, one of the most joyous occasions in Jewish life was a wedding celebration—an event that would span a week or even two. Such an event required extensive planning, and guests were informed far in advance, with a reminder sent on the opening day of the festivities. An invitation from a king to his subjects to a wedding such as this was essentially considered a command. Yet, many of the bidden guests in this parable did not come.⁸

“The refusal to attend the king’s feast was a deliberate [act of] rebellion against . . . royal authority and a personal indignity against both the reigning sovereign and his son. . . . The turning away by one man to his farm and by another to his [business interests]”⁹ reflects their misguided priorities and total disregard of the king’s will.¹⁰

Were a king to extend his dominion over the habitable earth, and send forth his laws which were the most perfect kind, and command his subjects one and all to yield obedience to the same, and add as a reward to those who obeyed them, that at a certain period they should be called to attend the marriage of his son, who in due time was to receive the kingdom, and they should be made equal with him in the same; and fix as a penalty for disobedience that every individual guilty of it should be cast out at the marriage feast, and have no part nor portion with his government, what rational mind could for a moment accuse the king with injustice for punishing such rebellious subjects? In the first place his laws were just, easy to be complied with, and perfect: nothing of a tyrannical nature was required of them; but the very construction of the laws was equity and beauty; and when obeyed would produce the happiest condition possible to all who adhered to them, beside the last great benefit of sitting down with a royal robe in the presence of the king at the great, grand marriage supper of his son, and be made equal with him in all affairs of the kingdom.

When these royal laws were issued, and promulgated throughout the vast dominion, every subject, when interrogated whether he believed them to be from his sovereign or not, answered, Yes; I know they are, I am acquainted with the signature, for it is as usual. Thus saith the King! This admitted, the subject is bound by every consideration of honor to his country, his king, and his own personal character, to observe in the strictest sense every requisition in the royal edict. Should any escape the search of the ambassadors of the king, and never hear these laws, giving his subjects such exalted privileges, an excuse might be urged in their behalf, and they escape the censure of the king. But for those who had heard, who had admitted, and who had promised obedience to these just laws no excuse could be urged, and when brought into the presence of the king certainly, justice would require that they should suffer a penalty. Could that king be just in admitting these rebellious individuals into the full enjoyment and privileges with his son, and those who had been obedient to his commandments? Certainly not. Because they disregarded the voice of their lawful king; they had no regard for his virtuous laws, for his dignity, nor for the honor of his name; neither for the honor of their country, nor their private virtue. They regarded not his authority enough to obey him, neither did they regard the immediate advantages and

blessings arising from these laws if kept, so destitute were they of virtue and goodness; and above all, they regarded so little the joy and satisfaction of a legal seat in the presence of the king's only son, and to be made equal with him all the blessings, honors, comforts, and felicities of his kingdom, that they turned away from a participation in them, and considered that they were beneath their present notice, though they had no doubt as to the real authenticity of the royal edict.

(Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith)

We can see in this first part of the parable, that God has everything already prepared for us. The banquet table is set. The blessings he has to give us are immense, but we have to be prepared and willing without rebellion in our hearts, to accept all that is prepared.

The parable continues:

“Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

“Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

“So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.”¹¹

Today, we are commanded, once again, to build the tower. We are commanded to be watchmen on the tower, and we are commanded to go out, warn our neighbor, and bring them in. Where are we bringing them to? It's not just to the church and baptism. That is only the first step. We are to bring them all the way into the wedding feast, or rather clothed in the garments of righteousness having made and keeping temple covenants. We fail if all the more we can do is to bring someone to baptism and then send them on their way, or attend their baptism, welcome them into the ward, and then barely if never speak to them again. These will be counted as sheep that we abandoned on the highway, and we will be counted as lazy disciples and watchmen, and foolish virgins. A watchman doesn't just yell out that there is danger. A watchman warns but then ensures that those over whom he has stewardship and even friendship have been guided safely home.

Isaiah 2:2-3

2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us ago up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

The custom in those days was for the host of a wedding feast—in this parable, the king—to provide garments for the wedding guests. Such wedding garments were simple, nondescript robes that all attendees wore. In this way, rank and station were eliminated, and everyone at the feast could mingle as equals.¹²

People invited from the highways to attend the wedding would not have had the time or means to procure appropriate attire in preparation for the event. Consequently, the king likely gave guests the garments from his own wardrobe. Everyone was given the opportunity to clothe themselves in garments of royalty.¹³

Revelation 19:8

8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

The Washing and Anointing and the Endowment in the temple that lead up to the sealing are the preparations for the Royal Wedding. We are given sacred garments from the king's wardrobe. We are brought in as equals to share in all that Christ hath. And during the Sealing ceremony, we are sealed up to be kings and queens unto the most high.

As the king entered the wedding hall, he surveyed the audience and immediately noticed that one conspicuous guest was not wearing a wedding garment. The man was brought forward, and the king asked, "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless."¹⁴ In essence, the king asked, "Why are you not wearing a wedding garment, even though one was provided for you?"¹⁵

The man obviously was not dressed properly for this special occasion, and the phrase "And he was speechless" indicates that the man was without excuse.¹⁶

Elder James E. Talmage provides this instructive commentary about the significance of the man's actions: "That the unrobed guest was guilty of neglect, intentional disrespect, or some more grievous offense, is plain from the context. The king at first was graciously considerate, inquiring only as to how the man had entered without a wedding garment. Had the guest been able to explain his exceptional appearance, or had he any reasonable excuse to offer, he surely would have spoken; but we are told that he remained speechless. The king's summons had been freely extended to all whom his servants had found; but each of them had to enter the royal palace by the door; and before reaching the banquet room, in which the king would appear in person, each would be properly attired; but the deficient one, by some means had entered by another way; and not having passed the attendant sentinels at the portal, he was an intruder."¹⁷

A Christian author, John O. Reid, noted that the man's refusal to wear the wedding garment exemplified blatant "disrespect for both the king and his son." He did not simply lack a wedding garment; rather, he chose not to wear one. He rebelliously refused to dress appropriately for the occasion. The king's reaction was swift and decisive: "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."¹⁸

The king's judgment of the man is not based primarily upon the lack of a wedding garment—but that "he was, in fact, determined not to wear one. The man ... desired the honor of attending the wedding feast, but ... did not want to follow the custom of the king. He wanted to do things his own way. His lack of proper dress revealed his inner rebellion against the king and his instructions."¹⁹

Very blatant examples of this are those who have been to the temple, have been clothed in the temple garment and then willingly take it off **OR** who try to council the Lord excusing themselves from wearing the garment or wearing it correctly. They will make up a list of excuses as to why they are justified in making up their own rules for when and how the garment should be worn. They will also try to alter the commandments and words of the prophets making more excuses for themselves explaining why they are the exception to the rule. They will say things like, “well, the For the Strength of Youth now doesn’t say that I can’t have a tattoo”, having missed entirely to cloth themselves with the robes of righteousness in their hearts. They have missed completely the doctrine now being taught in the For the Strength of Youth. The simple answer here is that they refuse to “follow the custom of the King.” They wish to walk in their own paths saying, “and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God.” (2 Nephi 28:8)

But even worse are those who teach this doctrine, the doctrine of priestcraft who enter not in by the door but by another, who wear sheep’s clothing saying unto the people,

5...Hearken unto us, and hear ye our precept; for behold there is no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done his work, and he hath given his power unto men;

6 Behold, hearken ye unto my precept; if they shall say there is a miracle wrought by the hand of the Lord, believe it not; for this day he is not a God of miracles; he hath done his work.

7 Yea, and there shall be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; and it shall be well with us.

8 And there shall also be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear God—he will justify in committing a little sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God. (**2 Nephi 28:5-8**)

These may be people within or without of the church who wish to drive the saints away. Of these are the true sheep in wolves clothing who have been to the temple and clothed in the holy robes but who are now actively fighting to deceive those around them.

The ultimate point here is that God knows our hearts. Even if we have been to the temple, God knows if we are clothed in the robes of righteousness. The robes of the temple are a physical manifestation of our commitment and devotion. These physical acts must be accompanied by the commitment and devotion of righteousness that clothes our inner most being.

Moroni 10:31

31 And awake, and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion; and strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders forever, that thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled.

We have been commanded to awake and arise from the dust. We have been commanded to put on thy beautiful garments. The Lord has all the blessings of Zion, the feast already prepared for

us. It is up to us though to strengthen our stakes and enlarge its borders forever. It is up to us to go out and gather in others to the wedding feast so that we can also be counted worthy to receive of those blessings.

Ammon's Thoughts:

David A Bednar

“The intended meaning or message of a parable typically is not expressed explicitly. Rather, the story only conveys divine truth to a receiver in proportion to his or her faith in God, personal spiritual preparation, and willingness to learn. Thus, an individual must exercise moral agency and actively “ask, seek, and knock”⁴ to discover the truths embedded in a parable.”

“Symbols are powerful teaching tools. Like the Master’s parables, *they allow individuals to learn on their own level—superficially or profoundly—according to their degree of preparation and sensitivity.* This is particularly true of teachings Latter-day Saints receive in the temple.

BYU Scholars Archive Citation. Cowan, Richard O. (2012) "Latter-day Saint Temples as Symbols," Journal of Book of Mormon Studies: Vol. 21 : No. 1 , Article 2.

Neal A. Maxwell

"These same Church members know just enough about the doctrines to converse superficially on them, but their scant knowledge about the deep doctrines is inadequate for deep discipleship. Thus uninformed about the deep doctrines, they make no deep change in their lives. They lack the faith to "give place" (Alma 32: 27) consistently for real discipleship. Such members move out a few hundred yards from the entrance to the straight and narrow path and repose on the first little rise, thinking, "Well, this is all there is to it"; and they end up living far below their possibilities.

Neal A. Maxwell Men and Women of Christ, p. 2-3

Many Are Called, but Few Are Chosen

The parable then concludes with this penetrating scripture: “For many are called, but few are chosen.”²⁰

Interestingly, Joseph Smith made the following adjustment to this verse from Matthew in his inspired translation of the Bible: “For many are called, but few are chosen; *wherefore all do not have on the wedding garment.*”²¹

The *invitation* to the wedding feast and the *choice to partake* in the feast are related but different. The invitation is to all men and women. An individual may even accept the invitation and sit down at the feast—yet not be chosen to partake because he or she does not have the appropriate wedding garment of converting faith in the Lord Jesus and His divine grace. Thus, we have both God’s call and our individual response to that call, and many may be called but few chosen.²²

To be or to become chosen is not an exclusive status conferred upon us. Rather, you and I ultimately can choose to be chosen through the righteous exercise of our moral agency.

The footnote references the following:

See Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (1993), 769–71.

I couldn't find a free version of the 1993 copy of this book, so I found the 1886 edition in PDF online and found the reference to this parable on pages 425-430. It seemed an oddly specific and unique reference so I wanted to find it.

https://www.google.com.au/books/edition/The_Life_and_Times_of_Jesus_the_Messiah/CAUWAAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1

After reading the commentary on this parable in this book, my understanding really broadened and once again I could see the value and depth in its symbolism.

- The Kingdom is a marriage feast, held for the Son of the King (Christ).
- Israel were the first invited guests and were expected to be worthy, but were unworthy. The Lord has sent unto them first in the Old Testament.
- Though they failed to heed the call, in the New Testament, a second class of messengers was sent to them.
- The message in the New Testament was that the 'early meal' was ready (Christ's first coming) and that all preparations had been made for the great evening-meal (Christ's reign).
- Israel was so pre-occupied with their own things that they failed to adhere to the persistent call from God to prepare for the feast.
- For this failure and disobedience, Christ's judgements came upon them to their destruction IE The Roman burning of their city.
- The direction was then given to go into all the world and invite all men alike both Jew and Gentile.
- All are invited to the Gospel feast, but those who will partake of it must put on the supplied wedding garment of evangelical holiness.

And whereas it is said in the Parable, that only one was despoiled without this garment, this is intended to teach, that the King will not only generally view His guests, but that each will be separately examined, and that no one—no, not a single individual—will be able to escape discovery amidst the

mass of guests, if he has not the 'wedding-garment.' In short, in that day of trial, it is not a scrutiny of Churches, but of individuals in the Church. And so the King bade the servants—*διακόνους*—not the same who had previously carried the invitation (*δούλοις*), but others—evidently here the Angels, His 'ministers,' to bind him hand and foot, and to 'cast him out into the darkness, the outer'—that is, unable to offer resistance and as a punished captive, he was to be cast out into that darkness which is outside the brilliantly lighted guest-chamber of the King. And, still further to mark that darkness outside, it is added that this is the well-known place of suffering and anguish: 'there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.'

And here the Parable closes with the general statement, applicable alike to the first part of the Parable—to the first invited guests, Israel—and to the second, the guests from all the world: 'For' (this is the meaning of the whole Parable) 'many are called, but few chosen.'^a For the understanding of these words we have to keep in view that, logically, the two clauses must be supplemented by the same words. Thus, the verse would read: Many are called *out of the world* by God to partake of the Gospel-feast, but few *out of the world*—*not*, out of the called—are chosen by God to partake of it. The call to the feast and the choice for the feast are not identical. The call comes to all; but it may be outwardly accepted, and a man may sit down to the feast, and yet he may not be chosen to partake of the feast, because he has not the wedding-garment of converting, sanctifying grace. And so one may be thrust even from the marriage-board into the darkness without, with its sorrow and anguish.

Thus, side by side, yet wide apart, are these two—God's call and God's choice. The connecting-link between them is the taking of the wedding-garment, freely given in the Palace. Yet, we must seek it, ask it, put it on. And so here also, we have, side by side, God's gift and man's activity. And still, to all time, and to all men, alike in its warning, teaching, and blessing, is it true: 'Many are called, but few chosen!'

Matthew 7

21 ¶ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; **but he that doeth** the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Please note the use of the word *chosen* in the following familiar verses from the Doctrine and Covenants:

“Behold, there are many called, but few are *chosen*. And why are they not *chosen*? “Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men.”²³

I believe the implication of these verses is quite straightforward. God does not have a list of favorites to which we must hope our names will someday be added. He does not limit “the chosen” to a restricted few. Instead, *our* hearts, *our* desires, *our* honoring of sacred gospel covenants and ordinances, *our* obedience to the commandments, and, most importantly, the Savior’s redeeming grace and mercy determine whether we are counted as one of God’s chosen.²⁴

Mosiah 15

11 Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that **all those who have hearkened unto their words**, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or **they are the heirs of the kingdom of God.**

12 **For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died**, to redeem them from their transgressions.

The Saviour’s grace and mercy applies only to those who have hearkened unto the words of the Prophets. It is for these that the Saviour died. These are they that the Lord will count as his ‘Chosen’.

In the Parable, the Jews failed to accept Christ at his coming or build Christ’s Kingdom so the opportunity to be involved in building the Kingdom was offered to... US!!!! In our day, in this last dispensation. This last chance to gather in scattered Israel to the wedding-feast. It is a spiritual gathering, but also a literal gathering. The gathering culminates with the building up of Zion the New Jerusalem as the place designated for the Lord to receive his Kingdom and his people.

“When will Zion be redeemed? When will the Savior make His appearance in the midst of His people? When will the veil be taken away, that we may behold the glory of God? Can any of you

answer these questions? Yes, readily, when I tell you. The redemption of Zion is the first step preparatory to the two last-named events.

“Just as soon as the Latter-day Saints are ready and prepared to return to Independence, Jackson County, in the state of Missouri, North America, just so soon will the voice of the Lord be heard, ‘Arise now, Israel, and make your way to the Center Stake of Zion.’ We must be pure to be prepared to build up Zion.”

-Brigham Young (July 28, 1861, Journal of Discourses 9:138)

"For without Zion, and a place of deliverance, we must fall; because the time is near when the sun will be darkened, and the moon turn to blood, and the stars fall from the heaven, and the earth reel to and fro. Then, if this is the case, and if we are not sanctified and gathered to the places God has appointed, with all our former professions and our great love for the Bible, we must fall; we cannot stand; we cannot be saved; for God will gather out his Saints from the Gentiles, and then comes desolation and destruction, and none can escape except the pure in heart who are gathered. "

- Joseph Smith the Prophet (TPJS, pp. 70-7)

We must be one temporally and spiritually to build Zion:

"There is not a faithful Elder who does not daily pray earnestly for the **redemption of the Center Stake of Zion**; but how seldom we inquire of ourselves if we are prepared to enter upon that work. The Lord is very merciful to us, and more willing to bestow his bounties upon us than we are to receive them, or prepared to appreciate them; for if we were now prepared to receive the fulness of his Kingdom, we would be far advanced in the knowledge of God to what we are. **I have often remarked that in [p. 340a] spiritual things we are one; and we have also got to become one in temporal things as we are one in spiritual things.**"

President Brigham Young, delivered in the Bowery, Great Salt Lake City, October 7, 1864. Reported By: G. D. Watt.)(Necessity of a Living Testimony of the Holy Ghost—How We Are to Be United, Etc.

In the process of this gathering it has been made clear that each individual will need to be scrutinized as to their worthiness and involvement with Zion. How will this be done?

“I bear this testimony this day, that Joseph Smith was and is a Prophet, Seer, and Revelator—an Apostle holding the keys of this last dispensation and of the kingdom of God, under Peter, James, and John. And not only that he was a Prophet and Apostle of Jesus Christ, and lived and died one, but that he now lives in the spirit world, and holds those same keys to usward and to this whole generation. **Also that he will hold those keys to all eternity; and no power in heaven or on the earth will ever take them from him; for he will continue holding those keys through all eternity, and will stand—yes, again in the flesh upon this earth, as the head of the Latter-day Saints under Jesus Christ, and under Peter, James, and John. He will hold the keys to judge the generation to whom he was sent, and will judge my brethren that preside over me; and will judge me, together with the Apostles ordained by the word of the Lord through him and under his administration.**”

A Discourse by Elder Parley P. Pratt, Delivered in the Bowery, Great Salt Lake City, Sunday, September 7, 1856. JoD Vol 5 - REMINISCENCES AND TESTIMONY OF PARLEY P. PRATT

What does the Lord expect from us to prepare ourselves for the evening-meal (his reign on Earth as King) we have been invited to witness?

What is preventing us from being Chosen? Why aren't we hearkening to the words of the Prophets? What is standing between us and the coming forth of the Kingdom of Christ on the Earth and his evening-meal (reign)?

“Behold, there are many called, but few are *chosen*. And why are they not *chosen*?

“Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men.”²³

“I do **not expect** that **more than half of us** will have oil in our lamps (Matt. 25:2) and be **prepared** to enter into the marriage supper with the Bridegroom. That will be about as much as we can expect, unless we repent of our sins and turn from our follies, fooleries, and the fashions of Babylon—things which our hearts have been set upon instead of upon building up the kingdom of God. It seems to me that **there will be but a remnant even of the Latter-day Saints** who will be **prepared** to inherit eternal life and for the coming of the Bridegroom.”
- Wilford Woodruff, JD 18:117

As Elder Orson F. Whitney said of Zion's Camp:

“The redemption of Zion is more than the purchase or recovery of lands, the building of cities, or even the founding of nations. It is the conquest of the heart, the subjugation of the soul, the sanctifying of the flesh, the purifying and ennobling of the passions.”

-Elder Orson F. Whitney (The Life of Heber C. Kimball, 2d ed., Salt Lake City: Stevens & Wallis, 1945, p. 65)

We need to cast the love for Babylon from our lives, take upon ourselves the wedding garment and choose to be chosen by sanctifying ourselves through hearkening to the words of the Prophets. This will prepare us to become that Zion people that will be worthy to attend the Saviours wedding-feast and bring forth the great capital of Christ's Kingdom on the Earth, Zion the New Jerusalem, in preparation for the evening-meal and his reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Micah's Thoughts:

For this I believe at the very least, before reading a parable, one should read what Joseph Smith said about unlocking the true meaning behind the parables of the Lord. Joseph Smith taught: “the Lord would never make use of a figure of a beast nor any of the brute kind to represent His Kingdom” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 289). Joseph Smith taught that every jot and tittle of the word had to be literally fulfilled and this included parables, visions etc. Joseph Smith in identifying that the Lord even in a parable or vision wouldn't use something ungodly to represent something godly clarifies that even the symbols in parables have to make sense. Joseph Smith also taught on another occasion the best way to go about trying to find this primary purpose: “I have a key by which I understand the scriptures. I inquire, what was the question which drew out the answer, or caused Jesus to utter the parable?” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p.276-277) Joseph then goes on to explain that the question being answered is the primary interpretation and “all straining on this point is a bubble” (Teachings of the Prophet

Joseph Smith, p.277). So the best way to go about understanding the primary meaning/fulfillment/etc. behind a parable is to inquire “what caused Jesus to utter the parable”- if our interpretations of the parable don’t go directly to answer that question than we don’t have the primary interpretation.

People should also take note, that before Elder Bednar even went into this parable, he listed off other parables, “the mustard seed”, “the ten virgins”, “the pearl of great price”, etc. which people should realize all deal with the Redemption of Zion and building of the New Jerusalem- I obviously do not believe this to be accidental in the slightest.

So let’s answer the question “what drew out the parable” first

Matthew 21

50 And now his disciples came to him; and Jesus said unto them, Marvel ye at the words of the parable which I spake unto them?

51 Verily, I say unto you, I am the stone, and those wicked ones reject me.

52 I am the head of the corner. These Jews shall fall upon me and shall be broken.

53 And the kingdom of God shall be taken from them and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof (meaning the Gentiles).

54 Wherefore, on whomsoever this stone shall fall, it shall grind him to powder.

55 And when the Lord, therefore, of the vineyard cometh, he will destroy those miserable, wicked men, and will let again his vineyard unto other husbandmen, even in the last days, who shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

56 And then understood they the parable which he spake unto them, *that the Gentiles should be destroyed also*, when the Lord should descend out of heaven to reign in his vineyard, which is the earth and the inhabitants thereof.

Matthew 22

1 And Jesus answered the people again, and spake unto them in parables, and said,

2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto..

So from this we learn that the questions being asked and then answered by the Lord deal with His Second Coming, but more specifically to the relationship between the Lord’s kingdom, i.e. “the kingdom of heaven” and the Gentiles and who are destroyed and who take part in that kingdom. If our interpretations of this parable don’t answer these questions specifically than we are off on the primary interpretation. A set of scriptures I believe are important to read next as they will set the mind on the correct path to fully understand this parable from the get-go are found in

Doctrine and Covenants 112

23 Verily, verily, I say unto you, darkness covereth the earth, and gross darkness the minds of the people, and all flesh has become corrupt before my face.

24 Behold, vengeance cometh speedily upon the inhabitants of the earth, a day of wrath, a day of burning, a day of desolation, of weeping, of mourning, and of lamentation; and as a whirlwind it shall come upon all the face of the earth, saith the Lord.

25 And upon my house shall it begin, and from my house shall it go forth, saith the Lord;

26 First among those among you, saith the Lord, who have professed to know my name and have not known me, and have blasphemed against me in the midst of my house, saith the Lord.

Once again, to keep myself from doing a complete parable breakdown here I will simply say a few words generally about the two most important aspects of the parable

1. The command to prepare and go to the wedding feast and the subsequent refusal and reasons for the refusal are exactly the same as in the parable of the Nobleman and His Olive Trees... In that parable dealing with the Redemption of Zion and building of New Jerusalem (which is tied directly with the wedding feast of the Lord, the ten virgins, etc.) the servants are invited/commanded to build a tower, but we learn:

Doctrine and Covenants 101

46... [the servants of the Nobleman] began to build a tower.

47 And while they were yet laying the foundation thereof, they began to say among themselves: And what need hath my lord of this tower?

48 And consulted for a long time, saying among themselves: What need hath my lord of this tower, seeing this is a time of peace?

49 Might not this money be given to the exchangers? For there is no need of these things.

50 And while they were at variance one with another they became very slothful, and they hearkened not unto the commandments of their lord

The same command for the same events and the same rationale for refusal “might not this money better be spent?” This most certainly reflects misguided priorities towards money and business with a total disregard towards the king’s/Lord’s will. The next series of events in both parables play out identical, with the servants of the Nobleman/King going out and gathering “the residue of the strength of the Lord’s house, the young and middle aged men, etc.”

2. Someone in the parable thought to get in another way and was denied. This is something that is not covered in the parable of the Nobleman and His Olive Trees but is covered in the parable of the ten virgins, as well as by the Lord specifically in

Matthew 7

22 ¶ Repent, therefore, and enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction; and many there be who go in thereat.

23 Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it.

24 ¶ And again, beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

25 Ye shall know them by their fruits; for do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?

26 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

27 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

28 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

29 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

30 Verily, I say unto you, It is not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, that shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.

31 For the day soon cometh that men shall come before me to judgment, to be judged according to their works.

32 And many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name; and in thy name cast out devils; and in thy name done many wonderful works?

33 And then will I say, Ye never knew me; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

34 Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock; and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.

35 And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it.

And now a scripture chain giving the key of insight into understanding this, for those with ears to hear and eyes to see:

Matthew 22

14 For many are called, but few chosen; wherefore, all do not have on the wedding garment

D&C 121

"Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men"

2 Nephi 28

9 Yea, and there shall be many which shall teach after this manner, false and vain and foolish doctrines, and shall be puffed up in their hearts, and shall seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord; and their works shall be in the dark.

10 And the blood of the saints shall cry from the ground against them.

11 Yea, they have all gone out of the way; they have become corrupted.

12 Because of pride, and because of false teachers, and false doctrine, their churches have become corrupted, and their churches are lifted up; because of pride they are puffed up.

13 They rob the poor because of their fine sanctuaries; they rob the poor because of their fine clothing; and they persecute the meek and the poor in heart, because in their pride they are puffed up.

14 They wear stiff necks and high heads; yea, and because of pride, and wickedness, and abominations, and whoredoms, they have all gone astray save it be a few, who are the humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men.

Mormon 8

35 Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing.

36 And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquities; and your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts.

37 For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted.

38 O ye pollutions, ye hypocrites, ye teachers, who sell yourselves for that which will canker, why have ye polluted the holy church of God? Why are ye ashamed to take upon you the name of Christ? Why do ye not think that greater is the value of an endless happiness than that misery which never dies—because of the praise of the world?

39 Why do ye adorn yourselves with that which hath no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not?

40 Yea, why do ye build up your secret abominations to get gain, and cause that widows should mourn before the Lord, and also orphans to mourn before the Lord, and also the blood of their fathers and their husbands to cry unto the Lord from the ground, for vengeance upon your heads?

41 Behold, the sword of vengeance hangeth over you; and the time soon cometh that he avengeth the blood of the saints upon you, for he will not suffer their cries any longer.

2 Nephi 26

29 He commandeth that there shall be no priestcrafts; for, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion.

30 Behold, the Lord hath forbidden this thing; wherefore, the Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have charity, which charity is love. And except they should have charity they were nothing. Wherefore, if they should have charity they would not suffer the laborer in Zion to perish.

31 But the laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion; for if they labor for money they shall perish.

Doctrine and Covenants 38

23 But, verily I say unto you, teach one another according to the office wherewith I have appointed you;

24 And let every man esteem his brother as himself, and practise virtue and holiness before me.

25 And again I say unto you, let every man esteem his brother as himself.

26 For what man among you having twelve sons, and is no respecter of them, and they serve him obediently, and he saith unto the one: Be thou clothed in robes and sit thou here; and to the other: Be thou clothed in rags and sit thou there—and looketh upon his sons and saith I am just?

27 Behold, this I have given unto you as a parable, and it is even as I am. I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine.

"Why do ye adorn yourselves with that which hath no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not?"

Those that are not wearing the wedding garments are those practicing priestcraft, those who have "adorned themselves" with something else... Period... They do not wear the clothes of the laborer in Zion who labored for Zion, they adorn themselves with that which hath no life- money. That very much so is a choice, an act of open rebellion... They have chosen to set themselves above "the laborer in Zion"...

A perfect example of those WEARING the wedding garments:

Mosiah 18

26 And the priests were not to depend upon the people for their support; but for their labor they were to receive the grace of God, that they might wax strong in the Spirit, having the knowledge of God, that they might teach with power and authority from God.

Alma 1

19 But it came to pass that whosoever did not belong to the church of God began to persecute those that did belong to the church of God, *and had taken upon them the name of Christ.*

20 Yea, they did persecute them, and afflict them with all manner of words, and this because of their humility; *because they were not proud in their own eyes, and because they did impart the word of God, one with another, without money and without price*

25 *Now this was a great trial to those that did stand fast in the faith*; nevertheless, they were steadfast and immovable in keeping the commandments of God, and they bore with patience the persecution which was heaped upon them.

26 And when the priests left their labor to impart the word of God unto the people, the people also left their labors to hear the word of God. And when the priest had imparted unto them the word of God they all returned again diligently unto their labors; and the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers, for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal, and they did all labor, every man according to his strength.

27 And they did impart of their substance, every man according to that which he had, to the poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the afflicted; and they did not wear costly apparel, yet they were neat and comely.

In summary, the custom in those days was for the host of a wedding feast—in this parable, the king—to provide garments for the wedding guests. Such wedding garments were simple, nondescript robes that all attendees wore. *In this way, rank and station were eliminated, and everyone at the feast could mingle as equals*, or in other words, *"the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers, for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal, and they did all labor, every man according to his strength."*

Those that preach the Word of God for money (i.e. "those that sell their labor for money") are those who will be found without a wedding garment on. Period. Be one, or you are not His. Period.

I know why this subject became so frustrating for Hugh Nibley... Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints just don't want to hear it... They just don't... And it is EVERYWHERE in the scriptures, if one takes the time to actually read them... Which is why Hugh Nibley lamented the observable fact:

My sense of urgency comes from the fact that I spend all my days now with the scriptures. And the two marks of the Church I see are and have been for a long time these: a reverence for wealth and a contempt for the scriptures. Naturally, the two go hand in hand. We should call attention to the fact that these things we are doing are against the work of the Lord. There is one saying of Joseph Smith I think of quite often: "If the heavens seem silent at a time when we

desperately need revelation, it is because of covetousness in the Church. God has often sealed up the heavens because of covetousness.” And now the Church isn’t just shot through with covetousness, it is saturated with covetousness. And so the heavens are going to be closed. We’re told we don’t get revelation if we put our trust in money in the bank.

- **Hugh Nibley** (“Nibley Talks about Contemporary Issues,” 13)

Matthew 24

45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, *to give them meat in due season?*

46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh *shall find so doing.*

47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;

49 And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Doctrine and Covenants 101

11 Mine indignation is soon to be poured out without measure upon all nations; and this will I do when the cup of their iniquity is full.

12 And in that day *all who are found upon the watch-tower, or in other words, all mine Israel*, shall be saved.

13 And they that have been scattered shall be gathered.

3 Nephi 24

16 Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.

17 And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

18 Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

“For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.”²⁵

In the busyness of our daily lives and in the commotion of the contemporary world in which we live, we may be distracted from the eternal things that matter the most by making pleasure,

prosperity, popularity, and prominence our primary priorities. Our short-term preoccupation with “the things of this world” and “the honors of men” may lead us to forfeit our spiritual birthright for far less than a mess of pottage.²⁶

Promise and Testimony

I repeat the admonition of the Lord to His people delivered through the Old Testament prophet Haggai: “Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.”²⁷

Each of us should evaluate our temporal and spiritual priorities sincerely and prayerfully to identify the things in our lives that may impede the bounteous blessings that Heavenly Father and the Savior are willing to bestow upon us. And surely the Holy Ghost will help us to see ourselves as we really are.²⁸

As we appropriately seek for the spiritual gift of eyes to see and ears to hear,²⁹ I promise that we will be blessed with the capacity and judgment to strengthen our covenant connection with the living Lord. We also will receive the power of godliness in our lives³⁰—and ultimately be both called to and chosen for the Lord’s feast.

“Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion.”³¹

“For Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness; her borders must be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened; yea, verily I say unto you, Zion must arise and put on her beautiful garments.”³²

I joyfully declare my witness of the divinity and living reality of God, our Eternal Father, and of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. I testify that Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer and that He lives. And I also witness that the Father and the Son appeared to the boy Joseph Smith, thus initiating the Restoration of the Savior’s gospel in the latter days. May each of us seek for and be blessed with eyes to see and ears to hear, I pray in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

Footnotes:

1. See [Matthew 13:31–32](#).
2. See [Matthew 13:45–46](#).
3. See [Matthew 20:1–16](#).
4. See [Matthew 25:1–13](#).
5. [Mark 4:34](#).
6. See [Matthew 7:7–8](#); [Luke 11:9–10](#).
7. [Matthew 22:1–5](#).
8. See James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (1916), 536–40.
9. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 537.
10. See James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 537.
11. [Matthew 22:8–10](#).
12. See John O. Reid, “Many Are Called, Few Are Chosen,” *Forerunner*, Mar.–Apr. 2016, 8, cgg.org.
13. See Joseph Fielding McConkie, *Gospel Symbolism* (1985), 132.
14. [Matthew 22:12](#).
15. See Reid, “Many Are Called, Few Are Chosen,” 8.
16. See Reid, “Many Are Called, Few Are Chosen,” 8.
17. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 539–40.

18. [Matthew 22:13](#); see Reid, “Many Are Called, Few Are Chosen,” 8.
19. Reid, “Many Are Called, Few Are Chosen,” 8.
20. [Matthew 22:14](#).
21. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 22:14 (in [Matthew 22:14](#), footnote *b*); emphasis added.
22. See Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (1993), 769–71.
23. [Doctrine and Covenants 121:34–35](#); emphasis added.
24. See David A. Bednar, “[The Tender Mercies of the Lord](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2005, 99–102.
25. [2 Nephi 25:23](#).
26. See [Genesis 25:29–34](#).
27. [Haggai 1:5](#).
28. See [Jacob 4:13](#); [Doctrine and Covenants 93:24](#).
29. See [Matthew 13:16](#).
30. See [Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–21](#).
31. [Isaiah 52:1](#).
32. [Doctrine and Covenants 82:14](#).