



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

# “The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 88”

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***Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.***



### The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 88

#### Matthew 25:1–2

**1 “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.**

**2 Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish.**

Thank you for listening and thinking with me as we study God’s Word to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

Our takeaway point in this series on the Biblical Design of Gender is, God has designed man as the cooperative coalition of husband and wife so man can successfully achieve the objective that God has given us to exercise dominion over the earth, developing wisdom and knowledge in preparation for further responsibility in our eternal life.

The format of the wedding of a Jewish man to his wife in Jesus’ day was almost completely different from the pre-marital formalities that we have today.

One difference is that there were no wedding negotiations between the intended husband and the woman that he wanted to marry. Rather than getting down on one knee, romantically asking the woman, “Will you marry me”, and presenting her with a ring, the intended husband in those days had to negotiate marriage with the father of the woman that he wanted to marry.

For example, Jacob, Abraham’s grandson, saw a beautiful woman as he traveled to the town of Haran in which his uncle Laban lived to escape the wrath of his older brother Esau. She happened to be Laban’s daughter Rachel. Jacob worked for his uncle Laban for a month, after which Laban decided to compensate Jacob for his service. **Genesis 29:15–20** tells us:

**15 Then Laban said to Jacob, “Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what should your wages be?”**

**16 Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.**

**18 Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, “I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter.”**

**19 And Laban said, “It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me.”**

**20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her.**



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It was Laban's purview to select a husband for his daughter, thus Jacob approached Laban to propose marriage rather than Rachel. Now, some people in our generation might think that this method of determining marital partners is backwards, but in reality, it is more intelligent to have a woman's father decide whether a man is a good match for his daughter, for several reasons.

In the normative case, a woman's father is between fifteen years and forty years older than the woman herself, and should have been married for those years. A more experienced father should be able to make a more mature, more objective, reasoned decision about a potential mate than his youthful daughter, since maturity and knowledge generally increase with age and experience. The daughter, being younger, less objective and romantically involved, will likely be more emotional and less discerning about the choice of a spouse.

According to the 1995 report from the National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, of the divorces that occurred during the year of 1990, 27.6% of the women divorced were married before their twentieth birthday, 36.6% were married between the ages of 20-24, 16.4% between the ages of 25-29, 8.5% between the ages of 30-34, 5.1% between the ages of 35-39, and 5.8% age 40 or older. I use this report because the reporting standards changed in 1995, and such reports are not available from the CDC past 1990.

But the statistics from the CDC clearly indicate that the younger the person making the marital decision, the less likely that decision will ultimately be successful. Thus, it would be better to have an older, more mature, more objective father, who is less likely to be influenced by romanticism, make the decision as to whether or not a particular young man is a proper suitor for his daughter.

So, in the Biblical economy, the young man and the young woman's father made the marital agreement. That is not to say that the young woman was not consulted. In the Biblical case of Abraham's son Isaac, Abraham sent his servant to find a bride for his son. When the servant found Rebekah and proposed marriage to her father, her father agreed. The next morning, the servant wanted to take Rebekah back to Isaac. **Genesis 24:55-59** records:

**55 But her brother and her mother said, "Let the young woman stay with us a few days, at least ten; after that she may go."**

**56 And [Abraham's servant] said to them, "Do not hinder me, since the LORD has prospered my way; send me away so that I may go to my master."**

**57 So they said, "We will call the young woman and ask her personally."**

**58 Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "I will go."**

**59 So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men.**



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So, young women were not generally married against their will, but their father had the responsibility to verify and approve of the young man's bona fides.

Once the marriage contract between the man and his intended's father was completed, the couple was considered married. The marriage was not consummated, however, until the completion of the preparation period, a period similar to that which we call engagement.

During this engagement period, it was the responsibility of the husband to prepare a home into which he could bring his bride. Fathers were generally not concerned about emotional attachment, and would not allow a man to marry his daughter unless the intended husband could take care of her financially. The old saying was, "A man should never ask for a woman's hand until he is able to take it out of her father's pocket."

It was the responsibility of the wife to prepare the household goods and wardrobe that she would be bringing to her new home upon moving in.

After the engagement preparation, on consummation day, the groom left the home that he prepared for his bride as she and her bridesmaids moved that which the bride prepared into her new home. Once the bride completed the move, the groom returned home to consummate his marriage with his bride. After consummation, the new couple was officially man and wife in every sense of the word.

As the home was being prepared, and as the bride and groom were consummating their marriage, people often held celebrations at the new marital home. As a matter of fact, Jesus' first miracle of turning water into wine occurred at one of these marriage celebrations.

Since the groom did not know exactly how long his bride was going to take to move in, grooms often stayed away from their home until the evening or even at night. Before the advent of electricity, one of the responsibilities of the bridesmaids was to remain outside of the home with oil burning lamps to light the groom's path if he chose return home after dark.

Our text for today records such an incident. Jesus starts this parable in

**Matthew 25:1:**

**1 "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom."**

The similarity between the kingdom of heaven and the bridesmaids waiting for the groom is that both the bridesmaids and those going into the kingdom of heaven are waiting for someone to arrive. The bridesmaids were awaiting the bridegroom; those of us start are alive and intending to go to heaven are awaiting the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. **1Thessalonians 4:13–18** tells us:

**13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, [meaning died] lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.**



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**14** For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

**15** For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

**16** For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

**17** Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

**18** Therefore comfort one another with these words.

And Jesus Himself tells us that no one who is waiting for Him knows when He is coming back to initiate these events, just as the bridesmaids do not know when the bridegroom is coming back to consummate his marriage. Jesus tells us, in **Matthew 24:36–44**:

**36** “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

**37** But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

**38** For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,  
**39** and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

**40** Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left.

**41** Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.

**42** Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

**43** But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.

**44** Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

And just as the bridesmaids are admonished to be ready for the groom, we are admonished to be ready for the return of the Lord. But, despite Jesus’ warning, everyone will not be ready. **Matthew 25:2–4** records this information about the bridesmaids in the parable:

**2** Now five of them were wise, and five [bridesmaids] were foolish.

**3** Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them,

**4** but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

If one’s duty is to light the path of someone who may be coming at any hour with a lamp that is fueled by oil, it would be wise of one to have sufficient



fuel to do so, wouldn't you agree? But five of the bridesmaids did not heed that wisdom.

The parallel in the parable is that since Jesus Christ is coming at an hour that we do not expect, it would be wise of us to always watch and wait on our best behavior for his return, rather than foolishly participating in sin and not watching for Jesus. John tells us, in **1John 1:8–10**:

**8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.**

**9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

**10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.**

John makes it clear that our problem is not our sinfulness, but rather, our lack of repentance. And we may not be able to repent of our sin if we are committing it as Jesus Christ returns. Thus, the Scripture instructs us to be on watch for Jesus, meaning that we should avoid sin as though Jesus Himself would be returning to get us in the next minute.

I, for one, would hate to find myself sinning in a den of iniquity as Jesus returns. When I go to the club at which my wife Marie and I ballroom dance, I generally take either Marie or my computer. I also avoid drinking the alcohol that they serve in the club, so that if Jesus returns while I am in the club, I won't be doing anything of which Jesus could find me guilty.

I remember one evening as Marie and I were sitting in the club, a member of a particular church that had listened to and enjoyed many of my sermons entered the club. She stopped when she saw me, and then felt compelled to come over to my table. "Reverend Curtis", she said loudly with a disapproving tone as she walked up to our table, "what are you doing in here?"

Then, as she approached the table, she saw my wife sitting there, and her demeanor changed. "Oh, hi, Mrs. Curtis", she responded sheepishly, "How are you?"

**Ecclesiastes 9:9** tells us:

**9 Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun.**

So I can go into any venue with my wife and enjoy the ambiance.

Regardless of the intimacy of that which I am doing when Jesus returns, if I am participating with my wife, I am not sinning. **Malachi 2:15** tells us:

**15 But did [God] not make them [husband and wife] one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? [God] seeks godly offspring. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.**



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And that is another reason that I only dance with my wife. I can dance with her as intimately as I choose without sin. If, however, I dance with another man's wife, I may find myself sinning inadvertently or accidentally. God gives men wives and women husbands so that they can enjoy physical and emotional intimacy without sin.

And when I am faced with emotional distress, I have a spouse to whom I can express my innermost thoughts and feelings to comfort me. I have moved away from all my childhood friends; Momma has heard the steady march of the chariot wheels from the sky. Dad lives 240 miles away and my brother lives about 180 miles away. But **Genesis 2:24** tells me:

**24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.**

So, I always have someone. The purpose of having a spouse is so that we will always have someone. I often mention Psalm 90:10, which denotes our normal lifespan because our elders, the ones that raised us and love us, are going to pass off the scene. Neither you nor I can forestall God's plan. The cycle of life indicates that our parents will go home to be with the Lord before us, that we will go home to be with the Lord before our children, and so on.

God gives us marriage, and a spouse that is our contemporary with whom we can share the most intimate things of life because although life is not always going to be as we like it to be, we still have the admonition to watch for the Lord's return. And when I am emotionally down, and can not man my watching post well, my wife is watching with and for me. And when she is down and can not watch well, I am watching with and for her. Hopefully, one of us will always be on watch.

The Bible does not tell us when Jesus is going to return, but it does assure us that Jesus is coming. In Jesus' parable, all of the bridesmaids fell asleep watching for the bridegroom, who finally did come home. **Matthew 25:6–7** records:

**6 "And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!'**

**7 Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.**

But the bridegroom tarried so long before coming home that all the oil that the bridesmaids had in their lamps had burned up. For the bridesmaids that had extra oil, this situation was no problem. For the others, however, the problem was very real. **Matthew 25:8–9**: records:

**8 And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'**

**9 But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.'**



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Going to buy oil at midnight is a chancy proposition, but the foolish bridesmaids were forced to do so. They were fortunate enough to find some oil, but, **Matthew 25:10** tells us:

**10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.**

It's midnight. The wedding party is inside and the wedding is proceeding. People have had all day and all evening to arrive at the wedding, and they are enjoying the party as the bride and groom are consummating the marriage.

Since it is midnight, it is prudent to lock the door against those that were not invited to the wedding. And since it is dark at midnight, it is difficult to discern the identity of those that would come to the festivities at this late hour. Thus, **Matthew 25:11–12** tells us:

**11 “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’**

**12 But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’**

Brothers and sisters, the Lord admonishes us to watch for His return. The Lord admonishes us to be on watch for His return. The Lord admonishes us to remain on watch for His return. The Lord admonishes us to spend our lives watching for His return. Yes, we have things to do, places to go and people to see, but we should always live our lives being conscious of the fact that any moment may be our last on this side. **1Corinthians 15:51–52**: make this point crystal clear to us, as it says:

**51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—**

**52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.**

When the Lord returns, He will do so in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. The parallel from the parable tells us that there will be no time to get oil for your lamp and light it; you will need to be watching for his return and be able to immediately light your lamp, because the rapture will not take long enough for you to go buy oil.

**1Corinthians 15:53–57** makes it clear to us that Jesus Christ will defeat death on that day, as the Scripture says:

**53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.**

**54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”**

**55 “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”**

**56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.**

**57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**



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I preached my mother's funeral on December 5, 2003. She suffered with Alzheimer's disease for ten years and was unable to speak coherently for five years before she heard the steady march of the chariot wheels from the sky. But I stood in the pulpit that morning with the confident assurance that Momma was alive and able to think as well on that December day as she had been on her wedding day. **2Corinthians 5:1** tells us:

**1 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.**

And Momma went to her heavenly building at 11:00am on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2003, and was rejoicing with the Lord as I was preaching her funeral.

But, at the end of my sermon, I found myself crying. I knew, as I was crying, that Momma was better off walking the streets of gold in heaven than unresponsive and unable to speak in the hospital. But I was still crying. I was not crying for her; I was crying for myself, because although she is enjoying her eternal life, I will not be able to see or hear her again until I make the trip that she made just a few days earlier.

And, as I was writing that sermon, I recognized that although she had fought the good fight, finished her course and kept the faith, I still had some fighting to do. And although her resurrection at the return of Jesus Christ was assured, I was still in watching mode. And Paul tells me, and us, in **1Corinthians 15:58**:

**58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.**

And, as we work, we have to keep watch, as the Lord tells us, in **Matthew 25:13**:

**13 "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.**

So the message to the virgins is clear. Be wise. Carry oil for your lamps. Watch and be ready for the return of the bridegroom. And we know that the bridegroom, Jesus Christ, is coming back for His bride, the church, as Paul tells us, in **Ephesians 5:25–27**:

**25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,**

**26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,**

**27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.**

Christ gave Himself for those whom He loves, as He allowed the Jews and the Romans to break His body and shed His blood on the Cross of Calvary. Jesus Christ suffered, bled and died for His Church that our sins, thought they be



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many, might be forgiven. Jesus Christ died that repentance and restoration might be preached, beginning at Jerusalem, and even down to this little place to the few of us in the present day.

Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, grew up in Palestine, ministered in Israel, and walked the streets for three and a half years doing nothing but good. And Jesus Christ let us know that He was not just living the life of a good teacher, because He not only taught with wisdom, but He healed the sick, raised the dead, open blinded eyes, unstopped deaf ears and cast out demons from those who were possessed.

And Jesus did all of this to give the Jews and Romans an ocular demonstration of His deity, and to give us a historical record of the fact that He is God in the flesh. And then, when His earthly work was completed and He had fulfilled the prophecy in the Scripture, Jesus Christ allow sinful men to crucify Him as a sacrifice, shedding His blood on the Cross that our sins might be forgiven.

And then, early on that first Easter Sunday morning, Jesus Christ rose from the dead in fulfillment of the Scripture and to let us know, as Paul tells us, in **Romans 8:11**:

**11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.**

And Jesus assures us that this is true, that we actually have eternal life.

**John 3:16–17** tells us:

**16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**

**17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**

Salvation is ours. For us to be saved, we only have to believe in Jesus Christ. And if we believe in Jesus Christ, meaning, if we believe that Jesus Christ actually existed, that Jesus Christ is a Wonderful Counselor and that we should do as Jesus Christ instructs us, that Jesus Christ was sent by God, and that Jesus Christ is actually God in the flesh, our primary act to demonstrate our belief in Him is to fulfill His commandment to love one another.

Our exercise of our love for one another is our primary way to witness we love Jesus Christ. So, as we go down from this place today, let us resolve to be patient and kind with one another. Let us not be envious or puffed up with pride, nor should we seek our own best good at the expense of our brother or sister.

Let us not be rude or easily provoked, walking around with a chip on our shoulder, thinking evil, and let us be glad when the beneficial truth comes out, rather than being glad about our sins. Let us be able to bear one another's burdens, endure hardship as a good soldier, hope for the best for one another, and believe the best of one another.

**John 13:34–35** tells us:



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**34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.**

**35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

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