

Sermons on Matthew

As the Days of Noah

-Matthew 24:36-44

With Study Questions

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-Matthew 24:36-44

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 (Matthew 24:36-44).

Introduction

Last week we discussed the conflict between the popular notion of the world descending into a moral rotting carcass, ripe for judgment, and the Scriptural declarations of worldwide redemption.

God promised that **“all the families of the earth shall be blessed”** (Genesis 12:3); that Christ will reign **“till He has put all enemies under His feet”** (1 Corinthians 15:25; Psalm 110:1); that **“All the ends of the world Shall remember and turn to the Lord”** (Psalm 22:27); that the child of promise would be born and begin a kingdom that would have **“no end”** (Isaiah 9:6, 7); that promise was that **“the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea”** (Isaiah 11:9); Jesus confirmed this promise by telling Peter, **“_the gates of Hades shall not __prevail against it (the church)”** (Matthew 16:18).

So where do Christians get the notion that the world would become a rotting carcass rather than a redeemed and sanctified creation? They get it, largely, from the chapter we’re studying. They get it by losing the context of Matthew; that it was a judgment against Jerusalem, not the Great White Throne Judgment. Again, in review of Matthew we read that John the Baptist preached of an imminent judgment: **“even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees... (God’s) winnowing fan is in His hand (Matthew 3:10, 12).** Jesus told His disciples He would come in judgment before they made

it through the “cities of Israel” (Matthew 10:23). He then gave a time frame: **“Assuredly, I say to you, __there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom” (Matthew 16:28).**

The parables of judgment given by Jesus were aimed, not at the end of the world, but at the Pharisees (esp. the landowner—Matthew 21:33-46). Matthew records: **“Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they __perceived that He was speaking of them” (Matthew 21:45).** The entire chapter (chapter 23) leading up to our current chapter contains denunciations not against those who exist at the end of the world, but against the scribes and Pharisees. It was the scribes and Pharisees who received the multiples “woes” from the mouth of Jesus. Jesus concludes that chapter proclaiming that the justice of God **“from the blood of righteous Abel to __the blood of Zechariah”** (v. 35) would fall upon the **“generation”** hearing His words (v. 36).

This chapter has to do with the explosive end of the Old Covenant and the beginning of the New Covenant. It is not a prediction of the failure of the gospel¹ to redeem the world, quite the opposite. It is a prediction of God’s judgment of the enemies of the gospel, that the gospel might flow toward the east and toward the west... that the **“Lord shall be King over all the earth” (Zechariah 14:8, 9).**

For those who have not followed with us through chapter 24, it must be restated that the somewhat universal language—“world, nations” etc. are words used to describe the Mediterranean area or the Roman Empire (see Romans 1:8; Acts 2:5).

The text before us this morning gives us yet one more reason to understand this as a judgment against Jerusalem rather than the world.

¹ eg. Clarence Larkin *The Greatest Book on dispensational Truth in the World* (Rev. Clarence Larkin Est. 2802 N. Park Ave., Philadelphia 32, Pa. U. S. A., 1918), p. 77 1/2

But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of __heaven, __but My Father only (Matthew 24:36).

Day, Hour, Season

Do we, or do we not know the day, hour or season of the Second Coming?

Jesus chastised the Pharisees and Sadducees for their lack of ability to discern, literally, the **“signs of the seasons”** (Matthew 16:3; Luke 12:56) in which they were living—in other words they should have known they were in a season of judgment—as when Luke records **“the season of your (their) visitation”** (Luke 19:44).

Paul, writing to the church at Thessalonica, tells them they **“have no need”** to be taught regarding the **“times and seasons”** (1 Thessalonians 5:1) of this judgment. Speaking of those who would be judged, Paul says **“they shall not escape”** (1 Thessalonians 5:3). And although the Lord would come as a **“thief in the night”** (1 Thessalonians 5:2), those who were taught by Paul were **“not in darkness, so that they Day should over them you (them) as a thief”** (1 Thessalonians 5:4).

Paul continues that passage in 1 Thessalonians by telling his readers:

Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but __let us watch and be _sober. ⁻⁷⁻ For _those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk __are drunk at night. ⁻⁸⁻ But let us who are of the day be sober (1 Thessalonians 5:6-8).

Paul seems to be under the impression that they know (or at least have a very good idea) of what precedes the Day. The Day is not going to be like a thief to them—they are to keep their eyes open. But if this event isn't going to happen for thousands of years, exactly what is it they're looking for? This is highly problematic!

A quick review: Jesus chastises the Pharisees and Sadducees for not knowing the season of judgment; Paul comforts the Christians at Thessalonica because they do know the season of judgment. How does this help in light of our current passage? All of Matthew 24 contains warning signs of judgment—and even though they know the season, they don't know the day or the hour. Those warning signs of judgment were passed down to the church at Thessalonica (at one point they thought the judgment had already taken place—2 Thessalonians 2:2), and they knew the season, but had to be on the lookout for the day or hour.

Why is this yet another argument against this being the Great White Throne Judgment or the Second Coming? Remember, the faithful should know and did know of the season of judgment.

- Yet, at the ascension, where we're told that Jesus will return in the same manner in which He ascended (bodily at the Second Coming), Jesus has just the opposite to say regarding knowing the seasons.

Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"⁻⁷⁻ And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority (Acts 1:6, 7).

So, are we to know the season, or not to know the season? The difficulty is removed if we recognize that there are two different events that many have somehow converged into one. There is a season they were to know of (the imminent destruction of Jerusalem and end of the Old Covenant—Jesus will speak of that season in His Olivet Discourse), and there is a season that no one knows (the Second Coming) as we read in Acts 1:7.

-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 (Matthew 24: 37-39).

Life Goes On

Jesus is addressing a sort of 'Life Goes On' mentality in this passage. Although this passage is describing the attitude of those who would be judged when the temple fell, it is a common theme found throughout the Old Testament. Citing Noah gives the impression of licentiousness rather than mere conventional eating, drinking and marrying.

"Eating" (*trogontes*) conveys the idea of gnawing or slow munching—perhaps gluttonous. Genesis 6:4 tells us of ungodly marriages between the faithful and the faithless. It was a time of great evil and terrible judgment. And even though Noah was a **"preacher of righteousness"** (2 Peter 2:5), people partied on as if there would never be a

day of reckoning. We saw this when Moses delayed coming down the mountain, that the people **“corrupted themselves”** (Exodus 32:7). This theme of partying with no regard for judgment is found with Nabal (1 Samuel 25:36-38), The Amalekites (1 Samuel 30:16), the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:20), the parable of the great supper (Luke 14:18-20), and many other places.

There are many people who believe this passage speaks of judgment day rather than the fall of Jerusalem, and in one respect they’re correct. Because every last person in the Bible who was judged in history because of their rebellion against God found themselves immediately before the eternal tribunal of God: **“...it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment”** (Hebrews 9:27).

It is utter folly to have a ‘Life Goes On’ approach to life. God says of Israel, **“She did not consider her future; therefore she has fallen astonishingly”** (Lamentations 1:9). Life ends in a moment and we are not all given warning, as expressed in the next passage.

__ 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** (Matthew 24:40-42).

Often used as a text for a secret rapture, this passage says nothing of the resurrection, which is always given as universal—the **sheep and the goats** standing together in judgment (Matthew 25:32), the **wheat and the tares** harvested together (Matthew 13:30), the **resurrection of the good and evil** all together (John 5:28, 29). **“One will be taken”** (*paralambanetai*) does not mean to be lifted into the air; it simply means to bring along or take along.

This passage speaks of how quickly life ends—the swiftness of judgment. We hear of military conflicts where a soldier is speaking with his friend, he looks, and his friend is gone. The audience of Jesus would leave for the hills of Judea prior to this judgment for they knew the season even though they did not know the hour.

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** (Matthew 24:43, 44).

This is not the first time Jesus compares Himself to a thief. Earlier in Matthew Jesus describes Himself as entering the **“strong man’s house, binding the strong man and plundering his goods”** (Matthew 12:26-31). Only Jesus is a thief taking back that which is rightfully His—all the earth (Psalm 24:1). At the cross Jesus **“disarmed _principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it”** (Colossians 2:15). It was the victory of Jesus over the devil that gave the angel the key to the bottomless pit, binding Satan that he **“should deceive the nations no more”** (Revelation 20:1-3).

In short, Jesus is telling His listeners to be aware of God’s visitation of judgment the way a man might be prepared for a robber. There seems to be a clear indication that His listeners heeded His advice and headed for Pella where they were safe from the judgment that killed over a million people.²

God’s judgment, both in history and eternity, generally come without warning. We are ever to be ready to face our Maker. Those who had a faithful obedience to Christ were saved from the Roman armies, but more importantly, those who have a faithful obedience to Christ—those who trust not in themselves but in Him alone for deliverance from judgment—will find that there is no judgment at all. As Jesus taught, **“he who does not believe in Him is condemned already,”** but **“He who believes in Him is not condemned”** (John 3:18).

Questions for Study

1. Discuss the conflict between the views that the world is getting worse or better since the time of Christ (page 2).
2. What is the context of judgment in the gospel of Matthew leading to the Olivet Discourse (pages 3, 4)?

² Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. 3, cap. 5.

3. Should Christians know the day, hour or season of God's judgment? Explain your answer (pages 4, 5)?
4. What is there a danger in having a 'life goes on' mentality (pages 5, 6)?
5. What is the problem with the idea of a 'secret rapture' (page 6)?
6. In what respect is Satan bound (page 7)?