

Matthew 24F

- After a short break, I'm back and we're ready to dive back into our study about that mysterious future day that Jesus calls the coming of the Lord
 - So, let's revisit where we are in the Olivet Discourse in Chapter 24
 - Jesus has answered all the questions His disciples asked Him about the end of the age, His Second Coming and the Kingdom
 - Then having answered their questions, Jesus then moves to explaining another event associated with the end times
 - This new event was one His disciples didn't ask Jesus about, because it was something they had never heard about before
 - It was a mystery that God waited to reveal through Jesus, and Jesus reveals it in three stages
 - First, Jesus introduces it here at the end of Matthew 24 and the beginning of Matthew 25 in the Olivet Discourse
 - Then a few hours later Jesus elaborates more on this moment in His discourse at the Last Supper in John's Gospel
 - Finally, we get the full details from the Apostle Paul, who teaches us about this day in two main passages in his letters
 - Obviously, this is a study of Matthew's Gospel, so we will concentrate on what Jesus gives us here
 - Yet to gain a full understanding of this very important event, we will spend a little time in those other places in the Bible
 - We are going to look at "that" day in three parts, beginning with the circumstances of the day
 - Then secondly, we will study the details of how this day unfolds and who it involves
 - And finally, we will understand the purposes of this day in God's plan for the end of the age
- But let's continue in our study of the circumstances surrounding this day, which we began in Matthew 24:36-39

[Matt. 24:36](#) “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

[Matt. 24:37](#) “For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.

[Matt. 24:38](#) “For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,

[Matt. 24:39](#) and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

- Jesus called this new event “that” day to distinguish it from the previous events He’s discussed in this discourse
 - And there were several unique aspects to this day, most especially the fact that He said in v.36 that this day will have no warning signs at all
 - That is very different than the previous events Jesus described which all had multiple warning signs
 - That’s how we knew Jesus was no longer describing the end of the age or His Second Coming
 - Then in vs.37-39 Jesus gave us a point of reference from history to help us understand the circumstances surrounding this future day
 - Jesus says the arrival of this day would be just like the days of Noah before the flood came
 - Notice Jesus says “just as” or “just like” which means He’s asking us to draw comparisons between Noah’s situation and this day
 - And there are many comparisons to be made
 - For example, Jesus reminds us that in Noah’s day people were living normal lives and were optimistic about the future
 - They were oblivious to the approaching flood that would soon bring God’s judgment down upon them
 - So that tells us the coming of the Lord will take place in an age when judgment is fast approaching but the world doesn’t see it
 - Ironically, the Bible says the world should know better, if only they learned the lesson of Noah’s flood

[2Pet. 3:3](#) Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts,

[2Pet. 3:4](#) and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.”

[2Pet. 3:5](#) For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, [2Pet. 3:6](#) through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.

[2Pet. 3:7](#) But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

- Peter says that in the last days the world will mock the notion of a judgment day looming and even the claim that Jesus will return
 - But Peter says the world should remember Noah’s story
 - They should realize that if God could bring judgment upon the ungodly once without warning, He can do it again...and He will
- The second thing we learn from Noah’s story is that Noah and his family *did* know that a judgment was coming, because God told them it was coming
 - They didn’t know the exact day and hour, but they knew enough to get prepared, and the Lord told them to prepare by building an ark
 - So while the world was oblivious to their fate, God’s people were getting ready to escape judgment
 - And then right before the judgment waters came upon the earth, the people of God entered safely into the ark
 - And this fact offers us another point of comparison: believers today are on notice from the word of God that the end is coming for the world
 - We were given signs to watch for, and today we see these signs so we should be preparing for our escape
 - Of course, God hasn’t asked us to build an ark because God is not bringing another flood of water
 - Instead, we are called to prepare in other ways, ways which Jesus explains later in Chapter 25
- Thirdly, we know that the days of Noah were days of evil according to Genesis
 - Genesis 6 tells us that in the days leading up to the flood, the world was utterly wicked and bent on self-destruction

- Genesis describes those days in this way:

[Gen. 6:5](#) Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

- Every intent of every human heart on earth was evil continually
- Even worse, the evil of the world included demons infiltrating and corrupting the human race in ways we can only imagine
 - We're told in Genesis 6 that demons left their proper station to take human women and use them to produce offspring
 - The product of this unholy union were a grotesque race of giant humans the Bible calls Nephilim
 - Therefore, the wickedness of the world was so great it necessitated a flood...there was no other way to fix the problem
- Back in v.38 Jesus said life in the last days would be like Noah's day with people eating, drinking and marrying unaware judgment was near
 - So perhaps you assumed Jesus was saying life at the end will be carefree, innocent and wholesome...like a 1950's sitcom
 - Far from it...those days will be just like the days of Noah, which means ungodly to an extreme, and demonically-influenced
- Listen to Paul's description of what life on earth will be like in the days leading up to judgment

[2Tim. 3:1](#) But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.

[2Tim. 3:2](#) For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,

[2Tim. 3:3](#) unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,

[2Tim. 3:4](#) treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

- Paul's description of the last days world is nothing like Leave it to Beaver or The Andy Griffith Show...it will be the Walking Dead
 - And we can already see the evidence today that our world is heading in that direction

- After hearing what's in store for our world, you may be left feeling a little depressed or worried for your future
 - After all, we still have to live here, and our children and grandchildren will be alive here long after we are gone
 - So perhaps you're wishing for the good old days before these things began to happen
 - Or maybe you're wondering how long will you have to endure this trial or how can you get through it?
- And if that's you, let me suggest that you're not asking the right questions
 - The question we should all be asking ourselves is how are we supposed to make the most of this time and opportunity?
 - And to find that answer, we go back once again to the story of the flood to ask how did Noah approach his circumstances?
 - And the answer depends on which way Noah was facing
- If Noah turned his focus to the evil world that surrounded him, he probably lived in terror and dread and disgust
 - If you're watching the news these days you might think we're living in days equally evil to Noah's day
 - But the truth is our day isn't even close to the evil that Noah endured in his day
 - We have never known a world filled continually with evil hearts together with demonic creatures living among us
 - So we can't even imagine how bad things must have been in Noah's day
 - When Noah walked into the local village to trade for supplies or materials or when he visited the nearby well for water, he took a risk
 - He probably watched his back for an attack, or averted his eyes from gross immorality
 - He probably slept with a weapon nearby and routinely had to run off thieves from his work site

- He lived in difficult times, and being righteous, he grieved over what he experienced and what he saw around him
- And remember, Noah experienced this deteriorating world for 120 years while he built the ark
- That's a long time to suffer in a world of continually evil hearts everywhere...longer than any of us will likely know
- When Noah focused his attention on the sad state of his world, I have no doubt he experienced worry and anxiety and frustration and anger
 - You're probably experiencing those same feelings today... fretting over the the world becoming increasingly lawless and evil
 - Perhaps there are days when you read the headlines and feel like going back to bed and throwing the covers over your head
 - Or perhaps you spend your day writing angry posts on Facebook
 - Or maybe you join a protest in the street determined to make the world a better place
- And I'm sure there were days when Noah or his family felt a desire to lecture the world or fight against the depravity all around them
 - But that wasn't the mission God gave Noah
 - God didn't ask Noah to fix the world...He told Noah He was going to destroy the world, which is why Noah needed an ark
- And building that ark wasn't simply a matter of personal preservation... it was the way Noah would save the world
 - By building that ark, Noah would save his entire family, and his family would ultimately repopulate the earth
 - And the ark would also save the animals, without which human beings couldn't survive
 - So ironically, the way Noah could save the evil, wicked world was by building an ark in preparation for a future world
- Which is why Noah needed to move his attention away from fixing the world and onto his mission of building the ark...so that God could fix the world

- When Noah turned his attention away from the world and onto the project of building his ark, suddenly everything made sense
 - Building the ark gave his life meaning and purpose beyond anything else he had ever known
 - Whatever Noah accomplished prior to that moment was nothing compared to his God-given mission
 - Would we even remember Noah's name if it were not for the ark?
- Noah had a God-given mission and the sad state of the world simply imparted greater urgency upon his work
 - He woke up each day and looked at the ark under construction, and he knew why he was getting out of bed that day
 - And when his eyes caught a glimpse of the world falling apart, it just motivated him to build faster
- And that's exactly the way we should see our days today, because we live in the same circumstances as Noah (at least in a sense)
 - Our days are evil like Noah, so if you focus on the world's deterioration, then you too will feel isolated, frightened and hopeless
 - And that's especially true in our current circumstances, isolated in our homes unable to do many of the things we used to do
 - I know believers today are feeling lost and sidelined, passing the time watching hours of cable news or Netflix or playing games
 - That's not living with purpose...that is abandoning the mission at the most critical time
 - Imagine if Noah put down his tools so he could catch up on past episodes of Friends?
 - Or what if he threw his hands up in worry and decided the situation was hopeless?
 - Or what if he just decided to wait it out hoping that life would one day get back to normal?
 - Friends, when you live in the last days, there is no "normal"
 - We need to take our eyes off our crumbling world and fix them squarely on our mission just as Noah focused on the ark

- Our mission is not to fix this world, especially since we know the Lord is going to destroy it and replace it with something better
- We know judgment is around the corner because we have all seen the signs Jesus told us to expect
- Our mission is to prepare a people to escape this world and to enter a new and better world that is coming soon
 - We offer the world an ark, the ark Jesus, and when someone enters that “ark” by faith, they too are rescued
 - That’s our mission, and when we turn our attention away from the world’s troubles and onto that mission, we too find purpose
- Our work may be hard, just as building that ark was likely the hardest thing Noah ever did
 - And the world will still be evil, but that just gives us greater reason to stick to our mission
 - But everyday you’ll wake up knowing that the Lord is working through it
 - As Paul said in Ephesians 5:16, we will be making the most of our time knowing the days are evil
- We’ll end our study of the circumstances of this coming day with a few final comparisons to Noah’s day
 - Shortly before the Lord brought the flood on the earth, God told Noah it was time to enter the ark with his family and the animals

- And the way that happens includes some interesting details:

Gen. 7:13 On the very same day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah’s wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark,

- Everyone entered the ark on the same day, and later in Genesis 7:16 the Lord Himself closes the doors of the ark
- He seals everyone inside and prevents others from entering
- Even more interesting, Noah and his family and the animals waited in the ark for a full week before the flood started

[Gen. 7:7](#) Then Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him entered the ark because of the water of the flood.

[Gen. 7:10](#) It came about after the seven days, that the water of the flood came upon the earth.

- Notice that the entry happened a full week prior to the start of the flood
- For seven days, the family of Noah and the animals were safe and then God brought judgment down on the earth
- Both of these details tells us even more about the circumstances that will surround this mysterious, future day called the coming of the Lord
 - First, just as Noah's family entered the ark prior to the flood, so will the coming of the Lord take place prior to God's judgment
 - As it says in 2 Peter 2:9... God rescues the godly while keeping the unrighteous under punishment for a day of judgment
 - So our rescue will take place before the Lord moves to bring wrath and judgment to the earth
 - In fact, just as Noah's family was safely in the ark seven days before the flood, so will our rescue precede judgment by a period of seven
 - We know Tribulation will be a seven-year period of wrath upon the whole earth, according to Daniel
 - And Paul told us during an earlier lesson that the Lord will come from heaven to rescue the Church from that wrath to come
 - So Noah's seven days sitting in the ark before the flood came is a picture of our rescue happening seven years or so prior to God's judgment
 - Then at the end of those seven years, Jesus' return to earth causes mourning because He brings judgment
 - Also, remember the Church returns with Jesus so we are present at the judgment though we are not caught up in it
 - That is also pictured by Noah, who witnessed the flood waters come on the earth while he was sitting safely in the ark
- Finally, just as everyone entered the ark in a single moment, on the same day, so will our future day include all of God's family in the same moment

- No believer will be left out because all experience the same rescue
 - And on that day the Lord will “shut the door,” so to speak, so that none of those rescued may be lost and no one else may enter
 - This moment will be the dividing line for all humanity, just as Noah’s ark made clear who was being rescued and who wasn’t
- There will be two groups of humanity: those in the safety of Jesus and those left behind
 - And at the moment, there will be no going back, no exceptions, no appeals
 - And there will be no doubt that the Lord has protected His own
- And that leads us into the second section of our study: the nature of this coming day, how it happens and who will be involved
 - This is really the heart of our study and it will take several lessons to complete
 - With the time we have remaining today, we will look at what Jesus gives us in Matthew 24 and move to other texts next week

[Matt. 24:40](#) “Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left.

[Matt. 24:41](#) “Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.

- Jesus begins His explanations of the events of that day focused on that dividing line we just learned from Noah... two people with different futures
 - In v.40 Jesus illustrates how this day will unfold from a perspective on earth using two common scenarios of everyday life
 - First, He says there will be two men working in the field on a given day
 - Which tells us that nothing about that day will seem different from any other day
 - Had that day seemed different or strange, these men would not have gone about their normal routine
 - Similarly, two women will go to a mill to accomplish the daily grinding

- And again this is an indication that up to this moment, all seems normal
- People going about their normal daily routines without any sense that the day would be different from any other
- This is perfectly consistent with what Jesus said earlier, when He told us that no one will know the day and hour of this event
 - The timing of this event will surprise everyone, even those who God will include in the rescue
 - So we can know that the event is planned and even how it will happen, but we cannot know when it will happen
- Then instantly, Jesus says one of the men and one of the women will be taken, but the original Greek wording of this verse implies a different sense
 - We could read v.40 to say “two men shall be in the field, the one is received, and the other is left”
 - In other words, something – or someone – receives one of the men and one of the women
 - That specific language suggests the movement of the person, not the death or the destruction of the person
 - So one man and one woman will be taken away from the earth, leaving the other man and woman unaffected and still at work
 - It’s similar to the way Noah and his family entered the ark and the Lord shut the door
 - One moment Noah and his family were just another family on earth like the rest of the population
 - But the moment the door closed, they were separated from the world, out of sight and out of reach
 - This is what our planned rescue will be like, Jesus says, which just leads us to many more questions
 - And as I said, Jesus elaborates further at the Last Supper, and we will jump there next week to see what He says
 - Later, Paul will give us the details in two of his letters, and we will look at those next week as well

- So in the meantime, let's approach this next week and every week to come with a godly attitude that appreciates how we are to live in these days
 - It comes down to remembering five things that you know that you know:
 - First, we know that judgment for the world is fast approaching, because we can see the signs that Jesus told us to watch for
 - And secondly, we know God has planned a rescue for us so we will not experience this coming judgment
 - And thirdly, we know that as we await our rescue, the world will become increasingly evil, so we should not lose heart over it
 - Fourthly, we know to focus our attention on our mission of preparing for the next world, not trying to preserve this one
 - And fifthly, we know that as we serve God in the mission He gave us, these last days can be our best days
 - Rather than being depressed or angry or discouraged by the days we live in, we can be filled with purpose and joy
 - Because we move our eyes off the world and on to Jesus and the rescue He has planned for His Church
 - We aren't going down with this ship, we're helping people into our life raft
 - The church today is witnessing perhaps the single greatest witness opportunity any of us have seen in our lifetimes
 - A period of history when the foundations of our society are crumbling, evil has the upper hand and everyone is scared
 - Nothing is normal or stable now, and if you can't see God's handwriting on these circumstances, then you're blind
- This is the time for the Church to fulfill its mission, and we can't do that on the couch playing our X-Box, or watching Netflix, or surfing the web
 - We need to be about our Father's business, building the ark and stuffing it with as many passengers as we can
 - And by building the ark I mean preaching the gospel, sharing the truth, being a witness in these dark times

- This is the time we show the optimism that understands our rescue is right around the corner
- This is the time we show confidence and peace and joy when the world is filled with worry and distress and sadness
- So that the world may be drawn to Christ through our witness and they too might be rescued when the day comes