

Having been away from Matthew 24 for a few weeks, let me begin with a brief review. Chapters 24-25 constitute the 5th and final discourse in Matthew's gospel. It describes two events, the first foreshadowing the second. The first event is the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70, and the second event is the destruction of the world at the second coming of Christ.

- I. A Twofold Comparison (vv37-39)
- II. A Twofold Destination (vv40-41)
- III. A Twofold Exhortation (vv42-44)

I. A Twofold Comparison (vv37-39)

1. Within these three verses, our Savior compares the days of Noah with the coming of the Son of Man.
2. V37—"But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be"—there are similarities between the two events.
3. Let me just say in passing, that when our Savior speaks about "the coming of the Son of Man" He refers to His second coming.
4. Nothing is more obvious than this fact, as a consideration of the verses that follow will make very clear (let me suggest two ways the generation of Noah and the generation alive at Christ's coming are similar).
5. (1) Both lived in pleasure, v38—"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."
6. Now, none of these activities are in themselves sinful—eating, drinking, getting married, and giving our children away in marriage, are all good things.
7. But here's the problem—they viewed all of these things as ends in themselves—they lived for these things.
8. To eat, drink, get married and raise a family are good things, providing, they are not viewed as the best things.
9. Christians eat, drink, get married, and give their children in marriage, but they do these things as Christians.
10. Their view isn't—"Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die"—but—"Let us eat and drink to the glory of God."
11. And so too, our Savior says—this will also be true when He returns—people will be eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage.
12. This is a sad description of most people in the world—everyday they eat, drink, and sleep, only to repeat that the next day.
13. But don't Christians do the same things? Well, yes, they too eat, drink and sleep, but they do so very differently.
14. (a) They are thankful to God for these things—they understand that food, drink, sleep, work, marriage, and children, are all blessings from God.
15. (b) They use these things to glorify God—they seek to glorify God throughout the regular affairs of life.
16. (c) They understand these things are all temporal—they don't live as if these are the best things in life.
17. As good as these things are, they understand that they are all temporal blessings that end with this life.
18. (2) Both lived in ignorance, v39—"and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."

19. That is, they did not know about Christ's return, the end of this world, and a universal resurrection and judgment.
20. They did not know these things were temporary, and that we will give an account for our use of them.
21. Just as God's judgment overtook those in Noah's day by surprise, so it will overtake those at Christ's return.
22. To borrow language we shall see in v42 and v44, they were neither watchful nor ready—they were spiritually asleep.
23. Now, this doesn't deny that many of them will have been forewarned, as even Noah's generation was forewarned.
24. 1Pet.3:19-20—"Christ, by His Spirit, through Noah, preached to those who are now, spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared."
25. 2Pet.3:3-6—"Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.' For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water."
26. In other words, when our Savior says—"they did not know"—that doesn't deny many of them were forewarned.
27. But it does mean, even if they were forewarned, they refused to believe it, and continued without concern.
28. Furthermore, everybody has some knowledge about God and know, deep down, they are accountable to Him.
29. This is native to all men as image-bearers of God, as God has made Himself known in general revelation.
30. Rom.1:18-19—"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them."
31. It's for this reason, judgement will be based upon knowledge—those who only had the knowledge of nature will be judged less severely, and those who had the knowledge of Scripture, but ignored it, will be judged more severely.

II. A Twofold Destination (vv40-41)

1. Our Savior uses two illustrations to teach there are only two future destinations—when Christ returns some will be taken away in judgment and others left to inherit the earth.
2. (1) Some will be taken away—"Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken...two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken."
3. That is, they will be taken away in judgment—just as the wicked were taken away in Noah's day (v39 – 'until the flood came and took them away'), so these will be taken away in judgment.
4. This means, they will not enjoy the new heavens and earth—they will be taken away to the lake of fire.
5. (2) Some will be left behind—in contrast to those taken, others will be left behind (to inherit the earth).
6. Now, of course our Savior is not intending to give a full account of every event on the day of judgment—He's merely giving us the broad strokes.
7. One of you told me a few days ago—"I wish I could understand end-times better"—well, here's the end-times made simple.

8. Christ returns—He takes away the wicked to hell—and He leaves the righteous to live with Him in the new heavens and earth.
9. Prov.3:21-22—"The upright will dwell in the land, and the blameless will remain in it; but the wicked will be cut off from the earth, and the unfaithful will be uprooted from it."
10. Thus, the Scripture everywhere speaks of the wicked as being removed and the righteous as left behind.
11. (a) The days of Noah, Gen.7:21-23—"And all flesh died that moved on the earth. So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth (taken from it). Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained."
12. And then of course, after a year, the waters receded, and the ark landed on dry land (or what we could call a new earth).
13. All of the wicked people were taken away from the earth, and only Noah and his family, were left behind.
14. (b) The nation of Israel—God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham as an inheritance to his physical seed.
15. And yet, under Moses, He made very clear, that this inheritance was dependent upon their obedience.
16. If they obeyed God they would remain in the land, and if they disobeyed God, they would be removed from the land.
17. Simply put, the Scripture makes everywhere clear that the wicked are taken away and the righteous left behind.

III. A Twofold Exhortation (vv42-44)

1. As typical, our Savior isn't content with instructing His disciplines, without providing some application.
2. Thus, there's two applications to our Savior's teaching in vv42-44, and they are very similar in nature (watch and be ready).
3. (1) Watch, vv42-43—"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour (day) your Lord is coming. 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."
4. If a person knew that a thief was coming, let's say some time Monday night, they would be watching for him.
5. Here's the point—while we know Christ is returning, we don't know what day or hour He will return.
6. Thus, the need for us to be watchful—He could come today, He could come tonight, He could come tomorrow.
7. To "watch" is to be vigilant, attentive, cautious or alert—it's the opposite of being indifferent and apathetic.
8. Mk.13:35-37—"Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"
9. Here our Savior contrasts "watching" with "sleeping"—watching is being alert, sleeping is being indifferent.
10. To watch is to be intentional—it's to be looking and anticipating something—you know it's coming and you look forward to it.
11. 1Thess.5:6—"Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober"—that is, clear-headed and alert.

12. (2) Be ready, v44—"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."
13. To "be ready" is to be prepared—for example, if I said—"Be ready to go, because I'll pick you up in the morning."
14. You know I'm coming, but you don't know the exact hour—it could be 7:00, 8:00, 9:00, or 10:00 o'clock.
15. Thus, you need to be packed and ready to go—because you don't know what precise time I'm coming.
16. To be ready is to be prepared—it's to be sure things are right between you and God—it's to be sure you seeking to honor God with your life.
17. And so, our Savior, exhorted His disciplines (which includes us), to be watchful and ready for His coming.
18. Before I go any further, let me point out the obvious—both of these "watch" and "be ready" are commands.
19. These are things we must be—we must "be watchful" and "be ready"—they both refer to states of being.
20. All Christians, of every generation, are commanded by our Savior to "be watchful" and "be ready" for His return.
21. And yet, this begs a question—Why does our Savior have to command His people to be watchful and ready (let me suggest three reasons)?
22. Reason 1—False theology—by this I mean, any theology that removed or denies the imminence of Christ's return.
23. Many of you will know, that end-time theories abound—in fact so much so, that many Christians don't think about it (they feel hopefully lost and confused).
24. But let me ask you this—How does our Savior here describe His return—Is it complicated and confusing?
25. He says He shall return, and when He does some will be taken in judgment and others will enjoy salvation.
26. Friends, I am fully aware there are some Scriptures about Christ's coming, that are difficult to understand (for example, the book of Revelation).
27. But we don't start with Scripture that's filled with figurative and symbolic imagery—we start with the clear, didactic portions of Scripture.
28. Such passages like Matthew 24:37-44, where our Savior is speaking in a straightforward and clear way.
29. Christ returns—there is a universal resurrection of the just and unjust—the latter are taken away in judgment and the former inherit the earth.
30. You see, we start with the clear passages of Scripture, and then from there, move to the less clear passages of Scripture.
31. Thus, our Savior exhorts all of His disciplines, that we be watchful and ready, for He's returning at any time.
32. You see, any end-times theory that removes this imminence, is contrary to the teaching of this passage.
33. But another way—we are not waiting for anything else to happen—the next event is the second coming.
34. We are not waiting for a secret rapture nor a thousand years of prosperity—we are waiting for Christ to return.
35. Reason 2—Distractions—by this of course I refer to all the things that Jesus mentions—eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage.

36. If you were to add to these all the other responsibilities we have, you can see why we could be distracted.
37. Well, because we're going to have opportunity to speak about this point more fully next week, let me just say one thing here.
38. One way in which we can fulfill our obligations without them becoming distractions, is that we remember why we do them.
39. Why do we eat, drink, and sleep—why do we marry and then raise our children to eventually give in marriage?
40. Well, remember what I said earlier—not as ends in themselves but as means to end—and that is the glory of God.
41. In fact, there's a sense in which we can reduce all of our responsibilities into two—we are work and wait.
42. 1Thess.1:9-10—"you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven."
43. Reason 3—Unbelief—this I fear is a rather large reason why many Christians are not looking for Christ's return.
44. But here I don't refer to unbelief about Christ's coming—no you believe Christ is returning—but it doesn't bring joy as much as fear.
45. I have known Christians like this—for whatever reason, they lack a solid assurance of their salvation.