

THE LATTER PARABLES OF JESUS

Message 13

Scripture: Matthew 24:32-42

INTRO: We have looked at the parable of the fig tree which gave us the signs that Christ's coming is near. We interpreted those signs as being those things that begin all the things Jesus had told them would come to pass in 24:4-31. The beginning of those things, the Scripture says is wars and rumors of wars and pestilences and earthquakes.

I spent a fair amount of time in giving my understanding of the words of Jesus when He said, "This generation will not pass away till all these things are fulfilled." It is my view He is speaking of the Jewish people. Even today, consistently, their existence is threatened.

But, we now move into a very important section. In a sense, I would say that the application of this parable runs from 24:36-25:30. But included in that section are several more parables and we will deal with each individually. In my view, in these verses Jesus is still dealing with answering the disciples second question, "What will be the sign of Your coming, Your Parousia, Your presence? It is my view that He is dealing with the beginning and continuation of His Parousia. That is what we call the rapture, and which the English translation calls the 'catching up' in 1 Thessalonians 4.

Now, here is what I must tell you. The Post tribulationist believes this speaks of the rapture happening at the end of the tribulation, and most pretribulationists view this as speaking of the second coming of Christ at the end of the tribulation. Some of you read the *Israel My Glory* magazine and that is the position held by those writers. I will explain that as we go along. I do not agree with that view at all and will explain that as well.

We have interpreted the parable of the fig tree and have now come to the application in Matthew 24:36-41 (read). And before we go, if some of this is somewhat tedious to you, I want to remind you that when Jesus came the first time, they did not know where they were in prophecy. And Jesus said, "O foolish ones to believe all that the prophets have spoken..." When He returns, it will be like that for many, but it will then be too late.

4. The Application (36-51)

We have come to the application of the parable of the fig tree. As I understand this chapter, we are dealing with the disciples second question, "What will be the sign of your coming?" They wanted a sign whereby they might know that the time of Christ's presence was near. Clearly they understood by the things Jesus had told them that He would be gone for some time and they wanted something by which they would be able to know they are getting near to the time of His return. And so, Jesus gave them the sign of the budding of trees, and in particular the fig tree. There is, I believe, a close connection between the time when Israel became a nation once more, and the increase in national and natural disasters. That is the budding of the fig tree.

But, Jesus will now apply what He has said about the signs so that they will be ready at all times. Having given the signs when His coming is nearing, he now says in verse 36, "But of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only." So He is saying we can know when His coming is near, but we cannot know the precise timing of His coming. We said last time that to be within 200 years of His coming makes it near, relative to the amount of that that has passed already. So we do not know, are we within 200 years or 1 day? He might come at any time. So now, in order that we would be ready at all times, Christ applies the teaching of the parable by likening the time of His return to the days of Noah. So Jesus will now give an example of what it means to be ready at all times, from the life of Noah.

Now I want you to notice in verse 37 that He says His coming will be like the days, plural, of Noah. He did not say it would be like the day (sing.) of Noah. And what were the 'days' of Noah? Well, it is a reference to the time in Noah's life before, and up until the flood.

Now, just what is it in the days of Noah that will be like the days before Christ returns, that Jesus is speaking about? Well, I have said that most take this as referring to Christ's coming at the end of the tribulation. So before we deal with this question, I want to deal first with whether the days of Noah are like the beginning of the tribulation, or the end. Let

me show you the question on a slide (**SLIDE 1**). To give this position that it speaks of the end of the tribulation, let me read to you from John F. Walvoord. He says, "Because this event is somewhat similar to the Rapture in that some are taken and some are left, post-tribulationists almost universally cite this verse as proof that the Rapture will occur as a part of the second coming of Christ after the tribulation. However, a careful reading of the passage yields exactly the opposite result. At the rapture of the church, those taken are those who are saved, and those who are left are left to go through the awful period, including the Great Tribulation. Here the situation is just in reverse. Those who are taken are taken in judgment, and those who are left are left to enter the millennial kingdom" end quote (Every Proph. Of the Bible, 393).

Let me show you that on slide 2 (**SLIDE 2**). If this passage pictures time before and up to the rapture, here is what it looks like. The one 'taken' is taken up to heaven. The one 'left' is left on earth to go through the tribulation.

So, let me show you what is used to show that the illustration of Noah's day refers to the end of the tribulation. Look at verses 40-41 (read). Now notice that in both instances one is 'taken'. Now look at verse at verse 39. Those who hold to the view that this passage happens at the end of the tribulation point out the word 'took' in verse 39, the flood 'took' them all away. They were 'taken' in judgment. Compare that now to verses 40-41. The conclusion is that the one who is taken in these verses, is like those who were taken in judgment in the flood. Obviously then, the one taken is taken in judgment at the end of the tribulation, not in the rapture before the tribulation.

So let me picture my view for you as contrasted to what most hold to on this section of the Olivet discourse (**SLIDE 3**). Here, we have the days of Noah likened to what it will be like before the tribulation. Those taken, are taken into heaven and those left, are left to go into the tribulation.

Now let me give you the reasons why I believe the days of Noah are likened to what it will be like before the tribulation. First, look at verse 39. You might circle

the word 'took' and write in your margin 'airo'. Now go to both words 'taken' in verses 40-41 and circle them and write in your margin 'paralambano'. The word 'airo' occurs 142 times in the NT and can be used negatively or positively, so it might go either way, other than that in verse 39, it is to take in a bad sense, taken in a flood. The word 'paralambano' occurs 30 times. It means to take along, or to take with oneself. It is not airo. Go to John 14 (read 1-3). Note the word 'receive'. It is the same word as used twice in verses 40-41 of our text. We are getting some idea that in our text at least, the word *airo* is negative and the word *paralambano* is positive.

But, consider now with me the word 'left' in verses 40-41 (read). It is the word 'aphieami'. It is used 146 times and its uses are tedious, and let me just say the majority of its uses would favor that it best fits being left, forsaken, deserted to go into the tribulation. Not to be left to go into the millennium.

The use of the words *airo*, *paralambano*, and *aphieemie* do not give any conclusive evidence that this is a pretribulational rapture, but I think their use elsewhere best favors a pretribulational rapture.

But look now at verse 36. It says, "But of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only." Then Jesus illustrates that with the days of Noah. Now, let us say the rapture is to happen in the middle of the tribulation. You could know almost precisely when Christ will come. When you are two years in, you would say, "Only 1 and ½ years to go." If it is post trib, you would say, "Well, let us get ready for seven years of trials. We know in seven years Christ will come. We know He won't come before that. We know He will come then." But our text says, "Nobody knows the day or the hour." And my post-trib friends will say, "But we don't know exactly which day or hour." Well, if you can know within a month, you know when He is coming.

Furthermore, we must ask, just what is it in the days of Noah that will be like the days before Christ returns? Well, we find that in verses 38-39 (read). I would agree with J. Dwight Pentecost who says, "The reference to the days of Noe does not emphasize the

licentiousness of the people of Noah's day, but rather the unexpectedness of the Lord's coming is emphasized..." (281). But I would add to that, that it gives a picture of life as usual. It pictures normal life that is not disrupted by external events.

Because this unexpectedness is stressed throughout the next passages up to 25:30, I believe it refers to the rapture. The stress of these passages is that because we do not know the precise time of Christ's return we are to be ready. A local pastor said to me some years ago that no child reading the Scriptures would come up with the idea that a rapture would happen. And I said, "But any child reading the NT would come up with the teaching that Christ could come at any time." That can only be true if the rapture is pretribulational. If Christ is to come at the middle or at the end of the tribulation, you know He is not coming today or tomorrow or for at least 3 ½ years or 7 years. But these passages are clear on that we are to be ready for we do not know when He is coming.

But, just what was it like in the days of Noah that is like it is today, the time before the tribulation? Well, there are numerous similarities. For one, Noah had a most ridiculous message! Think of this. Noah is to build an ark on dry land, and a flood is going to come and it will cover the whole world! Can you imagine anything more outlandish? Why, there isn't enough water for that! It is possible, as some hold, that before the flood there was no rain. There is some ground for that, that I can't take time for. That makes Noah's preaching even more ludicrous!

So come with me back to the days of Noah. Go to Genesis 6 (read 13-17). Well it took 120 years before all was ready. Can you imagine what people said? Maybe like some of our modern scoffers they said, "See what a fool believing in God makes of an otherwise brilliant man!" Haw, haw, haw! And so one says to another, "You know, this year is the 110th year since this fool started on this big house! Unbelievable! You know, when you talk to him, he seems like a nice, sane, logical man; but look at this insanity!

Listen to Noah's preaching, "I want to tell you, it is time to repent! God is going to destroy this world with

a flood!" And they laugh, "Haw, haw, haw! A boat in the desert!" And Noah says, "I am serious, God told me He was going to send a flood." "Haw, haw, haw! You mean water will come from the sky? Haw, haw, haw. You mean it will get so deep that big house of your's is going to float? Haw, haw, haw." "Oh, man", they said, "nothing makes people more koo koo than believing in Jehovah God! That has got to be the worst. They are so narrow. They think we are all wrong! Look at how tolerant we are of one another. But not them. Oh no. They're the only ones that are right!"

May I ask you this morning, do you know what the subject matter of Noah's preaching was? 2 Peter 2:5 says he was a preacher of 'righteousness'! Try that today. Try that outside or inside the church. Try telling people they should not drink alcohol or try to tell them divorce and remarriage is adultery. You could get scorned as well. Maybe they said, "Listen to this Noah. He's against divorce and homosexuality! Honestly, something needs to be done about the old fool." Yes, Noah had a ludicrous message, both that the world would be flooded and that righteousness was the need of the day.

But think now what it must have been like for that small group that believed the Lord! Tell me, out of all the people alive at that time, tell me; how many were saved? Eight! You have got to be kidding. You mean to tell me all those millions of other people were wrong? How can you be so naïve? How can you get so narrow?"

But think now what it must have been like for Noah's family. Noah said, "My dear wife and children, I know what God told me. I know when you go to town people are looking at you like you have come from mars. I know you have few friends. Yes, I know what they are saying. But I must tell you, we cannot fool around with the Word of the Lord. God has spoken, and no amount of ridicule will change what He said would happen. I know we are few in number. I know it seems strange that all those people could be wrong, but here is what God said, 'Build an ark. There is going to be a flood. All who do not believe and are not ready will be drowned.' That is what God told me. That is what will happen!"

Now have you ever wondered how his family coped? Have you wondered what life was like for them? And I ask you, have you wondered what it was that held them together? What caused Noah's wife and family stick with it? May I suggest that it was not Noah that held them together. What was it then? It was Noah's message. It was truth. Have you noticed that sin is not logical? You cannot reason with sin? But God is logical. Truth is logical.

There is another reason why I think Noah's day is like it will be before the tribulation, and that is that when the flood came, it came all unexpectedly for those who were lost. They did not know until the flood came and took them all away, that it was coming. Day after day it was beautiful, no threat in the sky. And one day, one day, it began to rain and it would not quit. But what did they do right up until that day? They ate. They drank. They married. They gave in marriage. One day a young man proposed to a young lady, and they were looking forward to a happy life together, and the next day they were all drowned. Right up until it rained, it was life as usual.

And there is another reason why I believe this speaks of Christ's return at the rapture. In Noah's day, right up until the flood came, it was life as usual. All the signs were there that something was about to change. Food had been put on the boat. And now the animals had gotten onto the boat. Noah and his family are now in the boat. And yet, nothing. And then, crack! Thunder! And then rain. And then the water began to pool. And then it rose. And then people began to flee for any higher ground until they couldn't come down to get to yet higher ground. And then screaming. And then begging. And then, death. They did not know until the day it rained!

There is a new DVD out called, "Left Behind or Led Astray." It is done by post-tribulationists. It is done by pastors, and they say pre-tribulationist pastors are not doing their job. They are not preparing their people for tribulation. Now let me just say this in all fairness. Pretribulationists, mid tribulationists, pre-wrath teachers and post-tribulationists have almost everything in common. With regard to seeker friendly churches and emergent churches, most of them stand

alike. Their system of interpretation is exactly alike. That unites them on almost everything. They only differ on the timing of Christ's coming in a seven year period.

But these guys said the pretrib pastor is not doing his job. He is not preparing people to go through the tribulation. By the way, pretrib teachers, at least some of them, do make some rather large errors in my perspective. Some teach Christians will not experience persecution. That is very bad. But persecution and tribulation are not the same as the wrath of God. So I say to the post-trib teacher, "It is you that are not preparing your people for the Lord's return." You tell them it will be more than seven years yet. I prepare them by telling them to be ready today. Christ might come today. I think that is what we learn from the days of Noah.

Noah and his family knew it was coming closer and closer. They had been told, and they believed what they had been told. When God said, "Build an ark", no matter how preposterous it seemed, they built an ark. When God said, "Get in the boat. It will rain very soon." They got everything into the boat including themselves, and it rained. Unbelievers had been told a flood was imminent but they failed to believe. Believers had been told the flood was imminent, and they believed, and were saved. Just so it will be when Jesus comes for the Church.

There is another reason why Noah's day is like it will be just before the tribulation. I suppose year after year the people said about Noah, "You know, that is the same message he had last year." And the next year they said, "That is the same message he had last year." And at year 50 they say, "He's been saying that for fifty years now." And at year 75, they said, "He's been saying that for 75 years now." And at year 100 they said, "He's been saying that for 100 years now." And at year 110 they said, "Oh, this is getting so ridiculous. The old fool actually believes it. And his family, look at how he leads them like a cult leader." And at year 120 they said, "I guess we have to listen to another year of this nonsense." But in year 120 one day the skies got dark. And then there was a flash of lightning. Noah and his family are in the boat, and God

has shut the door. And the rain is starting to fall. And then the water is rising. And then it is getting higher. And finally pride breaks down in some and they swim to the ark and the cry and beg and plead. But the rain just keeps coming. And then, unbelievable screaming begins, and people are beginning to drown. And all the cries of repentance and pleading fall on deaf ears. And then, the big boat, that big ridiculous boat, begins to rise. And then it is floating. Oh, if only, if only, if only... But it is too late. Too late.

So, there are many likenesses in our day to Noah's day, but, let me tell you the one major reason why I believe Jesus' likened His return, not to the return of Christ at the end of the tribulation, but His return at the rapture, before the tribulation. In Noah's days we get the picture of the time before and right up until the flood. And the picture the Lord draws out of this likeness in particular is that it was life as usual. They were eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage until the day Noah entered the ark. They did not know until the day the flood came and then it was too late. And they did not know that in one day the whole world would drastically change and all of mankind except for eight people would be dead.

Now, here is the question: Does the Lord liken the days of Noah to what it will be like before the tribulation, or does He liken the days of Noah to what it will be like at the end of the tribulation? Well, the post-tribulationist says the days of Noah are like it will be at the end of the tribulation. Many present day pre-tribulationists have taken up the same argument.

I want to show you most clearly now, that the days of Noah do not at all picture what it will be like at the end of the tribulation. Those days at the end of the tribulation will be anything but like the days of Noah were. In the days before the tribulation, it will be life as usual, just like it is today. But it is my view that at least six months before Christ comes to earth, it will be NOTHING like the days of Noah. In the days just before Christ comes at the end of the tribulation, marriage will not be on anyone's mind. If they eat and drink, it will simply be for survival.

I want to show you what it will be like in the last months before Jesus comes down to earth to judge the world at the end of the tribulation, right up to where He comes down to earth. I want you to see if you think the time just before Jesus descends to earth sounds like life as usual, eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage. Before I do that, let me give you my interpretation in brief of that wonderful closing book of the Bible, the book of Revelation.

I view it as one of the most chronological books in the Bible. Let me show you this on slide 4 (**SLIDE 4**). Chapter one; introduction. Chapters 2-3, the Church age. Chapters 4:1, the catching up to heaven and a view of heaven in chapters 4-5. Chapters 6-19, the tribulation. As I see this section, though it seems a mumble jumble of topics, it is actually several trips through the tribulation from different vantage points. So it will deal with the end of the tribulation several times, which we will look at as that is our topic. Chapter 20, the millennium and the short season. Chapters 21-22 the new heavens and the new earth and eternity. That is entirely chronological.

Now I want to show you several of those passages in the tribulation that deal with the end of the tribulation, and I don't think any post-trib believer or mid-trib believer would argue the timing of these. And as we read these, ask yourself after each one: Is this life as usual? (Read 6:12-21; 11:14-19; 14:18-20; 16:17-21; 19:17-21.) I ask you, does that sound like life as usual to you?

Now let me show you what the tribulation looks like as far as disaster and calamities are concerned on slide 5 (**SLIDE 5**). No time in all of man's history has been, is, or will ever be as bad as those final number of months in the tribulation. It is absolutely anything but life as usual!

So, when Jesus said that His return will be like the days of Noah, I believe He is referring to a pre-tribulational rapture. I want you to consider now verses 40-41. Here is another likeness to the days of Noah. In the days of Noah, the flood came and took, airo, them away. But the flood took, paralambano, Noah and his family up, to safety. They were caught up. But

it took airw, the unbelievers in judgment. The ones taken away by the flood were left on earth to experience the flood, and to perish. They were forsaken, abandoned to suffer. The ones who were saved were taken up and delivered from the flood. They were 'caught up together'. They were 'taken with' *paralambano*. The ones left on earth were forsaken by the boat; the ones taken up were taken up by the boat.

Now you could go to Luke 17 and it will tell you that Christ's coming will not only be like the days of Noah, but like the days of Lot as well. The day Lot left the city, both Sodom and Gomorrah, which slept as though nothing would ever happen, were buried under ash. Luke writes in verses 34-36, "I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left." All the words 'taken' and 'left' are the same as the ones we studied already.

Now let me tell you something else that is as ludicrous as a world wide flood. There is coming a day when the Lord will catch up His Son's bride, the Church, and He will *paralambano* them to heaven. All those who are truly believers will vanish from earth, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye and they will be gone from here. Go to 1 Corinthians 15 (read 51-58). Now think of this: all believers bodies are to be changed in a nano second of time! Think it through. Is that not unbelievable? Then think of this, they will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air! No airplane. No gas masks. Just changed bodies! And this is true of all true believers! Is that not unbelievable? Then think of this. All unbelievers will continue to live on earth and the tribulation will run its course.

Now all of that is as ludicrous as building a boat on dry ground entirely out of reach of water. That is what was unbelievable to those before the flood. A flood was to come and cover the whole earth. There is only one thing to squelch that unbelievableness. It is this: God said it would happen! Therefore, it will happen!

Only evolutionists or New Agers would believe something so outlandisch, that is, if it did not require

repentance and faith in the true God. New Agers and evolutionists should not have a problem believing something as unbelievable as this. What they believe is much more unbelievable. On Thanksgiving Day, the men of our family took the children grouse hunting. And we came to an end of a trail on the Buffalo Head Hills because a road had been built and the trail was closed off by a brush windrow. And we got off the quads and had a look around. I noticed for the first time in my life that I was shaky walking on trees that had been pushed over and were lying in the windrow. So on the way back, I looked for a place where the windrow was lower and I crossed there. Well, something else had had the same idea. Just on the other side of the windrow was a carcass that had lain there all summer. I could not determine what it was and my son-in-law said it was either a wolf or a bear. It had been snared, had broken the snare, and just gotten over the brush pile and died there.

Well, I took the head home and checked on the internet, and found it was a wolf head. Well, I thought, it must be a big wolf if my son-in-law thought it might be a bear, and it had broken a heavy snare. I measured the skull, it measured 17 and 6/16 inches. It is a record book size wolf (SHOW HERE).

But as I cleaned it all up, I marveled at the structure and pondered how a wolf grows from a pup to this size animal. And now I want to tell you something more unbelievable than a world-wide flood or a rapture of the Church. It is that one day, billions of years ago, there was a big bang, and suddenly, there was the universe, all in order! And then slowly, oh ever so very slowly, yes, over millions of years, a wolf like this evolved. If you can believe that, and that, without one tiny piece of evidence, then believing in a flood that has all kinds of evidence is nothing. And if believing in a world-wide flood because God said so is nothing, then believing in a rapture is nothing either, since God Himself has foretold it! May I ask you, do you believe Him?

Someone sent me a picture of a church sign that Eric Hovund posted and it said, "Evolution: the substance of fossils hoped for, the evidence of links not seen." You can tell that is a new twist on Hebrews 11:1. We were

in a zoo one time and behind thick glass sat a huge Ape. He had his chin in one hand and he just observed all his relatives on the other side of the glass. And I said, "I can see exactly what he is thinking. You guys just wait another 6 million years and I'll be on that side of the glass too!"

I read the other day that a woman by name of Lisa Randall, who is a physicist at Harvard University has a new idea on how human beings came into existence. You see, its like this, there is a dark, pancake-shaped patty of densely packed dark matter within our galaxy that might just be responsible for our emergence as a species. Now you must understand what science is supposed to be. It is knowledge. But nobody knows if dark matter really exists. Scientists think there is evidence that it might be there. We can't see it or touch it, but, you know, it could be there. And if it is there, then it could be that we came from there. How do you like that for science from a very highly esteemed educational institute.

If you can believe things like this, with no evidence, there is nothing that is hard to believe in the Bible with all the evidence there is for its veracity.

Well, we read 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 earlier. That the Lord will come and take His people home, and that it will happen in a nano or pico-second, may seem unbelievable, but that is what the Word of God says! And the warning from the days of Noah this morning is this: "Be ready!" Here is what is going to happen, two ladies will be preparing bread, one will be taken the other left. Two men will be making a land deal, and suddenly one will be taken and the other left.

CONCL: May I ask you in conclusion this morning, how you live? The Lord says in Isaiah said in 1:3-4, "The ox knows its owner And the donkey its master's crib; But Israel does not know, My people do not consider. Alas, sinful nation, A people laden with iniquity, A brood of evildoers, Children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, They have provoked to anger The Holy One of Israel, They have turned away backward."

May I ask you, how do you do business? How do you train your children at home? How high on your list is righteousness? How high is godliness on your list? May I tell you the fig tree has been budding for some time? There are wars and rumors of wars. There are ever increasing pestilences and diseases and

earthquakes. May I tell you, the earth knows its master and it is trembling. It knows something is about to happen. But how many of the Lord's people, like Israel, do not consider? It is life as usual. And the Lord's return will be like it was in the days of Noah. For 120 years, nothing. Then one day it rained, and it never quit, and it was too late. Just so one day soon, the Lord will take His Church home. And I ask you are you ready? And if you are, from our passage I call you to watch, for no man knows the day or the hour!