

119

MINISTRIES

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Like the Days of Noah

During his teaching in Matthew 24-25, which has come to be called the Olivet Discourse, Yeshua (Jesus) compares the days leading up to his return to Noah’s time. Here’s what he says:

Matthew 24:37

[For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.](#)

So, the coming of the Son of Man will be like “the days of Noah.” What does that mean?

Well, we know that, in the first century, the story of Noah’s flood was a common analogy for God’s final judgment. Peter makes the same comparison in his second epistle (2 Peter 2:5; 3:6-7). This theme is also found in Second Temple Jewish literature outside the Bible, like the Book of Enoch (1 Enoch 1-16). So it shouldn’t be surprising that Yeshua used this ready metaphor to speak of the coming judgment.

But what was his point in making this comparison? How are the days of Noah illustrative of the coming of the Son of Man? Well, as with anything regarding biblical prophecy and the end days, there has been a lot of speculation!

Some say that, just as Noah’s time was marked by extreme wickedness, so too will the end days be a time of wickedness and depravity. Often people will cite examples of the increasing evil and abandonment of morality happening in America and around the world to suggest that we’re drawing near to the end.

Others say that just as a great act of judgment marked Noah’s time—that is the flood—so too will the last days be marked by great acts of judgment. Often people will point to natural disasters happening around the world to suggest that our current generation must be the last.

Still, others go so far as to say Yeshua’s use of this analogy implies that fallen angels and the mysterious Nephilim will reappear in the last days! According to a common interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4, many believe the Nephilim to be the offspring of fallen angels and human women.

The Book of Enoch speaks about fallen angels in Noah's day who taught humans about magic, weapons, and led mankind into violence and promiscuity (See 1 Enoch 6:1-2; 7:1-2). Because of that, some speculate that, in the end days, the fallen angels will reappear. Perhaps they will be perceived as aliens from outer space, and they will lead mankind into all sorts of wickedness again. Moreover, since the Nephilim were apparently the result of an unauthorized mixture of seed—that is, fallen angels and humans—we should expect to see something like this again as we draw near to the end. Often people will point to genetic experiments involving hybrid creatures as evidence that we're part of the final generation.

For more information on how we should think about the Book of Enoch, see our teachings, [Testing the Book of Enoch](#) and [The Son of Man in the Book of Enoch](#).

While it is certainly tempting to go down these roads of speculation, we don't need to. The key to understanding what Yeshua meant by this statement is to read the passage carefully, along with the following passages, which make his point clear.

Now, this isn't to say that there is no validity to *some* of these parallels between Noah's day and the final generation. It certainly can't be denied that lawlessness will increase significantly before the time of the end. And, obviously, the end days will involve judgment. But Yeshua used this analogy to Noah's flood to make a different point. It is the first of a few examples Yeshua gives to demonstrate what he says a verse earlier.

However, before we get there, let's establish the overall context. Yeshua's Olivet Discourse is his teaching in response to the disciples' questions in Matthew 24:3.

Matthew 24:3

As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

Yeshua had just finished prophesying of the destruction of the Temple (Matthew 24:2). So their first question, regarding "these things," focuses on the destruction of the Temple. But their second question focuses on the sign of the Second Coming and the end of the age.

Yeshua's teaching throughout Matthew 24 refers to Jerusalem's destruction as well as the last days and his Second Coming, but not in some strict chronological order. The destruction of the Temple is given as a prophetic foreshadow of the final tribulation to come. As Tim Hegg writes:

Yeshua's prophecy of the destruction of the Temple to occur in the near future (70 CE) does not exhaust the eschatological significance of vv. 5ff but rather is a potent indication of the kind of tribulation that will mark the end of days and the eschatological events yet to come.

-Tim Hegg, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Tacoma, WA: TorahResource, 2013), Vol. 5, p. 1089

While Yeshua doesn't directly answer his disciples' question regarding *when* these things will occur, he does give warnings about what to look out for. These warnings were certainly relevant to the generation of Yeshua's day, especially in light of the destruction of Jerusalem in their time. But these warnings are also relevant to every generation afterward as we draw nearer to the end of the age.

In response to his disciples' questions, Yeshua warns about false prophets leading people astray, wars, rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, persecution, lawlessness, and so forth.

Afterward, finally, the Son of Man will come on the clouds of heaven with power and glory.

But then Yeshua makes this statement in verse 36, just prior to his comparison to Noah's flood:

Matthew 24:36

But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.

Yeshua's point here is pretty straightforward: nobody can predict his coming because nobody besides the Father knows when it will be. So, any attempt at calculating a definitive date for the Second Coming is ultimately futile. We simply can't know.

In light of Yeshua's statement in verse 36, the signs he gives previously in this chapter are not meant to provide some timetable so that we can set dates and predict the timing of the end times. Instead, the point is to prompt us to be alert and watchful at *all times* so that, when certain signs *do* occur, we'll recognize them. The rest of Yeshua's Olivet Discourse makes this clear.

So, now we get to Yeshua's comparison to Noah's flood:

Matthew 24:37-39

For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

What does Yeshua mean when he says the people of Noah's day were "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage"? He is saying that the people were simply living their daily lives. They went about their regular business, completely unaware that the flood was about to come and sweep them all away. The point is this: in the same way, the masses will be caught by surprise in the end days. They will be living their lives unaware that judgment is at hand.

Again, while there's no reason to doubt that lawlessness will increase in the end days, that's not Yeshua's point here. After all, there's nothing sinful about eating, drinking, and marrying—these are the activities of ordinary life. Here's how Dr. Craig Keener puts it:

Like the flood, the Son of Man's coming (Dan 7:13-14) would arrive as sudden and unexpected judgment, without explicit warning (24:37-39; cf. Lk 17:26-27). Jesus' followers might recognize the completion of requisite signs (cf. 1 Thess 5:4-6), but for outsiders, events would continue as business-as-usual. The point of the comparison is unexpectedness as well as sudden destruction.

-Craig Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), p. 591

As we keep reading, this point becomes clearer:

Matthew 24:40-42

Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. **Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.**

Again, we see here that people will be going about their normal lives and that the coming of the Lord will be unexpected. Therefore, followers of Yeshua must “stay awake.” This is translated as “watch” in most other translations, and it brings up the image of a night watchman at his post. Yeshua’s followers are to be prepared for his coming, watching for it.

Yeshua continues with another example:

Matthew 24:43-44

But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. **Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.**

Once again, the point is straightforward: the timing of Yeshua’s coming is unknown. Therefore, we must *always* be ready.

Yeshua goes on to give a parable, comparing the time leading up to the Second Coming to a servant watching over his master’s house:

Matthew 24:45-51

Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, **the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know** and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Once again, this parable contributes to Yeshua’s overall point: he will come when the wicked don’t expect him. Therefore, we must not be like the wicked servant but like the faithful and wise servant.

This parable also further defines what being alert looks like: we must be doing the work that our master called us to do. We must serve our master faithfully by observing his commandments and serving others. We must not have the mindset of thinking that we can get away with evil because we believe the Messiah won’t be returning anytime soon. Instead, we should always be about our master’s work.

From here, Yeshua gives the parable of the ten bridesmaids awaiting the Bridegroom (Matthew 25:1-13). It’s the same message. The timing of Yeshua’s Second Coming is unknown; therefore, be watchful. Don’t be like the foolish bridesmaids who didn’t have enough oil in their lamps.

The next parable concerns the industrious servants vs. the slothful servant (Matthew 25:14-30). A man goes on a journey and will return at an unknown time. In the meantime, he entrusts a portion of his money to three servants. Upon his return, the master blesses the servants who wisely invested the money given them and condemns the servant who, out of fear, buried his portion. This goes back to the idea that

readiness for Messiah's return demands faithfulness to the work he called us to do.

Finally, Yeshua concludes his teaching with a warning of the final judgment (Matthew 25:31-46). Yeshua will reign as King and separate the "sheep" from the "goats." Those who cared for the least of these—that is the hungry, the stranger, the naked, sick, and imprisoned—will inherit the kingdom. Those who neglected to care for the least of these will be condemned.

Therefore, we must be ready and watchful, always serving our master by serving our neighbor: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40).

Peter reinforces Yeshua's teaching in his second epistle in which he also appeals to Noah's flood (2 Peter 3:1-7). He says that scoffers will mock the idea of the Second Coming:

2 Peter 3:4

They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."

In the end days, people will deny the very reality of the end days. They will disregard Yeshua's warnings and continue living as if there is no coming judgment. In their view, everything seems to be the same as it's always been, so what's the point in serving God? But to them the day of the Lord *will* come unexpectedly, "like a thief" (2 Peter 3:1). And since they refuse to believe the Gospel and live in accordance with Scripture, like the people in Noah's day, they will be swept away in God's final judgment.

So, what lessons do we learn from these passages?

First, as Yeshua teaches us, we are to be alert and watchful at all times. As Peter warns us, we are not to be like the scoffer who deludes himself into thinking there will be no consequences for his actions. Instead, we are to live our lives in accordance with the knowledge that we are accountable to God for how we live. We are to spend our time doing the work our master gave us to do. As Peter puts it:

2 Peter 3:11, NIV

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives.

Second, we must not become discouraged as we await the arrival of our King. Just as the Bridegroom was delayed (Matthew 25:5), Messiah's Second Coming might be delayed from our perspective as well. But there is a purpose in the waiting. As Peter says:

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

God is giving us time to repent because he desires that nobody should perish. Likewise, we ought to have this same concern for others. Just as God's heart is for the unbeliever, we should desire that *all* reach repentance. Proclaiming the Gospel of our King is to be a top priority.

Our Messiah's end-time message, echoed by the apostle Peter, is meant to inspire us to take action. In the midst of those around us who are just going about their regular lives, completely unaware of what's

to come, we ought to be mindful of the reality of God’s judgment. We ought to be focused on living holy lives and sharing the Gospel with all who will listen.

Now, while some believers don’t take seriously the warnings to be watchful, others misinterpret what that means and miss the point of the warnings. It is a sad fact that many believers who take an interest in studying the end days seem to neglect the things they’re called to do with the information.

People’s interest in the end days often leads to things like predictions of the future and date-setting, even though Yeshua said no one besides the Father knows the timing. Also, rather than producing a sense of urgency to reach the lost, many end-times studies lead people to obsess over their speculations about aliens, microchips, and other such things—it’s all they want to focus on. And while being prepared for emergencies is a good idea, a lot of people also become obsessed with “doomsday prepping” and “survivalism” to such a degree that they isolate themselves from the world, failing to be the light that people need to see.

As we’ve discovered, the Messiah’s admonishment to be “watchful” entails faithful service to God and our neighbor. That’s what we need to be focused on. As Dr. Craig Keener puts it:

Being ready does not mean stockpiling food and weapons in the mountains. Being ready means that we are completely sold out to Jesus and ready to testify for Him no matter what our situation. It means that we are ready to suffer for Jesus in the short term because we realize that we will live forever with Him in His presence. It means that we will not take a mark of loyalty to the Beast—whether that is figurative or literal—because we belong to a different master, the Lamb.

-Craig Keener and Michael Brown, *Not Afraid of the Antichrist: Why we Don’t Believe in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture* (Minneapolis, MN: Baker Publishing Group, 2019), p. 24

The coming of our Lord, Yeshua the Messiah, draws near. We, as his disciples, ought to live our lives accordingly. May we be encouraged to “stay awake” and live holy lives, desiring to bring the lost to repentance for God’s glory. “[Stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming](#)” (Matthew 24:42).

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching.

Remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom!

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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