



Matthew 24:36–41

36 “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; 39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them

all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

Reflection

Yesterday's passage ended with these words from Jesus,

35 Heaven and earth will pass away,
but my words will never pass away.

And here we are two thousand years later still reading Jesus' words. His words may never pass away but in this same

verse Jesus is telling us that the heavens and the earth will one day pass away, to make room for the new heavens and the new earth (Rev 21). The day that Jesus is talking about is the day of his Second Coming, the day of his return.

As Jesus sat down on the Mount of Olives, on his way back to Bethany after a long day in the Temple in Jerusalem, his disciples asked him two questions (Matt 24:3) as a result of the day's tumultuous events. Jesus gives an extended answer to both these questions in Matthew 24 and 25. Their first question enquired about the destruction of the temple. Jesus answered it in Matthew 24:4–35. Their second question was about the signs of his Second Coming and the end of the age. It's to this question that Jesus turns in to-

day's passage, and he will continue to answer it until the end of Matthew 25.

His Second Coming. The Parousia. The End of Days. The day when Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead and make everything new. 'What signs should we look for to know it's coming?' ask his disciples.

Jesus has already said in Matthew 24:27 that the day will be unmistakable, just like a lightning strike that lights up the night sky from east to west, suddenly, powerfully and unmistakably. But as to when that day will be, he says in verse 36,

36 "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the

Father.

No one knows when Jesus will return. No one. Not angels. Not even the earthly Jesus himself, only God the Father the in Heaven. He alone knows the day and timing of Jesus' return. So to ask about timing and dates, to try and predict his return, is utter foolishness. Because no one knows, except God the Father himself.

Jesus continues,

37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; 39 and they knew nothing

about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

To explain the suddenness and gravity of his return Jesus turns to the story of Noah from Genesis chapter 7. When we think of the story of Noah and the Ark, it's easy to think of all those cute children's stories of animals going two by two into a big wooden boat. These stories certainly have their place amongst our young, but a more adult conception of Genesis chapter 7 sees an account of terrible judgment, in which God drowns all of human civilisation, who'd become so corrupt that every inclination of their collective hearts was only evil all the time. All of human civilisation was wiped out, with God extend-

ing his mercy and grace to just one single family. Here's Gen 7:21–23,

21 Every living thing that moved on land perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. 22 Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. 23 Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.

Jesus' point is that his Second Coming will be the same. In Noah's day, despite Noah's preaching and pleading and extraordinary

activities in building a monstrous boat on dry land, people just kept about living their normal every day lives, completely ignoring his urgent warnings. Until suddenly, the flood gates opened and swept them all away. Jesus' Second Coming will be exactly like this. That time God judged the earth by water, at the Second Coming he will judge it by fire (2 Pet 3:6–7), and just like the first many people will be caught completely unawares, judgment will be universal, and only those who have made advance preparations will be spared.

Here's how sudden it will be says Jesus,

40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the

other left.

What could be more normal than two men working in the field and two women grinding with a hand mill? They're just going about their daily lives. But in an instant, one will be taken and the other left. Mother and daughter, husband and wife, father and son, lifelong friends; separated forever in an instant. One to eternal judgment, the other to eternal life.

Think

Sudden, universal, eternal. Are you ready? Take some time now to think through the implications of this passage. No-one knows the day or hour of Jesus' return. But he will come again, suddenly, unmistakably and in terrible judgment upon those who

are not prepared. But on that day, those who have made advance preparations, who've turned back to God in repentance and faith, those you are ready, will experience the unspeakable and indescribable joy of finally comprehending the full extent of what their futures hold, living in the world made new, in the new heavens and the new earth worshipping and enjoying the best of eternal life alongside the Lord Jesus. Are you ready?

How do you feel about today's passage? Mixed emotions? An urgency to warn those around you are oblivious to what may at any moment come down on their heads and what will most certainly meet them on the other side of the grave? But in tension with this you may also be feeling joy and a longing for Jesus to return. Take some

time this morning to think through the implications of these mixed emotions. What will you do in response to this passage?

You might resolve to share the gospel more frequently and fervently. And pray for opportunities to do so. You might also decide to live a little more loosely to this world. After all, it is passing away, and something far greater awaits which means we need to dream bigger dreams than the small ones we so often waste our lives away chasing.

Pray

Pray some of these thoughts and feelings over with God. Perhaps think of one person this morning that you'd like to share the good news of Jesus with. Pray and plan with God how this might come to

pass. Pray also that God would continue to grow in you the desire for Jesus' return.

And pray that what awaits you in the new heavens and the new earth might be your greatest joy and your singular focus as you go about today and every day seeking to honour your heavenly Father, in response his priceless gift of eternal life.