

## **Matthew 22-07-24b**

We are ready now to pick up our study in Matthew chapter 24. We want to look at this little bit of inscrutability, if you will, in verses 39 through 41. The people who were marrying and giving in marriage, eating and drinking in the days of Noah, they did not know until the day that Noah entered the ark.

They were doing it until the day that Noah entered. This, once again, might argue that Noah entered on the 17th day back there in Genesis, because they were doing this right up until the raindrops started falling. They paid no attention to the animal parade as we discussed on the break.

They did not know until the flood came and took them all away, took them all away. This is kataklousmas in Greek. Kata is down and klousmas has a notion of washing.

They were washed down, washed away. So also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two men will be in the field.

One will be taken and the other left. Two will be grinding at the mill. One will be taken and the other left.

The mill picture is particularly interesting because this is not the mill like Samson ground at, the upper millstone dropping off a tower and so on. This is a hand mill, but it was large enough. It required enough weight on these stones that it was typically operated by two women.

It had a smaller version of the big millstone that you're familiar with, a circular bottom plate and sort of a wheel upper plate, but it had a handle on it. You'd put the grain on it and then two women together would get this thing going. You could work it individually, but it worked better if there were two.

So these two women are working this mill. They're working together. Two are in the field.

They're probably working together. Jesus doesn't give the basis for discrimination, but one is taken and one is left. So if you were one of these women, if you were one of these men in the field, do you want to be taken or do you want to be left? Let me say first of all, and we concluded our first session noting that the nature of the timing of the events in Genesis chapter seven, the early part there, is important primarily in terms of application.

If it's how many angels on the head of a pin, it doesn't matter a lot. My view is that scripture is clear and understandable to us when we need it to be clear and understandable. And things that are somewhat opaque are either something that encourages us to dig deeper so that they are no longer opaque or they're really not that important.

And this is a distinction that someone who studies to learn and to present needs to take into account that you don't want to be running down a rabbit trail that really doesn't make a difference in terms of application. This is why I think pinning down this generation not passing away is important in terms of application because it conveys the certainty of coming judgment on everyone. And the judgment is where will you be when it comes is the idea.

Same thing here. Ultimately, does it matter which way to take it? So some people say, and some very well respected commentators and commentaries say that to be taken is taken in judgment. Others say to be taken is to be delivered like the rapture.

The rapture we are taken away and those who are left have to go through. And of course this makes a lot more sense if you're a pre-tribulationist. The mid and post-tribulationists don't find that bucket carries much water.

But here is a view on this. And this is from a man with some qualifications. He's a Dr. Alan Kirshner.

And he says, amillennialist, post-tribulationist, many pre-tribulationists argue that the ones who are taken are taken to judgment and the ones who are left are left for deliverance. Of course, you can base that argument on where the carcass is. There the vultures will gather and the carcass isn't there very long.

It is taken away and fed to young ones and digested. And this is God's natural cleanup system is that, and we see it around here all the time. People drive these now paved roads very quickly and there's all manner of squirrels.

The only thing I don't see is rabbits. I think rabbits are too quick and smart. You see deer, you see possums, you see raccoons, you see squirrels, you see turtles, you see snakes.

You see people's domestic pets. I can't remember the last time I saw a smashed rabbit on the road. But having said that, there's not a cleanup crew out here in the country other than the carrion eating animals.

There are several that are both four-footed and winged that will come and make short work. Not to mention the microbes and the digestive flies and the rest of it that come. The thing doesn't last more than a few weeks and you can hardly tell it was there unless there's some bones remaining.

So to be taken, you could understand that. But honestly, I think the instinct we have that is quoted here that is to be taken to happiness is also well-founded. It's the model of the rapture.

We're taken and delivered from a coming judgment. Noah being taken out before the

generation is judged. Lot and his wife and two daughters taken out before the city is judged.

The difficulty you have is why would you need to warn the people of Israel about all of the things we have just seen in chapter 24? Flee, look out, don't take the mark of the beast when you go to Revelation and the rest of it. If you're going to be delivered out from it, why even bother to talk about the nature and detail of the judgment? There doesn't seem to be biblical support for a rapture of the Old Testament saints who came to faith after the rapture of the church and that they are then taken and then those who remain are judged. But here's the argument that Kirshner makes.

This interpretation views those who are taken as taken for judgment after the battle of Armageddon. Those who are left are those who survive the day of the Lord and enter the millennial kingdom. Their argument is based mainly on the Noahic illustration in verses 37 through 39.

They contend the judgment of the flood came and took them all away. The judgment of the flood took them and so being taken is taken for judgment. Identifying the wicked with those who will be taken is mistaken for the following reasons.

First, the domestic and agricultural illustrations in verse 40 and 41, working in the field, grinding at the mill, parallel the Noahic illustration. So they are not intended to illustrate the illustration of the Noah illustration in verses 37 through 39. Rather, 40 and 41 intend to illustrate the climax of this prophetic discourse, this answer to the question that was asked at the beginning of the chapter, which is the gathering of God's people at the parousia, the gathering of God's people.

And this is looking back to when Jesus says that he will send his angels and they will gather his elect in verse 31. He will send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet. They will gather together his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other.

So in the context, the angels come and gather the elect. And so if you put 31 with this, then to be taken is to be taken by the angels and gathered similar to the rapture. And this would follow that pattern.

But on the other hand, you have verse 28, wherever the carcass is, the eagles will be gathered together. So we're still kind of sitting the fence. Kirshner goes on to say, the other interpretation breaks the parallelism of the illustrations.

Noah's family being delivered is described first, the day when Noah entered the ark. The day that he entered the ark is the day that he is separated from the rest of his generation, perfect and upright in his generation. He is separated by the command of God to enter the ark.

Then the judgment upon the ungodly is described. So to preserve the parallel, a man in the field and a woman grinding at the mill is first described as taken, delivered. Then the other man in the field and the other woman grinding at the mill are left, judgment.

The difficulty I have with that is how many hundreds of thousands, if not millions, die before Armageddon. There is judgment beforehand. And there is a limited ability to parallel the days of Noah because the people experienced nothing by way of hardship or tribulation until the day that Noah entered the ark and they were all swept away.

There was no third of the earth scorched, third of the seas dry up, sun darkened, moon turned to blood, scorpions with stings in their tail, mark of the beast, men crying out for the rocks to fall on them. There is no indication that the believers of that age are somehow delivered out of that by being taken. They are encouraged to hide and preserve themselves, but they are not taken out the way we are taken out prior to those judgments.

Third, he argues, some translations render the flood illustration in verse 39 as the flood came and took them, took the wicked all away. The rendering took is unfortunate because unsuspecting readers may assume it is the same taken used in verse 40-41. But swept away is our katakloumos, the cataclysm took them.

And the Greek in verse 39 is airo, they are taken away, the cataclysm comes and takes them away, airo. And then in contrast, the term in 40-41 to be taken is para lambano, and lambano is to receive, and para is alongside. So para lambano in almost all of its New Testament uses has a positive connotation.

In John 14, if I go, I will come again and para lambano you to myself. I will take you alongside to myself. And of course, para klete, the one who is called alongside, para kletos, alongside is, it seems to be a beneficial thing.

So to be taken, it's a different word. They're not airoed, they are para lambano. And para lambano is used 49 times in the New Testament.

And 46 of those times, it is this positive sense of being embraced or taken to oneself in a positive way. The other three times are soldiers taking you into custody to put you in jail, and they're sort of safeguarding you from fleeing so that they can incarcerate you. So that's an argument.

Fourth, being left is afiemi. One will be taken, para lambano, the other is left, afiemi, which in this context is to move away, to separate, to leave, to leave behind, to depart from. Interestingly, this is also the word that is implicated in forgiveness.

Our sins are separated from us along with their guilt and their consequence in terms of judgment. So afiemi in this context has the idea more of being abandoned to the upcoming judgment in his view. Fifth, in this same context, Jesus gives another

illustration, which is coming in the, in chapter 25, which is the 10 virgins and the five wise virgins who have their lamps burning when the groom comes.

They are taken into the wedding feast and the foolish virgins who have to go try to find oil to buy are left. And when it's time to come into the wedding celebration, the door is shut. And so those who are left are left for judgment.

So these seem fairly compelling in terms of persuasive value. Those who argue the other way say that this is a misinterpretation and they say people actually apply this to the rapture itself, and some do, and that wouldn't be appropriate because this is not the church. But the days of Noah is invoked in another way.

Who was taken in the days of Noah? It certainly wasn't the righteous. They stuck around and inherited the earth after God removed the wicked. Jesus explains that the coming of the Son of Man will be like the days of Noah when the wicked were taken away and the righteous will be left behind.

So in this man's view, somebody named Staples, two men will be in a field. One will be seized and one will be released. Two will be grinding at the mill.

One will be seized and one will be released. This translation, he says, is clearer. It's better to be in the latter group to be released, better to be let go or released than to be taken or seized.

And that runs counter to the picture in modern imagination. So I find that to be less compelling than the other. Consistent with the context, Jesus, again in verse 31, sends his angels with a great sound of a trumpet in this same context, talking about the same event at the coming, someone is going to be taken.

Well, Jesus said in verse 31, they will gather together his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other. And so you would say, well, he's taking them and those who are left then are going to be judged. However, when you look especially at Revelation and the unfolding of the seals and the trumpets and the thunders and the bowls, it seems as though those who are here as believers during the 70th week are kind of like the three witnesses where they are going to suffer and they need to be faithful under dire persecution and hardship.

They are not delivered out in a way such as the church is. So which is it? It is, I think, unclear. I think you could take it either way and come to the same point of application.

The point of application is whatever is happening at the point that one is taken and one is left, there is a basis for that distinction. There's a basis. What is that basis? Why aren't they both taken? Why aren't they both left? The point Jesus is making is watch therefore, Gregoreo in verse 42, because you don't know the day, you don't know the hour.

So you need to be watchful and not be engaged in routine so that when the day of distinction and the day of separation comes, whichever it is, if being left is good or being taken is good, something is distinguishing and dividing for judgment and for deliverance. It doesn't really matter which direction, taken or left. What matters is when the distinction is made, when the judgment is applied, are we those who are watchful and ready? Or are we so interested in our routine and our daily lives, we're caught up in the affairs of this life, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage? Noah's sons ate and drank and married and their wives were given in marriage.

That's how you have Mrs. Shem and Mrs. Japheth and Mrs. Ham and Mrs. Noah. Nothing intrinsically wrong with those things unless they blind God's people to the knowledge of the day of judgment, which is certainly coming. So it is of a piece with what we saw about this generation not passing away to be constantly mindful that we will be judged for our priorities and our goals and our values.

We can do these activities. You have to grind at the mill. You have to work in the field.

You have to eat and drink and marry and give in marriage. Nothing intrinsically wrong. Why are these given as a picture? Because they are being practiced with an absolute oblivious spiritual condition to God, to God's Son, and to God's certainly coming judgment.

Insensitivity to the spiritual side of things because of being, as Don Henley says, too much in this world, too invested, too caught up, too preoccupied. It's subjectivity, eyes on self, eyes on people, eyes on circumstances. And if we're looking horizontally all the time and never looking up, the day will overtake us as a thief.

It's interesting that Jesus doesn't say, behold, I come as an ark before the flood. Behold, I come as an angel of deliverance before judgment. He says, I come as a thief.

Because the primary thing that is going to happen when Jesus comes is loss. Most people at the coming are going to suffer loss. More houses, more barns, more grain, more towers.

Fool, do you not know that this night your soul will be required of you? Not thinking about the implications of coming judgment. So that is our answer. You can take it either way.

And I think that there is certainly a taking and gathering of the elect from the four winds of heaven. I personally believe that 31 is talking about something different than verses 40 and 41. I think 40 and 41 are talking about being taken to judgment.

I think 31, the angels gathering, is talking about the rapture, so to speak, where the alive and remaining ones are granted the extended warranty physical body and the dead in Israel are raised. The vision of Ezekiel where the dry bones are covered with flesh and

then breath is breathed into them. The angels are going to gather the dead and buried Jews from the four winds and bring them to the land.

And that is a picture of deliverance. This is a picture of judgment. Where the carcass is, the vultures will gather and you will be taken.

Many other parallels we've talked about in the past. Jesus said at the end of the millennium he will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all things which offend. Those will be taken and the wheat will be left.

But then it too is taken. It is reaped and the grain is taken to the barn. Ultimately you're taken to one destination or another.

So it doesn't matter greatly how you view being taken and being left. What matters is do you get the point that a separation and a judgment is coming and you want to be on the right side of it and to be prepared for it and to be thinking about it and not just eating and drinking marrying and giving in marriage. So that's that.

Know this verse 43 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. There's a reason the timing is not given because God's not going to give Satan a heads up about the second coming and it is his house that is going to be broken into. The strong man can bind the weak man and take away his stuff.

You also, verse 44, be ready. This is the point. Be ready because the son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect and in parentheses if you're not ready.

Be ready and be expectant otherwise he's going to come in an hour that you do not expect. Expect him or he's going to be unexpected. Well that brings us to verse 45.

Who then is a faithful and wise servant whom his master made ruler over his household to give them food in due season. This begins with an exhortation to those who have been assigned a leadership role. Responsibility for provision.

Authority to carry out that responsibility. One of the first things you learn in the military is the relationship between authority and responsibility. I can't be held responsible for that over which I do not have control and authority grants control.

Husbands are granted the leadership role in a marriage but they are also held accountable because they have been given that responsibility and the authority that goes with it. If they abuse the authority it's very similar to what's upcoming here. This who is a faithful and wise servant he's been made a ruler.

This is particularized now for the disciples for the apostles and for all who will follow them in any responsibility role where there you have been made ruler in some sense.

You could be a teacher you can be an employee where you have stewardship over some area of responsibility. You've been given the wherewithal the means of controlling that area of operating and fulfilling this assigned responsibility.

This guy hasn't been made a ruler so that he can live high on the hog. He has been made a ruler to give the underservants food in due season. In due season means he's got to think.

He can't just open the larder and say help yourselves I'm going to go take a nap. He distributes food in season. He's got to lay it in ahead of time.

He's got to manage inventory. He's got to be aware of how many servants there are and what their needs are. Food in due season.

He has been made a ruler and he's got an area of responsibility and concomitant authority. So this is not universally applicable. It is applicable in areas where we have stewardship.

So it's universal in that sense but it specifically applies to pastors to those who have been assigned authority as parents or as husbands in a marriage wives and mothers over their children and so on. It's areas of authority and responsibility. Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing.

What does this mean? Once again this is daily domestic operation. It is routine but there is always the thought of the assignment. I serve a master.

I have been made a ruler but I'm intermediate. Remember the Roman centurion. Lord you don't have to come under my roof.

I have those under my authority. I say to one come and he comes to another go and he goes. And I know that you have authority.

I understand authority. I am a man under authority and there are those who are under mine. Same thing here.

Blessed is the servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing. Keeping the assignment in mind and who his own ruler is. Who his own master is and what his own master requires of him.

What does the Lord require of you oh man to be aware not mindlessly in the routine as the preceding illustrations. Assuredly I say to you he will make him ruler over all his goods. He starts out with one assignment when he returns and finds that servant doing it faithfully he's going to be promoted and having demonstrated awareness and faithfulness he is going to be given future opportunities to serve.

Isn't this a wonderful and exciting thing that if we are faithful in that which is least we've

been faithful over one city we'll rule 10 cities. We've been faithful with a few talents we'll be given many more talents. We are preparing.

We are practicing. We are rehearsing in the same way that these prophecies have a near and a far fulfillment. Our near faithfulness is going to have a far fulfillment where being faithful in that which is least enables us to be faithful in that which is much more.

He will be made ruler over all his goods but if that evil servant says in his heart my master is delaying his coming begins to beat fellow servants and to eat and drink with the drunkards this is dismissing the possibility of the master's return which means evaluation and judgment being oblivious and unconcerned about future judgment leads to selfishness self-centeredness self-gratification and the abuse of others. Anybody living the self-centered life is hurting somebody. Anytime we are self-gratifying anytime we are self-serving self-seeking we hurt someone in the periphery.

It's just by definition. We are violating the law of love. Love your neighbor as yourself.

If we love ourselves and ignore our neighbor we have violated that second great commandment that is a part of the summation of all the law and prophets. Drinking with the drunkards the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking. Remember verse 44? Watch be ready or the master is going to come at a time you do not expect.

The master of that servant will come on a day when he's not looking and an hour that he's not aware of and will cut him in two and apportion him his lot his meros his inheritance with the hypocrites. Hypocrites say one thing and do another and he is lumped in he is judged he is either taken or left to join the hypocrites. Weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Our momentary light affliction works for us an eternal weight of glory. The momentary practice of self-gratification and insensitivity to others works an eternal hardship. Read Romans chapter 2. Indignation and wrath on the day of wrath to those who by patient continuance and well-doing seek for eternal life there is glory and honor.

Read Romans chapter 2. Weeping and gnashing of teeth. Notice that it is not an end because these are members of the master's household. This is not outsiders, it's not the enemy.

These are servants who are unfaithful and in their ongoing partaking of future life they are weeping and gnashing their teeth. A sign of loss, a sign of misery, a sign of frustration lasts much longer than the brief season of self-gratification and abuse of fellow servants. This happens in the household of the master.

These are servants, not unbelievers. So it's a warning to us. Well that brings us now to chapter 25 with the parable of the wise and foolish virgins.

We have covered this very extensively in our study of Jesus' parables. It is rich with meaning and fruitful for application and it is where we will pick up next time. But by way of closure for this very long and detailed study of chapter 24, the whole reason Jesus answers the question that was posed at the beginning of that chapter back in verse 3, when will these things be? What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? Jesus says the reason it is important for you to know is because judgment is coming.

It will be a time of judgment and everyone is going to appear. All of Old Testament Israel is going to appear in the day of Jesus' coming because they will be raised. It's only the unbelievers, the rest of the dead who live not until a thousand years are complete.

But all Israel is going to be alive and aware at the second coming. In that day, the rapture is also taking place and all the body of Christ will be awake and aware. As we saw earlier in this study, there are two phases of the coming.

The first phase, the day of the Lord begins with the rapture and it concludes when the millennial kingdom begins. It is a seven-year day. The day that Noah entered the ark was a seven-day week.

He began entering on the 10th. He finished entering on the 17th. It is a fruitful way to understand Genesis chapter 7. It was a process of entering and then being sealed in.

There is a process of entering into the millennial kingdom that begins with the rapture of the church and ends with the great and terrible day of the Lord. Armageddon, the raising of the Old Testament saints and their judgment passing under the rod to decide who is in and who is out, who will be in the wedding feast and who is in the outside, where once again there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. As long as we maintain an awareness on a daily basis that we are not living this life as an end unto itself, we do what we do as unto the Lord.

The verse my dad put in the front of my Bible, study Bible, is exactly that. Whatever you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men. As unto the Lord.

Worth reflecting on morning, night, and noon as we go to the Lord in prayer. Take stock. How sensitive are we to the fact that we are here as stewards of our time and our resources, as representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you think there was ever a time in His earthly ministry when He wasn't aware that He was about His Father's business? My Father is at work and I am at work. Jesus never forgot who He was and why He was here. We are His body and we should do the same.

Well, that concludes chapter 24 and we will begin chapter 25 next time. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for the fact that we are given ample instruction and warning and exhortation in advance of the Day of Judgment so that we

can, on that day, having done all, stand.

Because we have put on the full armor that You provide. We have heeded under the ministry of the Holy Spirit the truth of Your Word and have made it the object of our faith so that we have laid hold of righteousness. We have laid up for ourselves treasure in heaven and not on earth.

And as a result, we are prepared and fit for future service and future opportunity. What a wonderful potential You have given to us in the Lord Jesus. We thank You for these things in His name.

Amen.