

# Matthew 24:36-41

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-24/matthew-2436-41/>

*Jesus gives His answer to the disciples' first question about "When will these things happen?" He tells them even though the signs He gave will indicate His approach is very near, that "No one knows the day or hour of His return, but the Father alone." He parallels His return to the Days of Noah. The judgment will suddenly come upon those who are not ready just like it did at the flood.*

The parallel gospel accounts of this teaching are found in Mark 13:32-33 and Luke 21:34-35.

In this section Jesus answers the disciples' first question which was "When will these things happen?" (Matthew 24:3).

He began answering this question telling them, that when they see the things He'd been telling them—the Abomination of Desolation (Matthew 24:15), the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21), and the Sun, Moon, and Stars darken (Matthew 24:29)—then they should know that Jesus's *coming* is right at the door (Matthew 24:33). These things would happen one after the other so that the generation that sees them will not pass away (Matthew 24:34).

His *coming* will be certain and sure. Jesus promised His disciples that these signs were sure and true. *But* this does not mean that we can know in advance about when *the Son of Man* will return until these signs occur.

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

This was Jesus's answer to the first question the disciples asked Him.

*That day and hour* refers to the *day and hour* of Christ's return. Jesus said that *no one knows* when this *day and hour* will be except for God *the Father alone*. He states that *the angels of heaven* do not know when *that day* will be. Jesus shared that amazingly *not even He Himself knows* when this *hour* will be.

The *Son's* not-knowing *the hour* of His return might have only been applicable to Jesus during His earthly ministry. It could be that this ignorance was temporary and was an aspect of Jesus setting aside some of His divine privilege (Philippians 2:6-7). It could be that He did not *know the hour* when He shared this, but He now does *know* upon His ascension to His heavenly throne.

Among everyone else who does *not know the day or hour* of Christ's return is Satan.

Because the devil does *not know* when Jesus will return, he is constantly remaining vigilant to be ready for when that *day and hour* comes. We know that around the time it comes that there will be what the Bible describes as the beast or "antichrist," a world leader who opposes God and

makes war upon the followers of Jesus (Daniel 8:23-26; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; 1 John 2:18; Revelation 17:7-14).

It is interesting to speculate that because the devil does not know when the time will be, that he is constantly grooming witting or unwitting potential antichrists to be ready when *that day and hour* arrives. Some of history's most evil figures may have been lined up by Satan to assume the role of antichrist had *the day* of Christ's return come during their time.

Jesus then said, *For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.* Those who read and understand the signs will know that Jesus is right at the door *just like Noah* knew judgment was at hand. Everyone who does not read the signs that Jesus gave will be *just like* everyone else who did not get on the ark during *the days of Noah*.

In *those days before the flood*, most people ignored the sign given by *Noah*. They just kept living life as though nothing would ever change, *eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage*—activities people engage in when they have an optimistic view of the future. And this continued right up *until the day that Noah entered the ark. The wicked of Noah's day did not understand until the flood came and took them all away.* Seeing the signs did them no good. They did not understand them, so did not act.

Jesus made this lack of understanding a parallel *to what will occur at the end of the age.* As it was in *the days of Noah*, so it will be with *the coming of the Son of Man.* The wicked during the end times will *not understand* or heed the signs either. They will not repent, so will be judged.

Jesus then described how people *will be taken* in judgment. *Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Likewise, two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.*

This will happen suddenly. For the wicked who miss the signs that have been occurring signaling the end of the age and *the coming of the Son of Man*, it will appear to them to have happened without warning. It seems that people will be preoccupied with their daily tasks when the judgement comes, so they will be caught completely unaware.

Jesus compared how *the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.* Since it was the wicked that *the flood came and took away in the time of Noah*, it seems most reasonable to interpret in this instance when *the Son of Man* comes that it is the wicked (not the righteous) who are being *taken* away. Supporting this interpretation is the fact that the same Greek verb that is translated as "*took*" in verse 39 about *the days of Noah* is the same verb used in verse 40 and 41 for "*will be taken*" about *the coming of the Son of Man*. All three are the Greek verb, "airo."

As *at the time of Noah*, some are judged and some remain. Jesus did not add details about this event, such as how this will take place, the mechanism used to make it happen, or where the wicked will go. Jesus described something similar in His explanation of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares (Matthew 13:46-43). The unrighteous tares are harvested and put into the fire (Matthew 13:40), leaving the wheat, whom Jesus identified as "sons of the kingdom" (Matthew 13:38).

It is possible that these wicked who are taken away could be raptured (caught up) and taken directly to judgement. Rather than being taken up to heaven, they could be swept to prison, perhaps like the incident of the earth opening up and swallowing the disobedient priests in the Old Testament (Numbers 16:25-35) or the sweeping of the beast and false prophet directly into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:20).

2 Peter 3:3-9 functions as that disciple's commentary of Jesus's teaching in this passage. Peter, possibly recalling what Jesus told him here on the Mount of Olives, later wrote in his second epistle something very similar to what Jesus said about His return being like what happened *in the days of Noah*. Peter wrote that in the last days, mockers will come, jeering the faithful (2 Peter 3:3). They will claim that God isn't coming back, and that the promises are fake. They will be judged for their mocking of God, not with a flood, but with fire (2 Peter 3:7).

Peter encourages his readers to not lose heart no matter how long it seems until the Son of Man comes: "with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like one day" (2 Peter 3:8). And he also reminds his readers of the opportunities His tarrying allows for repentance and mercy (2 Peter 3:9).

After his betrayal of Jesus and restoration by his risen Lord, Peter appears to have really understood what Jesus had taught him during their time together. And he strove to be faithful, even in the face of loss, rejection, or death.

Jesus had answered the disciples' three questions (Matthew 24:3) in reverse order.

Their questions, along with His answers follow:

Question 1: "When will these things happen?"

Jesus's Answer: These things will happen within a generation of the signs that I have described (Matthew 24:34), but *no one* but God *the Father* knows in advance when *the day or hour* of His return will come (Matthew 24:36).

Question 2: "What will be the sign of your coming?"

Jesus's Answer: You won't need a sign. When *the Son of Man* returns it will be unmistakably apparent that I have come (Matthew 24:27). But here are three precursor events to signal my coming so that you will know when the time is near. These events are the Abomination of Desolation (Matthew 24:15); the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21); and the Darkening of the Sun, Moon, and Stars (Matthew 24:29).

Question 3: "What will be the sign of the end of the age?"

Jesus's Answer: The sign that the end of the age is ready to come is that the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to the nations (Matthew 24:14). This will take place after the increase of birth pangs such as international wars and natural

disasters (Matthew 24:7); persecutions (Matthew 24:9-10); and a disintegration of society into lawlessness (Matthew 24:12).

Throughout His answers, Jesus repeatedly warned His disciples to not be misled by the many false prophets and fake Messiahs (Matthew 24:4-5; 24:11; 24:23-26).

After answering the disciple's three questions, Jesus gave them an admonition to be ready and remain faithful (Matthew 24:43-51). This admonition was followed by three parables: "The Parable of the Bridesmaids" (Matthew 25:1-13); "The Parable of the Talents" (Matthew 25:14-30); and "The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats" (Matthew 25:31-46).

### **Biblical Text**

**<sup>36</sup> "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. <sup>37</sup> For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. <sup>38</sup> For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup> and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. <sup>40</sup> Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. <sup>41</sup> Two women *will be* grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.**