

# **A Boat Divided Against Itself Cannot Float**

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The April '92 issue of the *Spiritual Sword* carried an article by Alan E. Highers, entitled, "An Examination of Matthew 24." Highers' attempted to divide Matthew 24 into two subjects, the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the Second coming of Christ which he believed to be yet future.

He reasons that the "signs" given in Matthew 24 refer exclusively to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Verse 34 allegedly separates the A.D. 70 event from what he argues is the future return of Christ. Again, the classic traditional futurist arguments are presented which are:

- A. The second coming is future because no man knows the day or the hour,
- B. The second coming is future because no signs are given for the second coming of Christ.

We believe that the support for the division of Matthew in such arguments above is at best weak and superficial. A careful examination of these arguments will prove the division of Matthew to be a fallacy. The following arguments will be presented to clearly and conclusively demonstrate that:

- A. Matthew 24 cannot be divided into two comings of Christ one in our past at the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and one in our future.
- B. Jesus gave signs of His second coming and connect that event with the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

The arguments will be presented in 7 segments.

- Noah and family knew they would live to see the judgment in his day.
- The flood occurred before Noah's generation passed away.
- God gave very specific time frames for the flood in the later revelation

- Noah's flood is an illustration of how things would happen in the day when Christ would return.
- God gave more precise revelation regarding Christ's return as the time drew nearer to the destruction of Jerusalem.
- Noah was given signs of the coming flood.
- The fatal admission of Luke 17:30,31 as a parallel to Matthew 24:36f

With each argument, we demonstrate the fallacy of attempting to divide Matthew 24.

### **Noah and Family Had Knowledge They Would Live To See Their Day of Judgment**

Jesus stated that his coming would be the same as in the days of Noah. Noah had knowledge that he would live to see the flood. *"But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark-you, and your sons and your son's wives with you."* (Genesis 6:18). God in making provisions for the animals supports this concept. See Genesis 6:19. Noah, could readily reason that he would live to see the flood, -that it would occur in his lifetime.

He was given a *"general"* or *non-specific* time for the flood. He did not know the exact day and hour. This was known only by God. Thus Noah had the *general* time of the flood, "his generation" but not the precise *"day and hour."*

Then the Lord said to Noah, *"Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation."* (Genesis 7:1). This is the same as saying, "This (Noah's) generation would not pass until all those things (the flood) were fulfilled. It is also the equivalent of saying there were some standing with Noah who would not die until they had seen the power of God coming in the waters of the flood.

We have now covered the first two points. Next we will address the additional revelation given to Noah as the flood approached.

## **Noah Is Given Additional Revelation from God Concerning the Time of the Flood**

After Noah completed the ark, God gave him *additional* information or revelation concerning the time of the flood.” This latter revelation was much more explicit and precise than the general time revealed prior to the construction and completion of the ark. Observe carefully that what Noah and his family did not know *before* was *afterwards* revealed to them. “*For after seven more days I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and I will destroy from the face of the earth all living things that I have made.*” (Genesis 7:4).

God reveals that the flood is ‘*at hand*’, ‘*near*,’ and ‘*shortly to come to pass*.’ The “*night was far spent*,’ ‘*the day was at hand*.’ The ‘*time was short*,’ there would be ‘*no more delay*’, and the flood was ‘*coming quickly*’, in seven days! No one would attempt to place the flood in our day by saying it is yet future to us! Had someone asked Noah on this day when the flood would occur he could have responded with total confidence and accuracy, within ‘seven more days according to the word of the Lord!’

Noah did not believe in the doctrine of the ‘*elasticity of time prophecy*’ a notion invented out of desperation by “Wayne Jackson. Suppose Noah had said, “Seven days is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years is as seven days! Noah would have been a pre-historic premillennialist as far as the flood was concerned.

Our point is that God revealed a precise day that the flood would occur, not initially, but as the time drew closer to the event. Some use the example of Noah provided by the Lord to teach the very opposite of what the historical narrative teaches. They use it to prove that “the day and hour” was not known as with the second coming. This is not only false reasoning, but it reverses the application of the narrative.

Most futurists assume the non-fulfillment of Matthew 24 and the uncertainty of the event. Then they argue for the same in Noah’s day. This is just the opposite in the way Jesus uses the

illustration. He says that His coming would be as it was in the days of Noah. Thus, we must look not to the second coming to determine how the events transpired in the days of Noah. Rather, we are to look at the days of Noah and understand how the second coming events would transpire.

Ignorance of the precise day and hour of the flood refer not to the latter days of Noah's generation, but to the beginning or earlier days. What God did not reveal in the beginning, He revealed later. *"And it came to pass **after seven days**, that the waters of the flood were on the earth. In the six hundred year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, **in that day** all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened,"* (Genesis 7:10,11). [EMP. mine, whb]

The once hated now loved "day for a thousand years" premillennial argument goes down the drain. God's word is not a "rubber factory" designed for manufacturing "elastic" time statements. God, in his own time, reserved the right to reveal the "time and the seasons" for the flood which were in His own power.

Will the dividers of Matthew 24 be consistent in their application of the 'days of Noah'? If so, they must abandon the argument that no day was known at the time of the event. The point which Jesus makes concerning the flood of Noah's time is that the **wicked** did not know until the flood came and took **them** away. See Matthew 24:37-39.

The wicked would not pay attention to any of the signs nor heed the message of warning. Thus, they missed the signs of the flood and were overtaken by it. The righteous were aware and received both the signs and the knowledge to ensure their escape and safety. This should more than satisfy our challenge of proving that Noah received additional information regarding the precise time of the flood.

## **The Flood is an Illustration of How Things Would Happen at the Second Coming**

What was true of Noah's day was also true regarding the coming of Christ in A.D. 70 at the fall of Jerusalem. The careful reader will observe that "knows" in Matthew 24:36 is in the present tense. "But of that day and hour no one knows, no not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only," (Matthew 24:36). Mark adds, 'nor the Son' (13:32). This is the primitive or earlier stage of the prophecy. It corresponds to the general information given to Noah. If one presses the point that the coming of the Son of Man will be as the days of Noah, then one has every right to look for and expect **later revelation regarding a more precise time than was given earlier.** If not, the coming of Christ won't be as the days of Noah.

It is possible regarding the Parousia that God later revealed a more precise time than that given in the Olivet discourse. John writes, "Little children it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrists shall come, even now are there many antichrists where by we know that it is the last hour, (1 John 2:18). Earlier, the disciples, particularly John who was present when Jesus delivered the Olivet discourse recorded in Matthew 24, only knew the generation. In other words, he only knew that the events would transpire within his lifetime. Later at the writing of 1 John, he *knows* that the last hour has arrived because of the presence of the antichrists.

Like Noah, he has been given more precise, specific detailed information. He knows that the second coming will not be protracted for centuries but that the last hour had arrived. Earlier, the disciples were told that the day would not come until the apostasy had occurred and the man of sin was revealed. This was at work as early as the 50's when 2 Thessalonians was written. In Hebrews, Paul says they could "see the day approaching" (10:25) and that it was coming in a little while.' (10:37). Jude records that the 'mockers' were presently spots in their love feasts marked out of old for the condemnation about to come upon them in the last time, (Jude 18). John clearly places the last hour within *his day*, yet still within the first century. This is all

information that the disciples were not privy too when Jesus uttered the prophecy. This was just as it was in the days of Noah.

Further, Mark's account says Jesus did not know the precise time of His coming and that only God knew. This was true during His earthly ministry when He had been divested of a measure of the divine glory. How then could he return without at some time in the future receiving that knowledge? Prior to his ascension, Jesus prayed to be glorified with the glory that he had with the Father before the world began (John 17:3) versus when he gave up that glory, Phil. 2:5-6.

Did God give Jesus additional information? Not only did God give it to Jesus, he gave additional revelation to the angels and the disciples. We have it in a message called the "Revelation" or the "unveiling" of Christ in His glory. *"The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave Him to show His servants things which must shortly take place." And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John" (Revelation 1:1)*

Here we see that God gave to Christ additional revelation. Christ gave this revelation to the angel who then gave it to John for the express purpose of showing it to His servants, -the righteous. Now what is the subject discussed in that revelation? It is about the things whose time was 'at hand' and 'shortly to come to pass.' It is the coming of Christ in the clouds (1:7), *the end of the delay* (10:7) which means that the signs mentioned in 2 Thessalonians had been fully revealed, thus the day of the Lord *"could come"* whereas when Paul wrote Thessalonians it *could not*.

Further it meant that the 'time that the dead should be judged had come (Rev. 11:18; 20:12), and the coming of the new heaven and earth was soon to follow, (21:1-2). The angel informed John that 'these things must shortly take place.' (22:6,) and therefore "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand," (22:10) John here alludes to

Daniel's prophecy, thereby indicating that the time of the end Daniel prophesied had come. He likewise identifies that time of the end to refer the closing days of Israel when their power was completely shattered, (Dan. 12:4, 7) Jesus said, "*Behold I am coming quickly! And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give everyone according to his work...Surely I am coming quickly.*" (22:7, 12, 20).

There can be no doubt that Jesus is confidently expressing knowledge of the time of His coming. He knew 'surely' that He was 'coming quickly' and that the 'time' was 'at hand.' This is just as it was in the days of Noah, general revelation initially, but precise information near the end. As can be observed, the New Testament gives many signs and time statements most of which occur during the final twelve years leading up to A.D. 70. These time statements outline the chronological time table of the parousia. (Philippians 4:5; Hebrews 10:25, 37; James 5:7-9; 1 Peter 4:5, 7, 17; 1 John 2:18; Revelation 1:1-3).

Therefore, Jesus along with John, the angel and the seven churches, (God's servants) knew of the return and the time. The wicked did not know. They were walking around and going through their day as usual, marrying, given in marriage and "scoffing" against the revealed word of the Lord.

### **Noah Had Signs!**

God gave Noah signs of the coming flood, both general and specific. The general signs were in his lifetime, and within his very own generation. Noah did not have to be a rocket scientist to know that the flood would occur before he died. And don't forget that big boat. Why surely someone had to suspect something was going to happen. The ark would not qualify for a recreation speed boat. If a man were smart he would certainly be looking for some water about the time the ark was completed. Another sign was given when the animals were being loaded. For example: When the ticket agent asks everyone to board an airplane that is a sure sign that the

plane will be taking off soon. No one expects it to take 2000 years or more before the plane taxis down the runway. The same is true when boarding a ship. That means its time for Von Voyage!

In addition, judging from the size of the ark and the weight and size of some of the animals it stands to reason that the door/loading ramp was huge and heavy. If I were standing on the ground watching that huge door close of its own accord the possibility of a flood would immediately be terrifyingly more credible. If Noah had any concerns or questions previously the “slamming and jamming” of that door should have removed all remaining doubt. God shut that door without a hydraulic system. “So those that entered male and female of all flesh went in as God had commanded him; and the Lord shut him in, Genesis 7:16.

“Seven more days” (7:4) was a sign for Noah to know precisely when the flood would occur. That was a countdown more memorable and more remarkable than any space shuttle mission would ever dream to be. Just as the countdown for the space shuttle is a sign that it is about to be launched, the countdown of seven days was a sign that God gave Noah before He launched the ark.

Thus, God gave Noah signs. If the coming of the Son of Man is as the days of Noah, then we have positive proof that God gave signs of the coming of Christ. If not, the coming cannot be as it was in the days of Noah.

### **No Annihilation of the Universe**

The flood was not an annihilation of the universe. All human life on the planet did not cease. The material universe continued in existence. Noah’s ark was not floating in a vacuum through space. Peter expressly says that God brought the flood to destroy ungodly people. “*And did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly,*” (2 Peter 2:5). The ‘ancient world’ which God did not spare was



the *'world of the ungodly.'* The physical universe was the *agent* rather than the *object* of destruction. This simply means that the waters killed the “world” or the ungodly people.

Since the coming of the Son of Man is as it was in the days of Noah, there is no justification for reasoning that human life and the planet must be destroyed. The parallel would be the corresponding destruction of the ungodly world of the Jews.

### **Splitting the Ark**

Finally, to show the manifest fallacy of dividing Matthew 24, the very attempt splits Noah's boat right down the middle. Highers agreed that the events of Matthew 24:4-34 refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. He then argues that the account of Noah (vv. 37-39) refers to the second coming of Christ, placing it yet future because it falls within the section of Matthew below the *imaginary* “dividing line.” (This so called dividing line exists only in the imaginations of those who advance the argument. It is not in the text.)

The proof of this is seen when comparing Matthew 24 with Luke 17. To further clarify this point, Highers argues that the fleeing from the city, housetop, etc, (see Matthew 24:15-18) would have no reference to a barbecued globe or planet-ending event and therefore can refer to Jerusalem's fall in A.D. 70. Jesus however, places the fleeing event in the same time period as that to which he applies the warning concerning Noah's day.

*“And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man; they ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods*

*are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back,” (Luke 17:26-30).*

In this text, Jesus says that the parable concerning Noah’s day is applicable to the day when the Son of Man is revealed. Likewise Jesus places the “fleeing event” in the day when the Son of Man is revealed, (v. 30). Highers agrees the fleeing event is A.D. 70. We agree as well noting Jesus’ application in Matthew 24:15-17. The fleeing event refers to the A.D. 70 coming of Christ and is equally the same day in which the Son of Man is revealed per Luke 17:30,31 It must follow that the day when the Son of Man is revealed per Luke 17:30, is the A.D. 70 coming of Christ in the destruction Jerusalem.

This means that the parable relating to Noah’s day finds its correct meaning and application in connection with the events surrounding the A.D. 70 conflagration. Therefore, no division exists in Matthew 24 relative to these events occurring within the first century generation.

One cannot divide Noah’s boat with half in 70 A.D. (Luke 17) and the remaining half in the future. Such a boat cannot float. Wherever the boat goes the fleeing must go with it. Jesus unequivocally places the fleeing event in connection with Jerusalem’s fall. *“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near: then let those in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled,” (Luke 21:20-22).*

### **Summary**

We observed the manner in which God gave Noah general revelation before the flood. Noah knew that it would transpire within his generation. Later God gave more specific information. “In seven days” was much more specific than in your generation.

We also observed that there were signs. The ark itself was a sign of the coming flood. God always warns his people before he brings destruction. The gospel had to be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations before Jerusalem would be destroyed in A.D. 70.

Critical to our discussion was the proof that Matthew 24 could not be divided into two events. The fleeing event of Luke 17:30, 31 equates with the fall of Jerusalem as shown from Matthew 24:15,-17 and Luke 21:20-22. The attempt to split Matthew creates a problem with the application of the parable of Noah and splits the ark right down the middle. Surely a split boat cannot float.