

Transcription details:

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**As It Was in the Days of Noah: Do You Want to Be Left Behind or Taken at the Second Coming of Jesus?  
Matthew 24:37–41 – Ep. 9**

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**\*The following is a transcript so it has not been edited for grammar and spelling.**

Transcription results:

[music] It's time for The Biblical Prophecy Program with your host, Alan Kurschner of Eschatos Ministries. [music]

As it was in the days of Noah, do you want to be left behind or taken at the second coming of Jesus? Matthew 24:37-41. I think this is a most appropriate topic and passage for today's program because the Left Behind movie has just come out, and as a pre-wrath, I have my obvious critique of the pre-tribulational escapist theology behind the movie, but I also have my critique of some of the people out there that are critiquing the movie. And they're critiquing it for the wrong reason. I'm going to give you two examples. There's one critique of the movie that says that the Bible does not teach the rapture. But this critique flies in the face of scripture because scripture explicitly teaches that there will be a rapture. I devoted an entire program on this in episode four, and you can find that at [alankurschner.com/four](http://alankurschner.com/four).

Another criticism of the movie that I'm hearing quite a bit, even this past week since the movie has come out, is that the premise of "left behind" is wrong. People are critiquing the movie saying, "I want to be left behind." [chuckles] They don't realize this is a very ignorant statement that they're making because their claim that, according to the Noahic in the agricultural illustrations in the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24:37-41, they say that Jesus is teaching that those who are taken, are taken to judgement. So, they're saying, "I don't want to be taken, because that's being taken to judgement." And those who are left behind are left behind for deliverance, they're claiming. And that's why they're saying, "I want to be left behind." This is the claim that I want to respond to in this program today because it's completely flawed. It's actually backwards, because, in reality, Jesus is teaching that those who are taken, are taken for deliverance, and those who are left behind are left for divine judgement. And this is what I'm going to demonstrate today in scripture. I'm going to be walking through this text. A lot of criticisms against my interpretation. I found that people cannot-- they can't walk through the text. They always have to criticize my interpretation. They have to go outside of Matthew 24 or they end up atomizing, like picking out one verse or one word or something in Matthew 24. For me, that shows that they don't have a case because they can't engage the context. They can't engage the narrative flow, the discourse. They can't walk through it. And that's what I'm going to do here is demonstrate the context of this issue in Matthew 24.

But first, I want to make a comment about the pre-tribulational interpretation of this passage in Matthew 24:37- 41. This is where the movie gets the expression "left behind" from. This may come as a

surprise to many, but actually, the majority of pre-tribulational teachers - and I'm very familiar with the literature on this. I'm very familiar with it because I'm doing doctorate research in Matthew's Olivet Discourse. The majority of pre-tribulational teachers do not believe that this passage actually has anything to do with the rapture, which is kind of ironic, right? Let me repeat this again. The majority of pre-tribulational teachers out there, more the scholarly type, they don't believe that this passage has anything to do with the rapture. I'm going to explain why here. Well, you may be saying, "Well, Alan, I thought Left Behind is foundational to pre-tribulational theology," but that's not correct. In other words, it's mostly pop pre-trib teachers out there like Tim LaHaye and Jack Van Impe and many other sensational pop pre-trib teachers who are teaching in their pre-trib interpretation that this has to do with the rapture. But most pre-trib commentators and theologians do not believe this has anything to do with the rapture. And the reason for this is that the pre-tribulational theology claims that Matthew 24 and 25 has nothing to do with the church. "This is not a church teaching," they'll say. This is a "Jewish" teaching. So, the pre-trib theologians interpret, those who are taken, are taken to judgement, for example, at Armageddon, and those who are left are the righteous who enter the millennium. And even some interpret actually just the opposite. Some say they're taken into the millennium and left for judgement. But the vast majority of pre-tribulational theologians, commentators, they would say that this has nothing to do with the rapture.

Here's what's really going on in the motivation of that interpretation, is in pre-tribulational theology, they cannot have the rapture in Matthew 24. Especially Matthew 24:31 with the reference with the gathering of the elect. They can't have the rapture as the gathering of the elect because that would mean that the rapture happens after the anti-Christ's great tribulation that's mentioned before verse 31, which, of course, would undermine the whole pre-trib system of theology. They have to make the reference of the gathering or the elect in verse 31 to some other type of gathering, such as the gathering of a remnant with Jews or something else. So, all of these illustrations of Noah, and the one taken and the other left, which is the agricultural illustration, they can't refer to the rapture they claim. But it's the pop pre-trib teachers, not the more scholarly type, but the pop pre-trib teachers who interpret the one taken and the other left to refer to the rapture. They don't even recognize that they're being inconsistent with their own theology. It's kind of ironic. It's just a striking contradiction in their interpretation. They'll say, "Matthew 24 has nothing to do with the rapture." But then, they'll say, "One taken and the other left refers to the rapture," which is in Matthew 24. They don't even that contradiction. It's sort of like when you ask them, does Matthew 24 have anything to do with the rapture? They'll say "No, no, no. Matthew 24 is for the Jews." And then, you just ask them, there's a passage in the bible that says no one knows the day or the hour of his return, right? And you ask them, what does that refer to? Of course, without exception they'll say, "Well, that refers to the rapture." It's like, "Are you aware that's in Matthew 24:36?" Of course, the more scholarly type of preachers will be aware of those types of contradictions and try to avoid them.

Saying all of this, as a pre-wrath, I actually believe that the gathering of the elect in verse 31, and by extension, these illustrations of Noah, and one taken and the other left, I actually believe that it does refer to the rapture because the illustrations are pointing back to verse 31 about the reference to the gathering of the elect. And again, I'm not addressing that today. I'm not addressing the issue of, does Matthew 24:31 refer to the rapture. Please understand that that's not what I'm addressing here today. In fact, I have a major section in my book *Antichrist Before The Day Of The Lord*. The section is called *Four Reasons Why Matthew 24:31 Is A Reference To The Rapture*. You can refer to the book on that argument.

The point I'm going to make today is that the ones who are taken is a positive deliverance. It's a positive taking. Of course, like I said, I believe that refers to the rapture. But, again, my argument here is just to make the case that this is a positive taking. And those who are left behind, that's a negative action. They will be left. That's the wicked who will be left behind for judgement. So, that's what I'm trying to argue here in the show. With all this background, let's move on and examine the issue and the passage. Let me read Matthew 24:37-41. "For as were the days of Noah, so will the coming of the Son of Man." I'm reading from the ESV, English Standard Version. "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 when they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field. One would be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill. One will be taken and one left." That's Matthew 24:37-41. If you're listening to this and your'e driving in the car, don't read your Bible with this. That's why I gave this reference. I don't want you to get into an accident here, or you will be taken immediately. All right. What do we have here? We have actually two illustrations, right? We have a Noahic illustration for "as were the days of Noah," so there's a comparison of when the Son of Man comes it's going to be like this. What? Like the days of Noah. And then, we have an agricultural illustration with two men in the field and two women grinding, and one will be taken and the other left. So, two illustrations. Keep that in mind.

Pre-wrath interprets these two illustrations - Noahic and agricultural - as they're illustrating-- now, follow this. They're illustrating-- if you have an illustration, what should you be thinking? What event is it illustrating? What is it trying to describe or illustrate? Well, it's illustrating the separation that will happen at the beginning of the parousia with Jesus. When Jesus arrives in the clouds in Matthew 24:30-31. I mean, this is the basic principal biblical interpretation. Whenever you come across illustrations, you know there's something else that is in the context. The main point of what it's trying to illustrate. I say that because it's amazing. I read some of these interpreters on this text, on these two illustrations, and they don't explain what it's illustrating. It's amazing. In the previous context, we find a separation event. The illustrations are what? They're illustrating a separation. They're illustrating a separation. Where in the context do we have a separation? The obvious event is the one that Jesus just mentioned in verses 30 to 31 - the parousia. At the beginning of the parousia, Christ comes on the cloud, and then we have an action of separation. It's the initial event that will happen when Christ arrives on the clouds. There's going to be a separation. What is the separation? Let's read verses 30 to 31. "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven and all the tribes of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man arriving on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet blast, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Again, that's verses 30 to 31. When Christ returns, he will take his people. Who's his people? Well, it says, his elect. There's going to be a gathering. Here's the separation, the gathering. The elect is going to be separated out from the wicked. Why? Because the wicked are going to be left behind. The wicked are going to be judged.

In other words, in verses 30 to 31, Jesus describes what will happen, and then in verses 37 to 41, he describes how it will happen through the illustrations. This is not rocket science. You trace the context. You walk through the narrative as such. The former passage describes the godly who will be gathered to Christ. The latter passage emphasizes the sudden and unexpected nature of separation. Not only are there going to be separation, but the illustration conveys that it's going to be a-- when it does happen, it's going to be sudden, not very slow. It's going to be unexpected for, of course, the wicked. Again, I'm going to repeat this. Please understand what I'm arguing here. I do believe that the separation of the gathering, it does refer to the rapture, and then, by extension, verse 37 to 41 is illustrating that. But I'm not arguing that this gathering is the rapture in this particular program. Again, I've explicated that in my book and I'll refer you to that. In fact, I'm going to eventually do a show on this issue. But here, the purpose of this program is, again, making the case that the taking is a positive action, a deliverance, and those who are left behind, this is a negative action, a judgment. I'm critiquing the view that says that the taking is negative and the leaving behind is positive. That is not what scripture construes for us as we're going to see in the points below. I wanted to make that clear.

The other interpretation claims that the flood came and took them. Let me back up for a moment. The interpretation I'm arguing against, they'll say that the text that says, "The flood came and took them - the wicked - all away," you see that that parallels the event of "one will be taken." But this identification of the wicked and those who are taken, that's mistaken. I'm going to give six reasons for my interpretation that it's the righteous who were taken. It's a deliverance. It's a good event. It's a positive event. And then, those who are left are the wicked for judgement.

The first reason. The agricultural illustrations in verses 40 to 41 - men in the field and women grinding grain - they parallel the Noahic illustration. They parallel the Noahic illustration. So, the agricultural illustrations - please understand this - the agricultural illustrations, that is, one taken and the other left, they're not intended to illustrate the illustration of the Noahic illustration. Please understand that. The one who are taken and one who is left, that's not illustrating the Noahic illustration. It just parallels it. And, in fact, it reinforces the Noahic parallel. It's reinforcing the main point that it's going to be a quick separation, unexpected. What verses 40 to 41 intend to illustrate is that the gathering of God's people at the parousia in Matthew 24:30-31. So, the illustrations. The illustrations are illustrating-- and again, I touched on this previously, but this is part of the first reason, is that the illustrations, illustrate what would would happen, the parousia event in verses 30 and 31. You're not going to find in the context here any other event, any other reference of those who are taken, are taken to judgement and those who are left for deliverance. No. You're not going to find that. Instead, those who are taken-- we see illustrations and we look at the context, where's the separation event? It's at the parousia. And we see who is being taken. It is the elect who are taken, not the wicked. Look at verse 30 and 31. It's the elect who are taken. They're the ones being gathered. And that's the whole point of this invoking this illustration is to demonstrate the unexpectedness and the quick separation when Christ returns. So, verse 31 does not say it is the wicked who are taken, rather, it is the righteous.

The second reason. The schema of the other interpretation, that is, the view that the wicked are taken and the righteous are left behind, what it does, it actually breaks the order of the parallelism in the illustrations. It disrupts that parallel effect. And we know this because, when the text is examined very closely, we see that the delivery of Noah is actually described first in verse 38. It says, "The day when Noah entered the ark, you have your deliverance." And then, judgement upon the ungodly is described second in verse 39. "The flood came and swept them all way." To preserve this order of the parallel, the second illustration should be taken as such: a man in the field and a woman grinding at the mill are taken, that is, delivered. Then, the other man in the field and the other woman grinding at the mill are left for judgement. It is Noah who is taken in safety away from the judgement of the wicked who are left. It's backwards to think that it was the wicked who were taken and Noah who was left. Again, this breaks the order of the parallelism in actually three places. Not just in verses 38 and 39, but the parallelism in verses 30 to 31, and Matthew 25:1-13, the order in which you have the ten virgins. I'm going to talk about that in a further point.

So, this brings us to the third reason which, again, their interpretation contradicts the meaning of key Greek words in this passage. We're going to get into a little bit of Greek here because I think that's important. Some translations render the action of the flood illustration in verse 39 as the flood came and took them, that is, the wicked, all away. But this is actually a bad rendering. The rendering "took" is unfortunate because unsuspecting readers may assume it is the same "taken" used in verses 40 to 41, but that's not true. Even though the English may use the same English term, "take," or "taken," or "took," there's actually two different, almost opposite Greek terms behind the English rendering here. I'm using the ESV that thankfully recognizes this distinction because it replaces, it doesn't render it as "took." Instead, it renders it as "swept away." That is "And they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man." That's in Matthew 24:39. So, it is not "took" in a spatial sense as coming near. It's not "took," taking the wicked in that spatial sense for nearness. No. Instead, the notion is they're being swept away in a spatial sense of "away from." The Greek term in verse 39 is "airo." And in this particular context it's in the judgement flood illustration, it means "to take away; remove." And this is in contrast to the Greek term in verses 40 to 41. Guess what Greek term is there? The Greek term is "paralambano," which carries a sense of an intimate receiving. We know this because these two Greek terms being used together is indicating that they have distinct meanings. You have the wicked who are "airo," they're removed or they're taken away, away from. And then, "paralambano," there's a receiving, an intimate type of receiving. This third reason demonstrates that the Greek supports those taken are for a positive action and those left for a negative action.

Moving on to the fourth reason. We're going to get into little bit more Greek for this fourth reason. In verses 40 to 41, I mentioned this again in the third reason, that the term for taken is "paralambano" and it conveys a positive receiving. Well, this receiving is contrasted with the one who is left. The Greek term behind left is "aphiemi." "Aphiemi." In this context, it means to move away with the implication of causing a separation; leave; depart from. So here, we have a Greek positive term for "taken" contrasted with a Greek negative term for "left." This is more in keeping with the idea of separation and judgement than deliverance. It's kind of interesting that, just a few days after Jesus gave this Olivet Discourse, he used this term again, "paralambano," this intimate receiving. He used it to reassure his disciples that, at his return, he would take them to be with him. In John 14:3, he says, "And if I go and make ready a place for you, I will come again and take" - "paralambano" - "you to be with me. So that where I am, you may be, too." It's in the same context - John 14:3 and then this text in Matthew 24 - is in the same context, that's Christ's return, the same audience - his disciples - and the same terminology - "paralambano." So, this fourth reason argues for the point that those who are taken is a positive, those who are left, it's a negative action.

We move on to the fifth point. The fifth reason reason why the taking action is positive and those who are left behind is a negative action. In Matthew 24, this is in the same parousia context. Jesus gave all other illustrations, by the way, not just a Noahic illustration and the agricultural illustrations, but he gave another actually quite extended illustration that we are all aware of. He provides the illustration in Matthew 25:1-13. He gave this illustration so that believers will be prepared for his coming. And this illustration that was The Parable of the Ten Virgins. Five were prepared and five were not. The five wise virgins were prepared to be taken to be with the bridegroom. It was not the unprepared virgins who were taken. It was the prepared virgins who were taken. The five foolish ones, they were not prepared and they were what? They were left. They were shut out. What is the illustration illustrating? Christ's return. Again, this is referring back to the major event in Matthew 24:31. Because, up to roughly around Matthew 24:1-31, you have the events themselves, the narrative, the sequence. And then, afterwards, for the remaining part of the Olivet Discourse, you have what? You have illustrations. Basically, Jesus is saying, "This is what's going to happen. And now, you live in light of it." And then, he gives us these illustrations such as the ten virgin parable. The Parable of the Ten Virgins, this is consistent with verses 37 to 41, supporting my interpretation that those who are taken are taken for deliverance, and those who are left are left for judgement. This is another illustration demonstrating that, showing this separation at verses 30 to 31.

The last and the sixth reason, I want to mention Luke's account in Luke 17. There's a parallel account of this text found in Luke 17:22-37. Specifically, Luke 17:34-37. Let me read this. He writes, "I tell you, in that night there'll be two people in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. There will be two women grinding grain together. One will be taken and the other left. Then the disciples said to him, 'Where Lord?' He replied to them, 'Where the dead body is, there the vultures will gather.'" In this last verse, it contains the disciples' question, "Where, Lord?" This is insightful because Jesus responds with, "Where the dead body is, there the vultures will gather." That is, the dead bodies, they attract vultures. This is a judgement imagery representing the ungodly, not the righteous. In other words, the notion of judgement and those who are left, because, again, the disciples are asking, "Where Lord?" Now, of course, someone could ask, are they asking where people are going to be taken or where they are going to be left. Well, in this Lukan passage, obviously, the vultures as judgement proverb obviously has a connotation of judgement for the wicked. This Lukan passage that contains this proverb comports much better with those who are left for judgement, not the interpretation of taken for judgement. It should be noted that Jesus actually uses this proverb in Matthew 24:28, which is in the immediate context of what? The separation that will occur at the parousia. Verses 30 to 31. It's not a accident that the proverb is uttered in the conjunction of Jesus explaining the separation that will happen when he returns on the clouds. The separation of the elect, it's the elect that are what? Taken, and the wicked left for judgement. This proverb that Luke uses and the question of where, of course, this needs to be seen in the context of where people are going to be left, not where they're going to be taken, because then someone is associating the vulture illustration with the righteous. And you just can't do that. That

doesn't really make any sense.

These six reasons, I believe they demonstrate that the ones who are taken are taken for righteous and for deliverance. They're taken of the righteous for deliverance. And the ones who are left are the wicked, and they will be left for divine judgment, I believe for the day of the Lord's judgment. No Christian should ever say that they want to be left behind. That's just simply ignorant. It's an ignorant statement. It's based on a flawed interpretation. At the return of Christ, we want to be part of the elect that will be delivered out of the hands of Antichrist and into the hands of Jesus Christ. We want to be like the spiritually prepared virgins who wait for their bridegroom to take them to be with him, not to be left behind. And so, the question is, are you ready to be taken or will you be found left for judgment? [music]