

Are We Allowed to Know the Date of the Lord's Return?

Are we allowed to know the date of the Lord's return? Does not the Bible say:

36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. 37 "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. Matthew 24:36-37 NASU

One could argue here that Jesus was not talking about the Rapture, but the Second Coming here since previously in Verse 15 he spoke about the Abomination of Desolation which will occur at Midtribulation and in Verse 29 the Tribulation is again mentioned, which comes after the Rapture. Even so, it looks like Verses 36 through the end of the chapter (Verse 51) form a pericope that is speaking solely about the Rapture.

The verb used in Verse 36 is the Greek *eido* (to see) which has the third person singular perfect tense form of *oiden* (he has seen) from which we get the Latin word *video*. The translation no one "knows" is linguistically possible being derived from no one "has known" coming originally from no one "has seen". Since this was said by Jesus on Wednesday (12 Nisan 33 AD), he meant that up to that day no one had seen the day or the hour. This was true, but it does not preclude our knowing it now. Here is why.

Speaking about putting a lamp under a basket, Jesus said: *For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor any thing secret that will not be known and come to light* (Lk 8:17). When speaking to the sleeping church of Sardis (which is true of many in the church today), Jesus said: *Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.*ⁱ This means that all secrets will be known, but not to those that "do not wake up". So wake up, O church of Laodicia! Finally, in giving the Great Commission, Jesus said to the apostles: *It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority...*ⁱⁱ This was true 2000 years ago, but continuing the sentence, Jesus added: *but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...*ⁱⁱⁱ Concerning Scripture, the Holy Spirit has three functions: to reveal, to inspire, and to illuminate. The power the church received after Pentecost includes the illumination or understanding of the Word. Those not asleep at the wheel will have a keen understanding of the day and the hour.

Despite having said this, I still do not know the exact day or hour of the Rapture. Assuming that Jesus was talking about the Rapture in Matthew 24:36-51, then in light of what I have said previously, we have to consider the date and the time of day. The seven Jewish feasts show that Rosh Hashanah (Feast of Trumpets) occurs on the first of Tishri. Two things put the exact solar date in ambiguity: First, modern Judaism celebrates the New Year on two successive days. So is it the first or second day? Secondly and more importantly, what year are we talking about? Even though the prophecy stated "After a year from the appearance of the Anti-Christ, the Rapture will occur," it could be more than a year, i.e., the Arabic word for after (*ba'ad*) like the Hebrew word (*achar*) in Daniel 9:26 (*Then after the 62 weeks, the Messiah will be cut off...*)^{iv} could mean long after. The

allegory of the Jewish wedding as seen in Matthew 25:1-13, however, argues against a long period of time.

With the appearance of the Anti-Christ, the traditional Jewish wedding, which began 2000 years ago with the death of the Groom as the price the Father had to pay,^v now unfolds. The betrothed will now be put to the test. During this period the groom is not allowed to speak publically with his bride but may do so in secret or through an intermediary, so Jesus accomplishes this with an intermediary, the Holy Spirit, or by himself in secret. The groom is also frequently asked the date of the marriage, to which he would give the standard reply: "No man knows the day or the hour, only my father."^{vi} This betrothal period would normally last from one to two years, long enough to prove that the bride was not with child and that she had prepared for the marriage. So too will be the testing period for the church under the Anti-Christ. In preparation for the fetching his Bride at her house for the Rapture, Jesus said at the Upper Room Discourse on the eve of his death: *I go to prepare a place for you.*^{vii} This he did in his Father's house in Heaven. There each member of his church has a chamber or *chador* awaiting him. The groom will then fetch his bride. This Jesus Christ will do at the Last Trump on the Feast of Rosh Hashanah. The church will be purified. With glorified and immortal bodies there will be a brief ceremony in Heaven with two witnesses and some guests. The church will live there for at least the seven years of the Tribulation. After this, the Jewish groom would then take the bride to his own house. This will be fulfilled by the Second Coming when the Messiah takes his Bride to Earth (*And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen,^{viii} white and clean, were following Him on white horses.*)^{ix} on the Feast of Tabernacles to celebrate the marriage feast per Revelation 19:6-8. This will officially inaugurate the Kingdom. Since it is the responsibility of the groom to provide for his wife for ever, following the Millennium, Jesus Christ will move his church to the New Jerusalem in the eternal order as seen in Revelation 21:2ff and 21:10ff.

The foregoing is another indication that the Betrothal under the Anti-Christ will be an intense period lasting for one or two years--then the Rapture. I anxiously await the Betrothal because of what follows.

I wrote in *The Anti-Christ and the Rapture* that from the allegory in Genesis 24, Isaac lifting up his eyes in Verse 63 "*toward evening*" gives an indication of the time of day. This brings up a question of the diurnal timing of the Rapture. Will it occur *toward evening* everywhere in the world, in which case it will be like a rolling wave sweeping meridianally around the Earth with the shofar blasts going before it? On the other hand, it could be the timing only in Jerusalem, in which case some may be raptured as much as 12 hours earlier according to the clock or 12 hours later yet in actuality all being raptured together simultaneously.

So there is some room for contrary opinions regarding the day and the hour for the Rapture. But this is not the case for the Second Coming. Once the Great Tribulation begins with the signing of a *firm covenant*, there will be seven years until the Second Coming.

As the ritual count down of the shofar blasts begins, it will be a time of soul searching for those who are not sure of their salvation. For others, their anticipation will be palpable and their expectations unbridled knowing that the crown is nigh. But for the majority it will be a time of indifference or amusement.

ⁱ Revelation 3:3b

ⁱⁱ Acts 1:7b

ⁱⁱⁱ Acts 1:8

^{iv} Daniel 9:26

^v *You were bought with a price* (1 Corinthians 7:23). *Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her* (Ephesians 5:25). *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son* (John 3:16).

^{vi} Similar to Matthew 24:36

^{vii} John 14:2b

^{viii} Angels do not wear white linen. White linen is a sign of salvation reserved for the saints.

^{ix} Revelation 19:14