

The Mark of the Feast

"As it was in the Days of Noah..."

We are interested in learning more about what Jesus meant when He said that the last days would be like the days of Noah.

He said it in Matthew twenty-four, so after introducing some important things last time, from Genesis, we are going to look more into the context Jesus' words. I think it is necessary to deal with a couple of issues that arise from what Jesus said.

Immediately before Jesus mentioned the days of Noah, He uttered His oft-quoted phrase, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matthew 24:36).

That single statement has become synonymous with refuting folks who try to set a date for the rapture of the church.

I totally agree that we cannot set a date for the rapture.

Jesus' statement in Matthew, however, does not settle the matter.

It can't settle it, because in that verse, and in that chapter, *Jesus is not talking about the rapture*. He's not even talking about the church.

He's talking about the future Tribulation, the nation of Israel, and His Second Coming at its end, to establish His one-thousand year kingdom on the earth.

The Church is not present in any sense in chapters 24 and 25.

The disciples' questions related to Jerusalem, Israel, and the Lord's Second Coming in glory to establish His kingdom. It skips over the Church Age in which we are living.

I don't want to read it all, but if you will simply scan the preceding verses, starting with verse fifteen, you can't miss the fact Jesus is talking to Jews in the Tribulation:

- He mentions "the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel." That is a well-known event that takes place at the very mid-point of the Tribulation. The rapture precedes it by at least three and one-half years.
- All the geography of the passage is in the Promised Land.
- The people He is addressing are Jewish Sabbath keepers.
- He indicates it will be the greatest tribulation ever to come upon the earth, and therefore it will be the final one - the Great Tribulation that He ends at His Second Coming.
- The heavenly bodies will be darkened and shaken in an atmospheric cataclysm.
- At its end, its survivors will be gathered by angels from all over the earth for a judgment.

By the time you get to "no man knows the day or the hour," it's clear Jesus means His Second Coming.

That suggests another fun question. The Second Coming is at the end of the seven-year Tribulation. Since men on the earth can know exactly when the Tribulation starts, and it's precise mid-point, how is it no man knows the exact day or hour?

- The Tribulation will start when a world leader signs a treaty with Israel guaranteeing her peace and safety. He's the antichrist.

- As I mentioned, the abomination of desolation occurs at the exact middle of the seven years, when the antichrist defiles the rebuilt Temple.

So why won't men know the day or the hour?

For one thing, by Tribulations end, the earth and the heavens have gone through terrible changes. It may be that men will not be able to tell time at all.

But why won't Jesus know?

I consulted a few Hebrew sources, about what Jesus said, and what I discovered is fascinating. I put it out there for your consideration.

There is a first century Jewish idiom that will shed much light on what Yeshua (Jesus) was saying to His followers 2000-years-ago, and to us today.

The Hebrew calendar is based upon the lunar cycle and consists of twelve 30-day months; with the month officially beginning with the sighting of the first sliver of the new moon.

All Jewish holidays always fall on the full moon of the month - **except one**. Rosh HaShanah, also known as the Feast of Trumpets, is the only holiday that occurs on the first of the month, during the month of Tishri.

Before science understood the cycles of the planets and the solar system, the Jews knew that there was a two-day window for the sighting of the new moon. The new month could not officially begin until two witnesses reported to the High Priest that they had seen the sliver of the new moon.

Once the first two sightings were confirmed, the priests would sound the shofar to declare the start of Rosh HaShanah.

Until these two witnesses came forth, the response from the priests would always be "no one knows the day or the hour" of when the holiday would begin. Thus the words of Jesus become significant here with this understanding.

Yeshua was saying that He would come at Rosh HaShanah. His disciples would have understood immediately what He meant. But the meaning has been lost over the centuries as the Scriptures have been separated further and further from its Hebrew roots.

The Hebrew sources are claiming that "no man knows the day or the hour" was an idiomatic phrase specifically related to the Feast of Trumpets, and that Jesus was indicating He'd return in His Second Coming on that Feast.

We know that Jesus, in His first coming, fulfilled the four Jewish spring feasts, and that He did it on the exact days of those feasts. He sacrificed Himself on the Feast of Passover, was buried on the Feast of Unleavened Bread, was resurrected on the Feast of First Fruits, and He sent the Holy Spirit on the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost).

The practices of each of these spring feasts clearly depict the death and resurrection of Jesus:

1. Jesus is the Passover Lamb of God. "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).
2. Jesus is the Unleavened Bread of Life. "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread,

he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh." (John 6:51).

3. Jesus is the First Fruits. "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20).
4. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit on the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost). "And when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place... And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit..." (Acts 2:1-4).

The spring feasts were followed by a summer harvest, then the fall feasts were celebrated. The fall feasts are as yet unfulfilled by Jesus. They are the Feast of Trumpets, The Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

1. Jesus seems to be saying His Second Coming will be coincide with the Feast of Trumpets. It will mark the regathering of the nation of Israel.
2. The Day of Atonement could be fulfilled at His Second Coming as we read that all the Jews who survive the Tribulation will look upon Him and be saved.
3. The Feast of Tabernacles could be fulfilled as Jesus tabernacles with men in the kingdom.

It's common for students of prophecy to suggest that Jesus will resurrect and rapture the church on the Feast of Trumpets. There is nothing in the Bible to specifically indicate this. It's a conjecture.

I believe the Doctrine of Imminence **is** definitely taught by the writers of the Bible, and since Jesus could resurrect and rapture us at any moment, it could be on the Feast of Trumpets - but it could also be right now.

Thomas Ice gives this definition of Imminence:

Four important elements contribute to a pretribulational understanding of imminency:

1. First, imminency means that the rapture could take place at any moment. While other events *may* take place before the rapture, no event *must* precede it. If prior events are required before the rapture, then the rapture could not be described as imminent. Thus, if any event were required to occur before the rapture, then the concept of imminency would be destroyed.
2. Second, since the rapture is imminent and could happen at any moment, then it follows that one must be prepared for it to occur at any time, without sign or warning.
3. Third, imminency eliminates any attempt at date setting. Date setting is impossible since the rapture is signless (i.e., providing no basis for date setting) and if imminency is really true, the moment a date was fixed then Christ could not come at any moment, destroying imminency.
4. Fourth, a person cannot legitimately say that an imminent event will happen soon. The term 'soon' implies that an event *must* take place 'within a short time (after a particular point of time specified or implied).' By contrast, an imminent event *may* take place within a short time, but it does not *have* to do so in order to be imminent.

Does the Bible teach Imminence? Let me read a list of verses that teach Imminence:

- 1 Corinthians 1:7 "awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,..."
- Philippians 3:20 "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;"

- Philippians 4:5 "The Lord is near."
- 1 Thessalonians 1:10 "to wait for His Son from heaven..."
- 1 Thessalonians 5:6 "so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober."
- 1 Timothy 6:14 "that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,"
- Titus 2:13 "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus;"
- Hebrews 9:28 "so Christ... shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him."
- 1 Peter 1:13 "fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."
- Jude 21 "waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life."

The early church had a special greeting for one another, as we read in First Corinthians 16:22, which was "Maranatha!" Maranatha consists of three Aramaic words: *Mar* (Lord), *ana* (our), and *tha* (come), meaning "our Lord, come."

Maranatha only makes sense if an any-moment or imminent coming is understood.

James wrote what was probably the earliest of the New Testament epistles. He told his readers that the Lord's return was imminent:

Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! (James 5:7–9).

When the apostle Paul described the Lord's coming for the church, he used personal pronouns that show he was convinced he himself might be among those who would be caught up alive to meet the Lord:

*“**We** who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord . . . **we** who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (First Thessalonians 4:15 & 17).*

Noah and his family entering the Ark is not a picture of the rapture. It is a picture of the nation of Israel being saved through the Great Tribulation.

Enoch, being translated to Heaven without ever dying, prior to the flood - **that** is a picture of the rapture.

The flood is a picture of the Tribulation, preceded by the rapture. We're pre-trib, believe in imminence, and in being ready for our blessed hope - the coming of Jesus for His church.