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Red Sky in Morning Or, The Paradox of No Man Knows the Day or Hour

"And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

(Matthew 16:3).

by Tom Stewart

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Preface

If Jesus condemned as hypocrites those who could not "discern the signs of the times" (Matthew 16:3), it seems paradoxical that He would also say that no man can know the "day and hour" (Matthew 24:36) of His Return. But, it appears that the issue is not so much that anyone would know or not know the time of His coming, as much as it is that they would "love His appearing" (2Timothy 4:8).

An old weather predicting adage rhythmically states:

Red sky at night, Sailors' delight.

Red sky in morning, Sailors take warning.

Humidity in the air is indicated by red skies at sunset-- *red sky at night*-- or, at sunrise-- *red sky in morning*. The forming raindrops scatter the short-wavelength blue light so that only the long-wavelength red light reaches the observer. Jesus "answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red" (Matthew 16:2). Good weather-- *sailors' delight*-- is generally indicated when the sky is red at sunset, while *sailors take warning* of impending precipitation or bad weather, when the sky is red at dawn. "And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring" (16:3). The LORD Jesus Christ rebuked the hypocrisy of those who could easily use meteorological signs to predict the weather, but whose wickedness prevented them from admitting they were speaking to the very promised Messiah at His First Advent. "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And He left them, and departed" (16:4).

Similarly, the Second Advent of the LORD Jesus Christ, with its concomitant Pre-Tribulational Rapture, should not be unanticipated by the Saints of today. "And the LORD direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ" (2Thessalonians 3:5). [See our article, "[Must There Be a Pre-Tribulational Rapture?](http://www.WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Prophecy/Must.Pre.Trib.Rapture.html)" -- <http://www.WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Prophecy/Must.Pre.Trib.Rapture.html> -- , for a discussion of the Scriptural merits of such an event.] *It will not be long!* "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the LORD draweth nigh" (James 5:8). However, Jesus plainly warned us, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of Heaven, but My Father only" (Matthew 24:36). Does this admonition make anyone who believes he has reason to anticipate *any particular day or hour* for the Pre-Tribulational Rapture of the Church, unscriptural or heretical? Decidedly not! "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully

persuaded in his own mind" (Romans 14:5). Even the Old Testament prophet Daniel was reminded by the Pre-Incarnate Christ about the prophecies Daniel received, that "none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (Daniel 12:10). "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1Thessalonians 5:4).

Only Hypocrites Cannot Discern the Signs of the Times

During the earthly ministry of the Saviour, the Jews were also expecting the appearing of their Messiah. "And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John [the Baptist], whether he were the Christ, or not" (Luke 3:15). What the Church now calls the First Advent of the LORD Jesus Christ, should have been for the Jews the appearing of their long awaited Messiah, if they had not already become the "rebellious house" described by Ezekiel. "Son of man, thou [Ezekiel] dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house" (Ezekiel 12:2). In fact, the Pharisees and Sadducees, as if to prove their own wickedness, stared into the face of the Messiah that they claimed to be awaiting, and hypocritically asked for a sign from Heaven to prove that He was truly the Christ, when they had already rejected and despised Him for condemning their sinfulness. "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 5:20). The irony of the Jews situation was that Moses had already prepared them to be looking for the Christ, i.e., "a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me" (Deuteronomy 18:15), but by the time Jesus was manifested to the Nation, they had become a religiously hardened, hypocritical people that had *no* "understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1Chronicles 12:32). "1 The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired Him that He would shew them a sign from Heaven. 2 He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. 3 And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" (Matthew 16:1-3).

It is not a strange thought that the religiously and irreligiously wicked of this world should not be able to "discern the signs of the times" (Matthew 16:3), for the "natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1Corinthians 2:14). Because the New Testament Saints have been uniquely given the indwelling of the Spirit of God, they have the Heavenly Tutor to "guide [them] into all Truth" and to "shew [them] things to come" (John 16:13). In keeping with the Son's mission to reveal the Heavenly Father to His disciples, Jesus declared to His brethren-- "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Hebrews 2:11)-- the Father's plans of the prophetic future. "25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, LORD of Heaven and Earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. 26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight. 27 All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Matthew 11:25-27). For this reason, it is *not* a mark of spirituality, that those who are called by the name of Christ, to have such an unclear concept of the "times and the seasons" (1Thessalonians 5:1). Instead, the True Saints continually cry out, "Come [quickly], LORD Jesus" (Revelation 22:20), in keeping with Christ's

instructional prayer, i.e., "Thy Kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10).

No Man Knows the Day or Hour

A traditional doctrine of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, is that it will be imminent or at any moment. "8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the LORD as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The LORD is not slack concerning His Promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 10 But the day of the LORD will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the Earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2Peter 3:8-10). Coupled with this traditional teaching of the imminency of Christ's Return, is the proviso that no person will know the exact day or hour of Christ's Return. "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh" (Matthew 25:13). Most fundamental explanations of eschatology distinguish between Christ's secret coming in the air for His Church (the Pre-Tribulation Rapture)-- "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in Heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter" (Revelation 4:1)-- and, His "every eye shall see Him" (Revelation 1:7), bodily return to the Earth (the Second Coming)-- "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven" (Acts 1:11).

Contrasted to the Saints' expectation of departing at any moment for an eternity in Heaven, are the Scriptures that teach the opportunity and necessity of a life of service on Earth for our LORD Jesus Christ. "45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? 46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. 47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. 48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; 49 And shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; 50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, 51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24:45-51). Our earthly conduct of service for Christ, i.e., all right moral action, will be judged by the LORD at His Bema Seat, when He returns for us. "10 For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat [Greek, bema] of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. 11 Knowing therefore the terror of the LORD, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences" (2Corinthians 5:10-11). [See our article, "[The Judgment Seat of Christ, Or, Will There Be Any Stars In My Crown?](http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Prophecy/Judgment.Seat.of.Christ.html)" -- <http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Prophecy/Judgment.Seat.of.Christ.html> --, for a discussion of Christ's Bema Seat.]

An Excerpt from "Why Should Christians Be Date Setters?"

The case for knowing the day and hour of the LORD Jesus' Return is built upon friendship with the LORD Jesus. He knows when He will return, and He is absolutely willing to share that information

with His friends. "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:15). Only for a short time did Jesus set aside His heavenly glory, and voluntarily limit His knowledge of the future. Thus, He rightly stated that, "of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32). That was then. But now, He is back in Heaven where He is using all of His divine power, as the Saints' Friend and Intercessor, to show them "things to come" (John 16:13).

The secret of what is about to unfold upon the world at the end of this age is given to the righteous. "His secret is with the righteous" (Proverbs 3:32). "Surely the LORD GOD will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). It is becoming increasingly more difficult to build a case for ignorance of the timing of the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. If God could lead the Wise Men to the LORD Jesus at the First Advent, why wouldn't He lead the wise to the timing of Jesus at His Second Advent? "None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (Daniel 12:10).

[For a more complete development of the concept that a Christian *may* legitimately have an idea of the day and hour of the Rapture, read the rest of "[Why Should Christians Be Date Setters?](http://Whysaiththescripture.com/Timeline/Why.Should.Chirst.Date.html)" -- <http://Whysaiththescripture.com/Timeline/Why.Should.Chirst.Date.html> --. "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Habakkuk 2:3).]

What is the Crux of the Paradox?

Approximately two millennia have passed without the fulfillment of the Pre-Tribulational Rapture, the Great Tribulation, or the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, but that has not diminished the fact that the LORD Jesus has promised, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3). This same Jesus, who commissioned His Church to evangelize the world (Matthew 28:19-20), has likewise promised, "Behold, I come quickly" (Revelation 22:7). Of what value is the Church in publishing the Gospel to the world, e.g., "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1Timothy 1:15), if it is preoccupied with its departure from this planet? *None at all!* "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13) has been our LORD's marching orders to His people; and, a faithful servant will never allow himself to become lax about his living or spreading the Gospel, though he watch the clock for his departure. "2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. 3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. 4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but He that judgeth me is the LORD. 5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the LORD come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" (1Corinthians 4:2-5).

A paradox is a seemingly contradictory statement that may be nonetheless true. Since we know that the God-breathed Scriptures cannot contradict themselves, i.e., "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35), then any ostensibly conflicting declarations, must be able to be resolved without damaging the fabric of Scripture or the character of the God of Truth. For example, Solomon's Proverbs make two diametrically opposed assertions; and yet, the Spirit of God does not allow him to make contradictions. "4 **Answer not a fool according to his folly**, lest thou also be like unto him. 5 **Answer**

a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit" (Proverbs 26:4-5). "Answer not a fool" *in the fashion of "his folly"* (26:4), i.e., "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing" (1Peter 3:9). "Answer a fool" *because of "his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit"* (Proverbs 26:5), i.e., "19 And I ["a certain rich man" (12:16)] will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. 20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke 12:19-20).

The paradox of not knowing the day or hour of the LORD's Second Coming, i.e., "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of Heaven, but My Father only" (Matthew 24:36), is contrasted to our LORD's Promise to keep His friends posted concerning His Father's plans. "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:15). This is in keeping with the Old Testament Promise, "Surely the LORD GOD will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). *Even if none of the Saints were certain of the exact day or hour of the Pre-Tribulational Rapture, it does not detract from our LORD's willingness to have His people search for the timing of His soon appearing and their Pre-Tribulational Rapture.* "10 Of which salvation the prophets have **enquired and searched diligently**, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: 11 **Searching what, or what manner of time** the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. 12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven; **which things the angels desire to look into**" (1Peter 1:11-12).

It is our LORD's intention that His people should be keenly aware of what is about to shortly occur. "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all Truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and **He will shew you things to come**" (John 16:13). Because faith is confidence in God, His secrets belong to those who have confidence in Him. "For the froward [literally, crooked or perverse] is abomination to the LORD: but His secret is with the Righteous" (Proverbs 3:32). *The reason for no man knowing the day or the hour of the LORD's return is more attributable to man's lack of faithfulness than our LORD's willingness to make the timing known.* "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the Earth?" (Luke 18:8). Again, the LORD has long ago stated His willingness to share the secrets of His covenant with those that fear Him. "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant" (Psalm 25:14).

The Need for the Saints to be Watching for the LORD's Return

It is difficult for the Church to be alive, much less to be spiritually awake, without living in continual anticipation of the Second Coming of the LORD Jesus Christ and their Pre-Tribulational Rapture. "For our conversation is in Heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the LORD Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). The temptation and tendency to become sinfully polluted by the world we live in, must be continually overcome by trusting in the LORD. "This is the victory that overcometh the

world, even our faith" (1John 5:4). It would be self-deception to believe that we could be ready to meet the LORD at His return, without living a life of consecrated love that measures up to our professed confession of faith in the LORD Jesus. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the LORD" (Hebrews 12:14). In fact, our very emphasis upon the soon return of our LORD Christ, i.e., "Behold, I come quickly" (Revelation 22:7), is intended by the LORD to maintain our holiness and purity. "2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. 3 And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1John 3:2-3).

At the time of His First Advent, Christ Jesus impressed upon His apostles the need for recalling the atonement He was about to accomplish, through the ordinance of the LORD's Supper. "24 And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do **in remembrance of Me**. 25 After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, **in remembrance of Me**" (1Corinthians 11:24-25). Further, the Apostle Paul stressed that this remembrance was to continue until the judgment that the LORD would accomplish at His Second Advent. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the LORD's death **till He come**" (11:26). A key feature of the LORD's Supper is to remind the Saints of our need of self-examination, i.e., "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup" (11:28), that we "would walk worthy of God" (1Thessalonians 2:12), and that we would practice the self-judgment, i.e., "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1Corinthians 11:31), that would keep us from continuing in known sin. "But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected" (1John 2:5).

Spiritual readiness is expected of all True Saints-- those "that look for Him" (Hebrews 9:28). "Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (Luke 12:40). *The Saint who is about His Father's business is ready for His LORD's return.* "4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps... 10 And while they [the Foolish Virgins] went to buy, the Bridegroom came; and they [the Wise Virgins] that were ready went in with Him to the marriage: and the door was shut" (Matthew 25:10). [See our article, "[A Tale of Ten Virgins](http://Whatsaiththescriture.com/Prophecy/A.Tale.of.Ten.Virgins.html)" -- <http://Whatsaiththescriture.com/Prophecy/A.Tale.of.Ten.Virgins.html> --, for a sober warning to those who await their Pre-Tribulational Rapture.] Whether the Gospel is preached to the Lost, or the Saints edified, we must be spiritually ready to do the LORD's bidding. "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also" (Romans 1:15). Christians are born into the Kingdom of God, *ready* to do God's will, as well as to meet their LORD at His coming. "35 Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; 36 And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. 37 Blessed are those servants, whom the LORD when He cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (Luke 12:35-37).

Knowing how to conduct ourselves in this world, as we see Scriptural prophecies unfold, is essential to our well-being and usefulness, in these Last Days. "2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the LORD so cometh as a thief in the night... 4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief... 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (1Thessalonians 5:2, 4, 6). For example, the rebirth of the modern nation of Israel in 1948 or the Israeli recapture of the city of Jerusalem in 1967, are essential for a Rebuilt Jerusalem Temple to be

desecrated by the Antichrist in fulfillment of the endtime prophecies of the LORD Jesus Christ concerning the Abomination of Desolation (Matthew 24:15) at the Middle of the Tribulation Week, i.e., "When ye therefore shall see the Abomination of Desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)" (Matthew 24:15). [See our article, "[Antichrist Shall Come](http://Whatsaiththescriture.com/Prophecy/Antichrist.Shall.Come.html)" -- <http://Whatsaiththescriture.com/Prophecy/Antichrist.Shall.Come.html> --, for more background on this significant, but evil personality.] And, these modern events increase our anticipation of departure at a Pre-Tribulational Rapture, as we conclude that we are part of the Terminal Generation. "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled" (Luke 21:32). [Also, see our article, "[Ezekiel Predicted the 1967 Recapture of Jerusalem](http://Whatsaiththescriture.com/Timeline/1998.Year.of.Apocalypse.2.html#Ezekiel%20Predicted)" -- [http://Whatsaiththescriture.com/Timeline/1998.Year.of.Apocalypse.2.html#Ezekiel Predicted](http://Whatsaiththescriture.com/Timeline/1998.Year.of.Apocalypse.2.html#Ezekiel%20Predicted) -- (from our "1998: Year of the Apocalypse" series-- when we were hoping the Rapture would occur on Pentecost 1998).] Such anticipation draws us away from becoming at home in this world, accentuating the pilgrim character of all True Saints. "These all died in faith, not having received the Promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the Earth" (Hebrews 11:13). "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1Peter 2:11).

Keeping our focus upon the Heavenly Treasures is part of the benefit of watching for our LORD's return. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon Earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal" (Matthew 6:19). Certainly, souls won to the LORD Jesus Christ are part of that Heavenly Treasure. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our LORD Jesus Christ at His coming?" (1Thessalonians 2:19). But, all moral action transacted *for Christ* by the Saints is accounted as the Perfect Love demanded by our God. "36 Master, which is the great commandment in the Law? 37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the First and Great Commandment. 39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:36-40). Inordinate concern over the cares of this world, indicate that we have lost a proper Christian focus upon that which is true and real. "20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (6:20-21).

Too often, those who cry the loudest that some Christians are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good, have regarded the injunction of the LORD Jesus' Olivet Discourse, i.e., "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32), as an indication that Christians should be more practically employed in building the Organizational Church on Earth, than to be absorbed with "esoteric" prophecy. But, "1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the Earth. 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1-3). *If we are about our Father's business, He will look out for our interests.* "30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? 31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33 But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. 34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for

the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matthew 6:30-34).

The Potential Abuse by Those Who Say They Watch for Their LORD's Return

Refusing to do the spiritual service that God has appointed for us, i.e., "I do not have the time to minister the Word of God or pray, because I am too full of anticipation of being Raptured", is an unfaithful and foolish use of the doctrine of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the Pre-Tribulational Rapture of the Church. "42 And the LORD said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? 43 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. 44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath" (Luke 12:42-44). When the unfaithful degenerate in their foolishness from unwillingness to engage in "prayer, and... the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:4), their wickedness will be seen in increasingly blatant conduct. "But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken" (Luke 12:45).

More than once, in the history of the Church, have Professed Christians ceased working for the support of their bodily sustenance, i.e., quit their earthly, income producing jobs, because they thought that the End was near or the Coming of the LORD was about to be accomplished. The Apostle Paul wrote more than one epistle to the Thessalonian Christians, concerning their conduct in anticipation of the LORD's return. "5 And the LORD direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ. 6 Now we command you, Brethren, in the Name of our LORD Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every Brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. 7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; 8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: 9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. 10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. 11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. 12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our LORD Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread" (2Thessalonians 3:5-12).

The Thessalonian Christians had previously been addressed by Paul "to wait for [the Father's] Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1Thessalonians 1:10). It was a legitimate concern of the Apostle, that the Saints of Thessalonica would be "perfect, even as [their] Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48), not neglecting their Christian duty to walk in Perfect Love, even as Jesus instructed. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). This Apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13) framed the need for Practical Holiness in light of the Second Coming of the LORD Jesus Christ. "To the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our LORD Jesus Christ with all His Saints" (1Thessalonians 3:13).

Christianity and slothfulness are diametrically opposed, even if there is the peak of anticipation of the LORD's return. "26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou

knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: 27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury" (Matthew 25:26-27). Unlike the world that seeks the job or position that is worthy of them, the Saints have already been given this "high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14), and ought to be willing to work in the most humble employment that provides for our needs, "until the LORD come" (1Corinthians 4:5). "11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; 12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing" (1Thessalonians 4:11-12). Ending this practical exhortation against slothfulness, Paul punctuated the passage with the "Blessed Hope, and the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the LORD in the air: and so shall we ever be with the LORD" (1Thessalonians 4:17).

Lack of concern over personal holiness may arise when the Spirit of God is not consulted about the right estimation of the doctrines of the Second Coming of Christ, but we are assured that we are to follow "holiness, without which no man shall see the LORD" (Hebrews 12:14). "And the very God of Peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our LORD Jesus Christ" (1Thessalonians 5:23). [See our articles, "[Must We Then Sin?](http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/Must.We.Then.Sin.html)" -- <http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/Must.We.Then.Sin.html> --, and "[The Beauty of Holiness](http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/The.Beauty.of.Holiness.html)" -- <http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/The.Beauty.of.Holiness.html> --, to assist you in your desire for "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD" (Zechariah 14:20).] Since we are supposed to be the "children of light, and the children of the day" (1Thessalonians 5:5), "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (5:6). Seven practical exhortations to personal holiness are then given by the Apostle Paul:

(1) "Rejoice evermore" (5:16), i.e., How can we not be glad and rejoice, if our "Names are written in Heaven" (Luke 10:20)?

(2) "Pray without ceasing" (5:17), i.e., How can we have the slightest care, if we have cast all our "care upon Him" (1Peter 5:7) through prayer?

(3) "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (5:18), i.e., Does not "giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the Name of our LORD Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20) cause us to be knit to God and separated from sin?

(4) "Quench not the Spirit" (5:19), i.e., Can we be walking in Perfect Love, unless we "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby [we] are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30)?

(5) "Despise not prophesyings" (5:20), i.e., How can we continue to walk in Loving Obedience, unless we can cry out with the Psalmist, "O how love I Thy Law! it is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97)?

(6) "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (5:21), i.e., How can we cleave to that which is from God and that which is good, unless we have our "senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14) by reason of use of the strong meat of the Word

of God? And,

(7) "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (5:22), i.e., What Saint can maintain his holiness in life and service, if he does not hate "even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23)?

The Jehovah's Witnesses, a false cult that denies the divinity of the LORD Jesus Christ, e.g., "Who ran the universe during the three days that Jesus was dead and in the grave... If Jesus was God, then during Jesus' death God was in the grave... If Jesus was the immortal God, He could not have died" (from the Jehovah's Witness publication, "Let God Be True" [Rev. 1952, p. 109]), are sometimes cited as representative of what happens to Christians, who get carried away with the doctrines of the Second Coming of Christ. But, this cannot be an example of the fruit produced, when True Saints study Bible prophecy, because passages such as Paul's instructions to Timothy must have been purposely ignored by the Jehovah's Witnesses. "13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, Who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, Who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; 14 That thou keep this Commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our LORD Jesus Christ: 15 Which in His times He shall shew, Who is the Blessed and Only Potentate, the KING of Kings, and LORD of Lords; 16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the Light which no man can approach unto; Whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to Whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen" (1Timothy 6:13-16).

Further, though Charles Taze Russell-- founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses-- calculated that the "invisible return" of Christ was to have taken place in 1874, and the Second Coming of Christ in 1914, the ill-repute and failure of his predictions, more importantly, must be assessed in light of his ill-treatment and abuse of the LORD Jesus Christ. "21 He that hath My Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him... 24 He that loveth Me not keepeth not My Sayings: and the Word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me" (John 14:21, 24). [See our article, "[How to Identify a False Prophet](http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Prophets/How.To.ID.False.Prophet.html)" -- <http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Prophets/How.To.ID.False.Prophet.html> -- , for a Biblical treatment of false prophet identification.] Christians ought not fear that they will apostatize by laying emphasis upon the Second Coming of the LORD Jesus, much less, expecting any particular day or hour for their Pre-Tribulational Rapture, if we are confiding in the Promises of God to keep us from the abyss of such devils as Charles Taze Russell. "24 Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, 25 To the Only Wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" (Jude 24-25). [See our article, "[Exceeding Great and Precious Promises](http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Promises/Exceeding.Promises.html)" -- <http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Promises/Exceeding.Promises.html> -- , to see how the Promises of God are designed to confirm and sanctify us, until He returns for us.]

Conclusion

For any True Christian, knowing or not knowing the "day and hour" (Matthew 24:36) of Christ's return or of the Pre-Tribulational Rapture, is truly a non-issue, compared to the destiny of the hypocrite, who discerns not the "signs of the times" (Matthew 16:3). The real issue is Perfect Love, that is, "Do we give to Christ the obedience that demonstrates that we are His friends?" "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14). Contention over the whole topic of knowing or not knowing the day and hour of the LORD's return, would vanish if our hearts were not embittered over disappointments experienced, because the LORD Jesus delayed His coming. Again, "for the vision is

yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Habakkuk 2:3). Allow the Sovereign God the time to work out His purpose in completing the Body of Christ and working out His judgment of the world. "And all the inhabitants of the Earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the Earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (Daniel 4:35).

The Wicked cannot and will not know what has happened, while the True Saints are and will be taught by the Spirit of the timing of "things to come" (John 16:13). "(According as it is written, God hath given them [the Wicked] the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day" (Romans 11:8). Those who look with disdain at the zeal and fervency of those who anticipate a soon Rapture-- with or without any specific day or hour-- must recall that Paul told the Roman Saints that it was "high time" to be awake and ready for Christ to "appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28). "11 And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. 12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of Light" (Romans 13:11-12).

The great excitement generated within the Evangelical Church with Hal Lindsay's book, "The Late Great Planet Earth" (1970), caused many to sit up and take notice of the lateness of the hour and the closeness of the Rapture, in light of the argument that those who are alive at the time of the modern re-birth of Israel in 1948, are part of the Fig Tree Generation (Matthew 24:32), that shall see the LORD's return. "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (24:34). This interest in Bible prophecy was well and good, but the Church can never live alone on the emotion and excitement of even the Second Coming of the LORD Jesus. Instead, we are commanded to sink deep roots of abiding in Christ, that "when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1John 2:28). "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me" (John 15:4).

When all is said and done, we must "all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ" (Romans 14:10) to account for how we responded, when we were shown the "signs of the times" (Matthew 16:3). "11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1Corinthians 3:11-15). *LORD, make us to be ready!* "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36).

Maranatha!