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Day or Hour - "No One Knows the Day or the Hour" - What Did Jesus Really Mean?



By Dan Maines

"No One Knows the Day or the Hour" - What Did Jesus Really Mean?

Just before Jesus said "But about that day and hour no one knows" (Matthew 24:36), He also said, "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place." (Matthew 24:34, NASB)

Let that sink in. Jesus was not speaking of a future generation thousands of years later. He was talking to His disciples in the first century. The phrase "this generation" always means the generation alive at the time Jesus was speaking. (See Matthew 11:16; 12:38-45; 23:36; 24:34; Mark 8:38-9:1; Luke 7:31; 11:29-

32; 17:25.)

So what did He mean by "no one knows the day or the hour"? Simple. He meant that while the destruction of Jerusalem, the fall of the Temple, His Parousia (divine presence), and the resurrection would happen **within that generation**, no one knew the **exact** day or hour. It would take place during a 3-1/2 year period (66-70 AD), and they were to be watchful.

Compare this with Luke 21:20-22 - "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains... because these are days of punishment, so that all things which have been written will be fulfilled."

Luke 21:32 - "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place."

There it is again - **this generation**. All those things - not future events thousands of years off.

The Apostle Paul confirms this urgency: 1 Thessalonians 5:1 - "Now as to the periods and times, brothers and sisters, you have no need of anything to be written to you." Why? 1 Thessalonians 5:4 - "But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness, so that the day would overtake you like a thief." **They** were not in darkness. Not us - them. They knew the season and the signs, just as Jesus had taught.

Jesus and John the Baptist both said the Kingdom was **at hand**:

Matthew 3:2 - "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matthew 4:17 - "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Does "at hand" mean 2,000 years away? If you think so, you're saying God doesn't know how to tell time.

2 Peter 3:8 is often quoted to deny imminence - "With the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day." But the context is scoffers questioning Jesus' promised return in their generation. Peter warns them not to mistake God's patience for slackness. He writes in the 60s AD of a soon-coming day - the destruction of Jerusalem was only years away.

Look at how God speaks of time elsewhere:

Daniel 10:1 - "the message was true and one of great conflict, but he understood the message and had an understanding of the vision."

Daniel 10:14 - "Now I have come to help you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, because the vision pertains to the days still future."

God says 600 years is "a long time" in Daniel. He did not use phrases like "at hand" or "soon" there. But in the New Testament, He **does**. That's a big difference.

When God told Israel that judgment was at hand in Ezekiel 7, He meant it. It happened quickly. So when Jesus and His apostles said "soon," "quickly," or "at hand" - they meant it. Not thousands of years later.

The futurist view ignores the immediate time statements Jesus gave. When He said "this generation," He meant the generation standing in front of Him. When He said "some standing here will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (Matthew 16:28), He wasn't talking about people 2,000 years in the future.

God can tell time. Man just doesn't like what He actually said.

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