

Thoughts on the Revelation 12 Sign

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I've been asked for my take on the "Revelation 12 sign," the unique celestial alignment occurring in September 2017, so thought I'd share with all in a brief article.

First, I find the interpretation that the sign could be a picture of the Church being caught up *interesting*. However, I'm uncomfortable assuming too much about the primary meaning or purpose of the sign. I believe God has given us this sign and others as confirmation of the times—indications that He is about to return—but my hunch is that its full significance, including its placement on the calendar, will not be grasped until after all is said and done. I'm therefore uneasy about assuming, as some do, that the Revelation 12 sign is pointing to the Rapture on the Feast of Trumpets in 2017. While I do not dismiss the possibility that it *could* be, I find the teaching that it almost certainly *is* hazardous for a number of reasons.

One reason is that it takes the focus off the *present* and all that is prophetically on the table directly before us. I refer mainly to the Daniel 9/Jubilee factor, which I believe carries more weight as regards potential Rapture timing than anything one might assume about the Revelation 12 sign. My line of thinking is this: The "return" to Jerusalem in Daniel 9:25 either refers to the June 1967 return or it does not. The various pieces of this puzzle fit together much too neatly for me to believe it does not. Therefore, counting the "seven sevens" until Messiah using full (365-day) Gregorian years from the return/decreed date(s), we arrive at June/July 2017 for the furthest extent of Daniel's prophetic window. ASSUMING (all caps) that we're correct about Daniel's meaning and that we've done the math correctly, one could argue that for the Messiah to show up in the fall of 2017 would make Him tardy.

Again, I understand that the Daniel/Jubilee scenario also relies on assumptions, but they are fewer and more scripturally grounded, in my view, than those pertaining to the Revelation 12 sign.

Another reason I'm leery of the Revelation sign as a time-marker for the Rapture is that I'm not convinced the catching away has to occur on the Feast of Trumpets. There are a number of reasons for this, some of which I've detailed in previous posts, but here are the main ones:

- The Feast of Trumpets is described in Leviticus as a "memorial blowing of trumpets" and a Sabbath day of rest—period. Virtually all of the traditions associated with *Yom Teruah* (idioms, types of trumpet blasts, various themes, etc.) derive not directly from the Bible but from traditions instituted and perpetuated by the rabbis—the same rabbis who missed their Messiah due to some major misapprehensions of Scripture. This is not to say the rabbinical teachings and ancient traditions are not a valuable source of wisdom and insight and are not, in many cases, on target; it is only to say we must be extremely cautious about assuming too much about future feast fulfillments based on them.

- There are scripturally plausible scenarios that have the Feast of Trumpets being fulfilled at the *end* of the Tribulation (along with the other fall feasts) and the Rapture occurring on a *seemingly* random day—any day—as the culminating event of the Church age, typified by the parenthetical Feast of Pentecost. I detail this scenario in previous posts related to Pentecost, and it is also well articulated by teachers like Chuck Missler, Gary Stearman, and Jack Langford. The point, coming from one who used to assume the Rapture would occur on the Feast of Trumpets, is that it's not necessarily as simple as saying, "*Yom Teruah* is the next feast in line and trumpets are sounded, so the Rapture must happen on this day."
- One of the most basic reasons I've backed away from the trumpets-or-nothing rapture stance are Jesus' many admonitions, directed at believers and watchmen, to "*keep watch*" (e.g., Matt. 24:42-44). One has to wonder, why all the warnings to "be ready" and "keep watch" if the Rapture can only happen within a two-day window each year? Using the "thief" metaphor: If we knew that a thief could only break into our home during a two-day window each year, what would we be doing during the *other* 363 days? Answer: Not watching. What we *would* be doing is going about our lives until the two-day window arrived. We would then make a pot of coffee, fill our lamp with oil, and stare out the window for two days, waiting for the thief. The point is that we would not have to be reminded or encouraged to stay awake if the Feast of Trumpets was a *given* for the Rapture. It would be like reminding an eight year old to "keep watch" for Santa during Christmas. It's unnecessary. Yet, this is what we find in parable after parable and verse after verse: warnings to stay awake, to be alert, and to not assume that the Lord is delaying. It seems Jesus is hinting that even *we*, His followers, truly do not know the day.

The final reason I'm uneasy presuming too much about the Revelation 12 sign can be summed up in a question: What is more dangerous than setting a date for Jesus' return in the immediate future?

Answer: Setting a date for Jesus' return *a year from now*.

The problem and consequence of assuming the Rapture cannot happen until the fall of 2017, that we essentially have another year, is that we are human beings and will put off the things we know we should be doing: repenting, bringing others to Christ, warning people of the times, etc.

These are my thoughts at present, subject to change as events unfold. The bottom line is that although I find the Revelation 12 sign compelling, I'm leery of assuming too much about its precise meaning or what it may or may not be telling us about the timing of the Rapture. There are other possible explanations for its purpose or message. For instance, understanding that *Yom Teruah* is defined as a "memorial" blowing of trumpets, it's conceivable that the celestial alignment next fall could be intended, in part, as a "remembrance" (Strong's H2146) of something that has already happened.

Time will tell.

As of October 23, 2016, I am more convinced than ever that no one knows the day of the Rapture. It *could* happen around the Feast of Trumpets in 2017, but there are compelling reasons to believe it could happen much sooner.