

Some End Times Questions (Part 1)

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[0:00] Okay, well, tonight we're going to begin, or I'm going to begin to answer some questions related to end times.

! And I had, I think, about four questions. We're just going to look at one of them tonight. But I've had four questions related to end times. Some of them are really easy to answer.

I think this one's easy to answer. But I want to take the opportunity to kind of expand a little bit upon the question and consider a few things out of Scripture.

I'm going to eventually, I think, share with you what I think is the more relevant question than the one that was asked, not to be offensive to whomever it was that asked the question.

But here's the question. Does Jesus now know the day and hour of His second coming? Now, that's the question. Does He know now? And so let's consider then, first of all, as I have given you in your notes, we're going to consider what the Bible states just on the face of it, just exactly what the Scripture says.

[1:21] Well, we can glean from that just on the face value of it what the Bible states concerning knowledge of the precise timing of the second coming. And the ultimate conclusion, of course, I've given you the biblical references.

And Matthew, of course, repeatedly, Jesus in the Olivet Discourse conveys the clear idea that no one knows.

No one knows. And it's repeated over and over again in Scripture in the Olivet Discourse, which we have in chapters 24 and 25 of Matthew. We're not going to look at those passages, all of those. We'll look at at least one of those eventually. And then in Mark, which is Mark's account of that same sermon or discourse, the Olivet Discourse.

And then one reference in Acts, Acts 1-7, and we'll get to that passage toward the end, because I think it's pretty relevant to the question. All right, so we've not read the passages, but I can then make this very general conclusion from Scripture.

[2:28] And the general conclusion is, according to these passages, these verses in the Bible, no one but God the Father knows the timing of the second coming. That's just the conclusion you must come to after you read those passages, because it's very clear.

And especially when you consider Matthew 24, verse 36, a passage we're going to look at in just a minute, and Mark chapter 13, verse 32, those two are very clear.

And Jesus is speaking, and He says, Not only does no man know, or no human being know, that's the blank you need to fill in there, no human being knows the timing of the second coming.

No supernatural being, He said, nor the angels of heaven. And by the way, I'll go ahead and just remind you that when He says the angels of heaven, I think by implication He's talking about all supernatural beings, whether they're angels, godly angels, or demons, fallen angels, they do not know.

No supernatural being knows the timing of His return. And thirdly, not even Jesus. Not even Jesus. He said, nor the Son.

[3:47] The Son being the second person of the Holy Trinity, speaking of Himself. Not even I know, He might as well have said. Now, regardless of one's take on that or interpretation of that, on the face value of it, that's exactly what Jesus said.

No man, no angel, not even the Son of Man knows but the Father only. Only the Father knows. And so, that's pretty clear.

Just as a general conclusion from Scripture, not even Jesus knew, not at least at the time He spoke the words recorded in Matthew and Mark. And that's kind of an indication of where we're going to go with this.

However, I would say to you, and you know this to be the case, many have claimed to know over the years, haven't they? In fact, it's almost comical.

I have, just in my time as a pastor, received a number of free pamphlets, free books. They'll come in the mail from, you know, some weirdo out there, or some group out there.

[4:56] And they have arrived at a date, and they know for sure that it's going to happen on such and such a date. And I can take you to my office, and I have a little section for those kinds of books. Is it wrong like that?

Yeah, well, no. I want to, but I do keep that kind of junk, just for research only. But, I tell you, all those dates have come and gone.

All right, so they don't know. In fact, one of those books, and I know I've got it in my library. I was searching all over trying to find the thing. Couldn't find it, so I went to the Internet to get some information about it again.

Maybe you might remember about Edgar C. Weissnacht. He's not wise. Weissnacht. But it's Weissnacht. I'm not sure if that's how you pronounce it.

He was a former NASA engineer. And maybe you remember that he predicted the rapture would occur in 1988. Do you remember this guy? 88 reasons. 88 reasons why the rapture will be in 1988.

[5:59] And I did not know this, but he sold 4.5 million copies of that book. It was a relatively small book. But it was amended in 1989. Well, I'm going to get to that.

Jumping ahead here. But I also, of course, Weissnacht based his prediction on the biblical references to the Feast of Trumpets, one of the Jewish feasts.

But many evangelical Christians bought into it. And, you know, I don't think Baptists did. I didn't hear of any Baptist group that did. But some Baptists probably did as well.

As a matter of fact, I discovered, I didn't remember this, but as the days approached, by the way of the day, he went down to the very days. He picked three days. He said it's going to happen somewhere between September 11th and 13th.

So 11th, 12th, 13th, one of those three days. And as those days were approaching, TBN diverted or interrupted their normal broadcasting and began to provide to their viewers instructions on how to prepare for the rapture.

[7:13] And, I mean, you know, really. And so, of course, his prediction did fail, did you? I mean, he didn't come in 1988, as far as I know.

I'm pretty sure he didn't. Unless he came in a way that the Bible does not prescribe. But he was not to be put away.

You know, he revised his prediction, as Diane mentioned a moment ago. Wrote additional books, also to promote his new predictions. So the next book came out, The Final Shout, Rapture Report, 1989.

So this book happened in 1989. Then, 23 Reasons Why the Pre-Tribulation Rapture Looks Like It Will Occur on Rosh Hashanah, Hashanah, 1993.

So the next day it was 1993. And then, of course, it didn't happen. And then here's an interesting title. And now the Earth's Destruction by Fire, Nuclear Bomb Fire, was the name of the book, and the prediction was for 1994.

[8:19] And as far as I can tell, he continued to make predictions for the next several years, up to 1997, I guess. But after the 1988 failure, few people really listened to him at all.

And I guess, you know, if he had said, I prophesied that maybe we could go stone him, but he said, this is what I understand from Scripture. And, of course, he was wrong. So a lot of people have set the date and have claimed to know the date.

But Jesus said, no one. Not the angels, not even me, but the Father only. All right. So there's just kind of what the Bible says concerning knowledge of the precise timing.

Next, an examination of the key biblical passages. The passages, and some would dispute that, some would say that Mark 13.32 is the only passage in the New Testament that has the phrase, nor the Son, or where Jesus says, not even the Son.

The parallel passage in Matthew 24.36 in some translations, specifically the King James, the New King James, they omit the phrase, nor the Son, but it is in the Greek text.

[9:41] Most versions of the Greek New Testament do have, nor the Son. So I would mention here that Jesus declared that He did not know the day and hour of His return.

And the two places where you'll find that, Mark 13.32, Matthew 24.36. Mark 13.32 says this, But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Matthew 24.36. But of that day and hour, and I'm reading from the New King James, and so you'll find something missing there. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

Now, whether you insert nor the Son, or leave nor the Son out, you still have to deal with the word only. And so, in both passages, it's clear that Jesus is saying only the Father knows.

And it's very clear. And so the word only infers that Jesus did not know. At least that's what He's saying. Secondly, under that bullet, that heading, the verses, the verses I've just quoted for you, are part of the Olivet Discourse.

[11 : 05] I've already mentioned that. Recorded, by the way, Matthew 24.25, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Luke also records the Olivet Discourse, but he does not include this statement that we read in Mark and Matthew's account.

The Olivet Discourse, of course, is named that because it took place on the Mount of Olives. That's where Jesus gave this message. And the theme of the discourse, and I'll just quote John MacArthur because I think he's right.

I might as well just quote him. You know, if he's right, why should I reword it? And then give myself credit. Well, sometimes we do that, don't we? But anyway, this is what He said. Christ's second, this is the theme, Christ's second coming at the end of the present age to establish His millennial kingdom on earth.

That's the theme of the discourse. And the discourse, this discourse or message of Jesus is an answer to a question.

A question asked by the disciples. And by the way, the longest recorded answer to any question in the Bible. And it is long.

[12 : 20] Well, Matthew, and I don't suppose that we have every word that Jesus spoke. We don't always have every word that was spoken. But Matthew, of course, gives us the longest version of His answer.

It takes up two chapters in the Gospel of Matthew. And the question is found in verse 3 of Matthew 24. Now, as He sat on the Mount of Olives, that's why we call it the Olivet Discourse, the disciples came to Him privately saying, Tell us, when will these things be?

And what will be the sign of Your coming at the end of the age? There's the question. And I would note there for you that their question was prompted by something Jesus said in verses 1 and 2 of the chapter.

Let me read that to you. Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, Do you not see all these things?

Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another that shall not be thrown down. And then that prompted the question about when will that happen?

[13 : 29] When will these things happen? I think it's important to understand that the disciples were Jews, you understand that. And to them at that point in their life, the church age was still a mystery to them.

The prophets that prophesied, though we find implications and things that give us a clue of God's plan, but by and large the church is a mystery.

And so to the Old Testament Jew and the Jews in Jesus' day, their eschatology was basically this. The second coming or the coming of Christ and the millennium with no separation between the two. So they're looking for these things, these end time things to occur right now. Jesus, you're here. They did not see the cross, did not see the birth of the church, did not see that part of it, and so they're thinking the time is now.

And that explains a lot, I think, to explain why the disciples, why the Jews of the day acted like they did. So, it's an answer to the question.

[14 : 47] So, for the Olivet Discourse, I would say to you, refers, but we're not going to get into this, but it does refer to the distant future. Not everyone agrees with that, but it refers to the distant future.

How distant? Well, certainly, for Jesus' apostles, distant for them, they would not live to see this. And, for us as well.

Now, we could possibly live to see it, but, in my eschatology, we won't be here to see this. Because the rapture will take place before many of the things that are discussed in the Olivet Discourse ever take place.

And, you might have a different theology about that, and that's alright. We can agree to disagree on that. So, it's a distant future.

And, if we had time, and I encourage you to read through chapters 24, 25, and I think you'll be able to pick out some things that certainly did not happen in the lifetime of the disciples, could not have.

[15:54] And, many things that have not happened in our lifetime as well. And, then when you bring in the whole of scripture, then you understand that the rapture is going to take place prior to the tribulation.

But, anyway. Alright, number five, the phrase, that day, that you find in Mark, both Matthew and Mark, the passages in those two gospels, that day is a reference to the return of Christ.

And, you say, duh. Of course, I know that. It's described by Paul and Peter with the phrase, the day of the Lord. So, that day is the day of the Lord, and I think I may have given you those references and 1 Thessalonians and so forth, so you can look those up on your own time, because mine is running out.

And then the word hour, in these two passages, conveys the idea, though, by the way, hora is the Greek, it has different, various connotations, but in the way it's used here, in conjunction with that day, day and hour, then it conveys the idea of the exact moment of something taking place, something that takes place.

And you put these together, Jesus, in the Olivet discourse, is making a distinction between that day and hour, that phrase there in verse 32, making a distinction between that phrase and the phrase those days that appears a number of places in the discourse, verse 17, 19, 24.

[17:38] So you have the expression the day, that day and hour, and the expression those days, now both refer to the same event, both are referring to Christ's return, and so the point is this, we can know, this is what you ought to glean from the discourse, Jesus is saying we can know when his return is fast approaching and near at hand, we can know that, verse 29, when you see these things happening, know that it is near, at the doors, so we can know that, but we cannot know the exact time of his coming, we cannot know that, but of that day and hour no one knows, but only the father, the father only, alright, just to put that together so that we understand a little bit about the text itself before we go further and answer the question.

Number seven, the Olivet Discourse details many things Jesus knew and wanted his disciples to know about the end of the age, and one thing Jesus did not know.

I'm just kind of putting this in our minds so we can kind of organize this. What did Jesus know? He knew the signs of his coming.
will happen.

just as exactly like he said it. It will happen. In fact, if you look there at Matthew, if you've got Matthew open, maybe I'm confusing you going back and forth, but Matthew 24, 35, what does it say?

[19:45] It says, Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away. And so, you know, Jesus is not some professional guesser at the Weather Channel that is predicting 40% chance of something or another, somewhere, sometime, what he says is going to take place.

He's not making a speculation about it. He's really not even speaking much in generalities, is he? He's being very specific. And so, he did know those things, but Jesus did not know the exact time of return.

return. There's just no way around that. At least while he was walking on this earth, he did not know. He did not know the time.

Alright, so that leads us then to deal with the question. And I would suggest to you that the real question is not when did Jesus know. That's not the crucial question.

The question is how could he not know? How could he not know the exact time of his return when he spoke these words to his disciples? Don't you think that's the more relevant question?

[21:00] Now, there's nothing wrong with the question. So, if it was your question, I'm not trying to insult you. But my first question is, if I believe the Bible, and I do, and I take it at face value, take it literally, where it means to be literal, and Jesus said he did not know, then my question first is not when did he know, and if he knows now, but how could he not know?

Or, put it in other words, how do we reconcile the omniscience of the second person of the Trinity with the apparent ignorance of Jesus Christ?

How do we reconcile those two? When Jesus walked this planet, was he God? Yes. Yes, he was. When he walked this planet, was he man?

Yes. Absolutely. Was he part God and part man? Be careful. I might embarrass him. No, he was all God and all man.

As I've heard preachers say, he was all God as if he were not man at all, and all man as if he were not God at all. And how that works, I don't know, but he's God.

[22 : 12] And so, if that be the case, then God is omniscient, isn't he? That is, God knows everything. There isn't anything outside of his knowledge.

Past, present, future. He knows the end from the beginning. That's what scripture says. And so, if Jesus is God, then why didn't he know? Don't you think that's a pretty crucial question here?

Well, I think I can answer that for you. so, here are some suggested answers. In fact, we'll get to what I think is the right answer, but there's some pretty wacko answers here.

The first one is Jesus was merely a man, and as such, was not omniscient. That's one answer. Do you like that one?

I don't like that one. Oh, no, that's not true. B, the time of Christ's return was, and possibly still is, not set, or fixed in God's plan.

[23 : 13] Maybe Jesus said that because it hadn't been decided yet. Of course, then you have a problem with him saying that only the Father knows. And so, maybe it was that God had decided, the Father had decided, but since Jesus was down here, he just hadn't told him yet.

But the idea is, and some would hold to this, not only in regard to this matter, about knowing the timing of his second coming, but other things too.

And they would argue that God is not omniscient, that he is learning things, that not everything is planned out, and there are discoveries, things God doesn't know.

And so, you know, Jesus, alright, I'll give it to you, he was God, but he just doesn't know everything. And the time just not set yet, alright? See, the Bible is not infallible, nor is it inerrant.

Do you like that one? You better not like that. And so, just several possibilities here, and I don't know if I've provided this for you, may not have.

[24 : 23] Some possibilities, you know, that would line up with this idea, that it's not infallible, that it is not inerrant, that Jesus just simply misspoke. He misspoke when he claimed not to know the time of his return.

Little faux pas, something like that. Jesus is just kind of in the heat of the moment of preaching, and he just says some things that maybe were not true. Well, that's ridiculous.

In fact, I would say they would cite, for example, chapter 24, verse 34, where he says, assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

And so they said, well, it's right there, he made a big mistake. Because the generation of those people he was speaking to, they did pass away before this happened. What's the answer to that? Well, because he's speaking of future events, he's really speaking to a future generation. And he's saying that the things that are going to happen at the end of the age, are going to happen in rapid succession.

[25 : 32] And the generation alive in those days will still be alive when they see it all happen. So they will not pass away. But there are those who would say, well, you know, Jesus just misspoke here.

Or another possibility, Matthew and Mark quoted Jesus inaccurately. And so that's why you have maybe some manuscripts that we have discovered that like manuscripts from Matthew, of Matthew's gospel, and he does not include nor the Son.

And that's why maybe Luke did not include that because Jesus never said that. And Matthew and Mark, they just quoted Jesus inaccurately.

Now the possibility is that Matthew and Mark wrote what they believed to be true. what they believed to be true. Or maybe some tradition of the day. You know, it's silly.

Or maybe the passage is an example of scribal errors. Scribal errors or editing. You know, how they copied the scripture.

[26 : 46] We don't have any of the originals. And what we have are copies of copies of copies of copies. And we have literally thousands and thousands of copies of various parts of the Bible.

Some just little scraps of something and some entire manuscripts and so forth.

And so these have been, you know, copied by scribes over the years. And, you know, after all, just all human. You know, and so somebody just inserted that and it didn't belong there.

And that's, you know, so you have a mistake here. So the Bible's not infallible, not inerrant. I don't like any of these. I can tell you don't either.

Or maybe editing. Not just an error, but maybe a deliberate editing to maybe line things up, you know. As the years go by and get further away from the actual days when Jesus walked the earth, the first century, maybe on into the second century of the church.

And maybe, you know, some scribes are trying to reconcile things that Jesus said with historical events or maybe, you know, other ideas and such.

[28:02] well, so we have mistakes. That's the idea. And, or finally, the early church added the words nor the son to reconcile the sayings of Jesus with history.

you know, they needed to, this is the idea, I don't believe this, but somehow maybe they needed to absolve Jesus from error.

From the error when he, you know, when it became apparent that his return was not going to take place within the first century generation, like he supposedly promised in Matthew 24, 34.

So, here's three ideas or possibilities, and then there's one more, and I think I like this one. During his incarnation, Jesus chose not to know the exact time of his return.

Chose not to. Seriously. I think this is right. He chose not to. Jesus was fully God and fully man.

[29:06] John 1, 1, 14, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and the Word became flesh, and you know those passages. Jesus limited the use of His divine powers, including, apparently, His omniscience.

Limited. Self-limited. Philippians 2. Who, being in the form, that is, the very nature of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, didn't think He had to hold on to that equality with God, but made Himself of no reputation.

He emptied Himself. Made Himself nothing, literally. Taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men, and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient to the point of death.

Jesus imposed self-limitations. When He got hungry, I mean, He got hungry. And God, in all of His power, would never get hungry.

But Jesus chose to limit Himself, and apparently limited His knowledge. Jesus' knowledge was self-restricted to only what His Father wanted Him to know.

[30:24] I'm talking about just during the time of His incarnation. I'm not talking about the Christ or the second person of the Trinity from eternity to eternity. I'm talking about in this time that He was a man, John 15, 15 says, No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends for all things, now listen to this, all things that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

During His incarnation, Jesus taught and knew only what His Father told Him. God the Father told Him. He self-limited Himself.

John 17, 8, For I have given to them the words which you have given Me. Consequently then, during His incarnation, Jesus did not know the day and hour of His return.

And if He had known, He would have told His disciples. How do we know that? Well, the passage I just read, John 15, 15, all things that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

And so He only told His disciples what the Father told Him. And if He had had the knowledge of the timing, specific timing, of His second coming, if the Father had told Him that, then He would have told them.

[31:50] Because He told them all things the Father told them. I'm not in any shape or form trying to explain why God did this. Now, I will suggest something here in a minute.

I think it makes sense. Or I can't even tell you how God the Son could limit His omniscience during a space of time.

But He did that apparently. Withholding this information was in obedience to God the Father, Acts 1, 7. And He said to them, it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

And so, Jesus is being obedient to the Father. And it's not for them to know, and so they did not know. And so the question is why?

Well, Jesus said no man knows, and I'll just leave it to you to speculate, what would man do with that kind of knowledge? knowledge. He also said no angel knows, that I would assume includes Satan and his demons, and what would Satan do with that knowledge?

[33:05] So, that leads us to the original question, does Jesus now know the time of His coming? And I would suggest to you, as fully God the Son, Jesus Christ knew the exact time of His return prior to His incarnation, and immediately following His resurrection, and ascension.

So, His ignorance, so to speak, was confined to a space of time during His incarnation. John 17, 5, And now, O Father, glorify me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with you before the world was.

And, God, I'm longing, and God the Father, I'm longing and looking forward to the relationship we had before. And, Matthew 28, 18, then Jesus came to them and said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

This is after His resurrection. And then we go to Acts 1, 6, Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?

They're expecting the millennium to start right then. And He said to them, It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. And Jesus has just said, All authority has been given to me.

[34:19] So He knows now. And even in the Acts 1, 7 passage, He doesn't say that He didn't know. He just says it's not for you to know. And so the answer to the question is, yeah, I think He knows now.

All right. Thank you.