

Is Jesus Equal with the Father?

Scripture: Matthew 24

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But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.

Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that evil slave says in his heart, “My master is not coming for a long time,” and shall begin to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and shall cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth. (24:36–51)

The familiar expression “Here I come, ready or not” could well be applied to Jesus’ second coming, because He is coming according to the sovereign plan of God, with no regard for worldwide or individual readiness. Jesus is coming when He is coming, because the when and how of His return have long since been predetermined in the sovereign wisdom of God.

In response to the disciples’ question, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (24:3), Jesus told them of the birth pains that would immediately precede His coming (vv. 4–28), of the abomination of desolation (v. 15), which would precipitate those signs, and of the supreme sign of His own appearing on the clouds of heaven (v. 30). Now He gives them a partial answer to the “where” part of the question.

Although there will be observable, worldwide, and unmistakable indications of His coming just before it occurs, the exact time will not be revealed in advance. **Of that day and hour no one knows**, Jesus declared categorically. The signs He had just been describing will be conclusive proof that His arrival is very near. Once they have begun, the *general* time period of His return will be known, because one of the key purposes of the signs will be to make it known. But even during those sign-days the precise **day and hour** of Jesus' appearing will not be known, a truth He reiterates several times in this Olivet discourse (see 24:42, 44, 50; 25:13).

As has been noted, the books of Daniel and Revelation both make clear that the full Tribulation will last seven years and that the second part of it, the Great Tribulation, will last three and a half years (Dan. 7:25; 9:27; 12:7; Rev. 11:2–3; 12:14; 13:5). Then, “immediately after the tribulation of those days,” Jesus said, “the Son of Man [will come] on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory” (Matt. 24:29–30). Precisely *how* is not immediately said.

Daniel and Revelation also speak of an expanded period of 1,290 days (Dan. 12:11; Rev. 12:6), 30 days more than the basic 1,260 of the Great Tribulation. Daniel also mentions a 1,335-day period (Dan. 12:12), adding another 45 days to make a total addition of 75. As suggested in chapter 3 of this volume, it seems that the best explanation for those additional days is that they will cover the time when the Messiah descends to the Mount of Olives, creates the great valley in which the nations of the world will be judged, and executes that judgment (see Zech. 14:4–5; Matt. 25:31–46).

Nevertheless, even with all those indisputable signs and precisely designated periods, the exact **day and hour** will not be known by any human beings, not even Tribulation believers, in advance. Although the Lord gives no reason for their not knowing, it is not difficult to imagine some of the problems that such knowledge would cause. For one thing, if unbelievers knew the precise time of Christ's arrival, they would be tempted to put off receiving Him as Lord and Savior until the last moment, thinking they could make the decision any time they wanted before He actually is scheduled to appear.

But even if they planned to wait until the precise date and hour of Christ's appearing, they would not know if they would live until that time. Like the rich farmer (Luke 12:16–20), they will have no guarantee of the length of their lives and therefore have no guarantee they will still be alive when Christ appears. Although the *generation* living when the signs begin will not pass away until Christ returns (Matt. 24:34), many individual members of that generation will pass away, some by natural causes and a large percentage at the hand of the Antichrist.

Even if they knew the precise time of Christ's appearing and were certain they would live until then, they would be fooling themselves to think they could simply receive Him before that time. The fact that they will have put off trusting in Christ for as long as they have will be certain evidence they have no sincere desire to follow Him as Lord and Savior. If the indescribable perils of the Tribulation will not persuade them to turn to the Lord, the knowledge of His exact arrival time certainly would not.

As far as believers are concerned, knowledge of that specific time might also make them careless, causing them to withdraw and become spiritually sedentary, thinking it would be pointless to make plans for serving the Lord or to make further effort to win the lost. No one, believer or unbeliever, could think or function normally knowing the exact **day and hour** of Christ's coming.

Neither will the supernatural world know the precise time, not **even the angels of heaven**. Although the righteous angels enjoy intimacy with God, hovering around His throne to do His bidding (Isa. 6:2–7) and continually beholding His face (Matt. 18:10), they are not privy to this secret. The angels will be directly and actively involved in the end time as God's agents to separate the saved from the unsaved (see Matt. 13:41, 49), but for His own reasons God the Father will not reveal in advance exactly when He will call them into that service.

Still more amazingly, not even **the Son** knew at the time He spoke these words or at any other time during His incarnation. Although He was fully God as well as fully man (John 1:1, 14), Christ voluntarily restricted His use of certain divine attributes when He became flesh. "Although He existed in the form of God, [He] did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped," that is, to be held onto during His humanness (Phil. 2:6). It was not that He lost any divine attributes but that He voluntarily laid aside the use of some of them and would not manifest those attributes except as directed by His Father (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38).

Jesus demonstrated His divine omniscience on many occasions. "He did not need anyone to bear witness concerning man for He Himself knew what was in man" (John 2:25). When, for example, Nicodemus came to Him at night, Jesus already knew what he was thinking and answered his question before it was asked (John 3:13).

But there were certain self-imposed restrictions in His human knowledge. He told the disciples, "All things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15). Jesus obediently restricted His knowledge to those things that the Father wanted Him to know during His earthly days

of humanity. The Father revealed certain things to the Son as He reveals them to all men—through the Scripture, through the Father’s working in and through His life, and through the physical manifestations of God’s power and glory (see Rom. 1:19–20). Jesus learned much of His earthly knowledge just as every human being learns, and it is for that reason that He was able to keep “increasing in wisdom” (Luke 2:52). In addition to those ways, some truths were revealed to the Son directly by the Father. But in every case Jesus’ human knowledge was limited to what His heavenly Father provided.

Therefore, even on this last day before His arrest, **the Son** did not know the precise day and hour He would return to earth at His second coming. During Christ’s incarnation, **the Father alone** exercised unrestricted divine omniscience.

It seems probable that Christ regained full divine knowledge after the resurrection, as implied in His introduction to the Great Commission: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). Just prior to His ascension, He told the disciples, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority” (Acts 1:7). He repeats the truth that the disciples would not be told the time of His appearing, but He did not exclude His own knowledge, as He did in the Olivet discourse.

The three attitudes Jesus mentions in Matthew 24:37–51 are specifically addressed to the generation (Matt. 24:34) that will be alive during the Tribulation and that will witness the signs described in verses 4–29. Those attitudes are: alertness (vv. 37–42), readiness (vv. 43–44), and faithfulness (vv. 45–51).

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