

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON

Matthew 24:36

36 “But of that day and hour
no one knows,
not even the angels of heaven,
nor the Son,
but the Father alone.”
(**Matthew 24:36, 2022 LSB**)

SETTING THE STAGE

“But of that day and hour” is clearly speaking about the Second Coming of Christ. His return is the primary theme of Matthew 24-25.

NO ONE KNOWS

We understand that “no one knows.” That’s the reason Jesus’ disciples asked Him, “Tell us, when will these things happen?” (Matthew 24:3).

There is no shame in admitting that our knowledge is limited. I use a laser to make tumblers, but I don’t know how a laser works. When I looked it up, I learned that “laser” means “light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation.” That doesn’t really help, though. The thing is, *using* a laser doesn’t require knowing how one *works*. We can understand that something *is* without understanding *why* it is.

So, Deuteronomy 29:29 is both helpful and frustrating:

29 “The **secret things** belong to Yahweh our God,
but **the things revealed** belong to us and to our sons forever,
that we may do all the words of this law.”
(**Deuteronomy 29:29, 2022 LSB**)

There are simple things that we don’t know. Scientists have explored about 5% of the ocean floor. With time and technology, they’ll probably get to the rest. Whether or not mankind ever fully explores the ocean floor doesn’t really matter, though.

But there are other things that we don't know and will probably never know. I'm confused about how prayer works. The Bible says that God has decreed all things that come to pass and that we are to pray. How does prayer affect what happens? I really don't know. That's one of those secret things Deuteronomy 29:29 talks about.

Now, we are not responsible for the secret things. God is good; He isn't cruel or unfair. He doesn't judge anyone according to whether they obeyed His secret things. On the other hand, we are accountable for what God has revealed. Romans 1:20 says that creation itself is evidence of God's eternal power and divine nature, and as a result, people are without excuse when they refuse to worship God.

Matthew 24-25 are in our Bibles because the disciples wanted information, and the first information they wanted was *when*; when will these things happen? But according to the Lord Jesus, that information is in the category of "secret things." No person knows. No angel knows. The Son of Man doesn't know. Only the Father knows.

By the way, God knows YOUR secret things, too.

14 For God will bring every work to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil. (Ecclesiastes 12:14, 2022 LSB)

13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are uncovered and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom we have an account to give. (Hebrews 4:13, 2022 LSB)

God does not owe us His secrets. On the contrary, we owe Him accountability for ours.

ARE YOU CONTENT WITH WHAT YOU KNOW?

Let's stop there for a moment. **Are you content** with the secret things remaining secret? Many aren't, you know.

Some in the charismatic movement are openly pursuing occult practices. A woman named Ellyn Davis writes in her book *The Physics of Heaven*, "I decided to examine New Age thought and

practice for anything precious that might be extracted from the worthless.” That is, a woman who claims to be a Christian has gone to the devil to see if he has anything interesting to say.

Even in biblical times, **many longed to look into the secret things**. They tried to pry open closed doors and open sealed books.

Way back in Deuteronomy 18, **Yahweh warned His people to be content with His revelation** and never, under any circumstances, try to uncover what He has not revealed.

To ensure they didn’t misunderstand, **the Lord forbade occultic practices aimed at uncovering secret knowledge**. In Deuteronomy 18:10-11, He names those practices in detail: child sacrifice, divination, soothsaying, interpreting omens, practicing sorcery, casting spells as an enchanter, or trying to communicate with the dead as a medium or spiritist.

Then He passes judgment on those who do these things:

12 “For whoever does these things is an abomination to Yahweh; and because of these abominations Yahweh your God will dispossess them from before you.”
(Deuteronomy 18:12, 2022 LSB)

The word *abomination* describes the utter sinfulness of certain actions, like homosexual behavior (Leviticus 18:22) and child sacrifice (Deuteronomy 12:31). **The practices are an abomination, and so are those who practice them**. God loathes them. He hates them. They stink in His nostrils like the stench of decaying flesh.

Yahweh expects His people to be content with what He reveals, and so **He makes His revelation clear**.

He sent Moses to His people as His prophet. **He confirmed Moses by working miracles through him**. He sent other prophets, most of whom didn’t work miracles at all. How could the people know they were genuine? Because, first, **everything they said came to pass**, and, second, **everything they said agreed perfectly with Moses**, the confirmed prophet.

The Old Testament begins with the books of the confirmed prophet, Moses. It continues with the writings of those who are proven true by their perfect agreement with Moses, God’s confirmed prophet.

Those who spoke presumptuously in the name of Yahweh were to die (Deuteronomy 18:20-22). The people would recognize them because **what they said did not come to pass** (Deuteronomy 18:22) or because **they sought to lead people away** from what was revealed through Moses (Deuteronomy 13:2).

To summarize this, then, God's revelation through Moses was confirmed by Moses' 100% accuracy and by the miracles performed by Yahweh through Moses.

Do you know that **the same was true about the Lord Jesus?** Jesus taught, and **His teaching was in perfect agreement with Moses and the prophets. Jesus worked miracles that confirmed His authority and identity.** They were not just random miracles, nice things to do for people in need. They were miracles that had been promised by God the Father as the signs of His Son.

What's more, when He ascended to heaven, **Jesus sent the Holy Spirit** upon all His people, but first upon His apostles. **He confirmed His apostles** as His spokesmen by **working miracles through them.** And then Jesus spoke through His apostles by His Spirit, giving us what we call the New Testament.

So, just like the Old Testament, the New Testament begins with the Gospels, the teachings of the Son of God, and then continues with the writings of those who were proven true by their perfect agreement with the Son of God and by miracles.

We ought to be completely content with God's knowledge of the secret things. And we ought to be completely content with what God has revealed to us.

You might remember that last week, I said that there is nothing Satan will not exploit to destroy you. This certainly applies to our longing to know that which God has not revealed. Satan convinced Eve that eating the forbidden fruit would make her wise, and then she would be like God. Eve allowed her desire for hidden, secret information to dominate her imagination, and it was all over.

So then, Jesus says that no one knows the day and the hour of His Second Coming and the end of the age. Even the angels don't know.

NOT EVEN THE ANGELS OF HEAVEN

36 "But of that day and hour no one knows,
not even the angels of heaven,

nor the Son,
but the Father alone.”
(Matthew 24:36, 2022 LSB)

First Peter 1:10-12 contains a remarkable statement.

10 Concerning [the salvation we have in Christ],
the prophets, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you,
made careful searches and inquiries,
11 inquiring to know what time or what kind of time
the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating
as He was predicting the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. [The prophets wanted to
know what the disciples wanted to know.]
12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you,
in these things which now have been declared to you
through those who proclaimed the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven –
things into which angels long to look.” (1 Peter 1:10–12, 2022 LSB)

There’s a lot here, and you can explore it later on as you desire. I want you to notice the last phrase: *things into which angels long to look*. “Look” is present tense, not past tense. We aren’t being told that the angels were curious, but when Jesus came and died and rose again, their curiosity was satisfied. They want to look into these things *now*, as we gather today.

Imagine thing! You know things that the angels don’t know. We want to know more about the Second Coming and the end of the age, but the angels don’t know as much as we do. As my wife pointed out, this is a prime example of God revealing what He desires to whom He desires. The Gospel is a revealed thing to mankind, but it is a secret thing as far as the angels are concerned.

NOR THE SON, BUT THE FATHER ALONE

But then Jesus makes an interesting statement:

36 “But of that day and hour no one knows,
not even the angels of heaven,
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(Matthew 24:36, 2022 LSB)

How can the Father know something the Son doesn't know? Those who deny the deity of Christ, such as Muslims, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses, sometimes point to this verse and say, "Aha, there, you see? Jesus doesn't know what God knows, so Jesus cannot be God!"

In order to understand Jesus' meaning and know how to answer those who deny His deity, **we need to get our minds around what Scripture says about Him.** This is the area of study known as *Christology*, the study of what the Bible says about Christ. Christology was **the primary subject of the early creeds of the church.** A glance at systematic theologies will show just how much depth is contained in the study of Christ. The book "Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Study of Bible Truth" devotes more than *45,000* words to the subject of Jesus Christ. In "A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity," Puritan John Gill devotes over *65,000* words to Jesus Christ. In his systematic theology, 19th-century theologian Charles Hodge wrote over *91,000* words about Christ.

It would take more time than we have this morning even to list the topics that come into play when studying what the Scripture says about the Lord Jesus. But we can understand Jesus' meaning, I think, by remembering two key points of Christology.

First, Jesus Christ is fully and completely human. John 1:14 says,

14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us,
and we beheld His glory,
glory as of the only begotten from the Father,
full of grace and truth.
(John 1:14, 2022 LSB)

Christ's humanity is absolutely clear in Scripture. He was conceived in Mary's womb, carried to full term, born in the usual way, circumcised on the 8th day, and raised to manhood along with His brother and sisters. He ate, drank, walked, sat, slept, stood, touched, saw, heard, spoke.

And second, Jesus Christ is fully and completely divine. This was the shocking thing. No one disputed that Jesus was a man. Jesus once asked His enemies why they wanted to kill Him. They answered, "Because you, **being a man**, make Yourself God!" (John 10:33). They didn't say, "Because You, being God, make Yourself man."

15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
16 For in Him all things were created,
both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible,

whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities –
all things have been created through Him and for Him.

17 And He is before all things, And in Him all things hold together.

18 And He is the head of the body, the church;

Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,

so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

19 For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell ... (**Colossians 1:15–19, 2022 LSB**)

9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells bodily, (**Colossians 2:9, 2022 LSB**)

John 1:1-3, 14 and Hebrews 1 are equally clear. Jesus Christ is God. He is fully divine. He possesses all of the attributes of deity.

So the Bible teaches that Jesus is fully God and fully Man. He is fully divine, possessing every attribute of God. And He is fully human, possessing every attribute of sinless, holy humanity. Those attributes don't overlap; in theological terms, they are not confounded or mingled.

So, as God, Jesus is omnipresent, but as Man, Jesus is limited to being in one place at a time. Jesus is God and, therefore, eternal and unable to die, but Jesus is also Man and did die on the cross.

I won't ask if you understand *how* all this works – that's one of those secret things – but I hope you understand and believe that it is true. Our atonement required Jesus to be exactly who He is: the holy man who stood in the place of sinners and God the Son who satisfied the eternal judgment of God the Father.

So, let's look back at Matthew 24:36. Jesus says that the Son of Man doesn't know the day or the hour. He chose His wording very carefully. He doesn't say that the Son of God doesn't know because the Son of God, being God, has to know all that God knows, or else He wouldn't be God. Neither does Jesus say, "I don't know the day or the hour," because, odd as it sounds, that would be too imprecise. It is as the Son of Man that Jesus doesn't know. His human nature knows only what God reveals.

Now, how is all this possible? I have no idea; I really don't. I just know that it's what the Bible teaches about Jesus. And I know that in Matthew 24-25, Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of Man over and over again; I'll let you find those places on your own. If you go looking, you'll find seven uses of Son of Man in six verses. His emphasis all the way through is on His humanity, not on His deity. He is distinguishing between His divine and human natures. In the process, He models for us perfect submission to the will of the Father regarding the secret things. As the Son of God, Jesus

knew all things. As the Son of Man, Jesus only knew what the Father revealed.

There is an answer to the question, “When will these things happen?” But that answer is sealed up as a secret thing, as we see in Deuteronomy 29:29. That answer belongs to God. He has not revealed it in Scripture. With the death of the apostle John, the canon of Scripture was closed. That means that God is not going to reveal to us the “when” of the Second Coming and the end of the age. Again, there IS a “when,” it’s just none of our business.

BRINGING IT HOME

Let’s bring this home and begin directing our hearts and minds toward the Lord’s table. There are many things that God has not revealed to us. The day and hour of the Second Coming is just one piece of information among the infinite pieces of information that the Lord keeps for Himself.

There is no question that Jesus will return. Jesus said to His disciples the night of His arrest,

1 “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.

2 In My Father’s house are many dwelling places;

if it were not so, I would have told you;

for I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you,

I will come again and receive you to Myself,

that where I am, there you may be also.”

(John 14:1–3, 2022 LSB)

The Lord went on in John 14-16 to talk about how we are to live in the in-between of His going to prepare a place for us and His coming to receive us to Himself. He didn’t go into the details of His heavenly preparations or when He would return. He focused on how they should live.

The first event in the book of Acts is Jesus’ ascension to heaven. He gathered His disciples and commanded them to wait in Jerusalem for the promised Holy Spirit. But they had a question:

6 So when they had come together, they were asking Him,

saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?”

(Acts 1:6, 2022 LSB)

The church age began with Jesus ascending to heaven to begin His ministry of intercession. It

will end with His triumphant Second Coming. His disciples wanted to close the gap between those two events as much as possible. Jesus responds just as He does in Matthew 24:36,

7 But He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has set by His own authority;
8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to **THE END OF THE EARTH.**”
(Acts 1:7–8, 2022 LSB)

It’s amazing, but after Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples stood there and watched the sky as though He had just popped down to HyVee for a couple of things and would be right back. Two angels appeared to them and sent them on to Jerusalem to obey Him.

This is a good application for us today. Don’t worry about the Second Coming. Jesus is coming again, just as He promised. Leave that in His hands. Leave the time to the Father’s will. You and I should be busy in the in-between, living for Him, serving Him, growing in holiness and sanctification, strengthening His church according to our gifts, and sharing Christ with the lost as He provides us with the opportunity.

MOVING TOWARD THE LORD’S SUPPER

The Lord’s supper provides us with a precious moment to reflect on the reality of our faith. Jesus Christ was and is as real as the elements that we will hold in our hands in a few moments. “Taste and see that the Lord is good,” Psalm 34:8 says. The Lord’s table is a reminder that our relationship with Christ today, although spiritual, is nevertheless real. We see and hear Him in His Word; the Holy Spirit makes it live for us. We look back to the moment in history when His body was given and His blood was shed. The bread and cup of the Lord’s table remind us of that reality. We look forward in history to the moment when He comes again. The hunger we feel after the Lord’s table reminds us of that reality. I long to see Him with my eyes, to hear Him with my ears, and one day I shall. His Second Coming will be as real and tangible as His First Coming, and the results will be just as concrete and physical.

Our sin guilt is real; He bore our judgment in His body and washed away our sins with His blood. Our weakness is real; His Spirit gives us actual strength and hope and deepens our actual sanctification through our suffering.

Let's sing together before our time of prayer, and then we'll come to the table of the Lord together.