

## The Teachings of Mark 13:32 & 2 Peter 3:8

Essentially every time a conversation arises concerning the timing of our Lord's return, at least one of two statements is cited: the statement of Jesus that, *of that day and hour, no one knows but God* or the statement of Peter that, *to the Lord, a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day*. Due to this...

Here's what I've asked myself: Since so many I've come across in my life who've quoted these statements seem to otherwise have very limited Bible knowledge, why do they have such a command of *these* particular statements? Here's my answer: They have excellent command of those two statements because of *so very many* failed predictions over the centuries! I seen a documented list ([bible.ca/pre-date-setters.htm](http://bible.ca/pre-date-setters.htm)) of how that there have been at least 250 predictions that have crashed and burned over the last 2000 years! So no wonder! Right? Well...

Though I could easily devote an entire study to each of these two statements, I decided to just combine them into one. So let's consider them in order: Jesus first, then Peter.

**In the NKJV of Mark 13:32, Jesus is quoted to have stated this: "But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."**

(I chose Mark's account of this statement merely because it's more comprehensive than Matthew's.)

In the next 4 verses, Jesus built upon this foundational statement, warning His audience to be vigilant ... because they didn't know the day or the hour. Now, since He began this declaration in verse 32 with the conjunction "but," we must look back at what He had been discussing; what we discover (**vv. 1-3**) is that He was answering questions concerning the destruction of their temple in Jerusalem: "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things are about to be fulfilled" (v. 4)? So then...

Jesus listed things like the occurrence of wars, earthquakes, famines, family betrayals, persecutions of Christians, false prophets leading people away from Christianity, and the Romans preparing to come against Jerusalem; He then added that, when they—that generation (v. 30)—saw these things happening, they were to realize that the end of the temple was at hand and that He, via the Roman armies, was about to bring final judgment upon the Jews and their treasured city, meaning of course that they needed to keep a watch and get gone before the hammer came down! Why? Because of its specific day and hour no one knew, not even He, the Son, but the Father only!

"But," you may say, "you're applying everything to the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem here! You're not taking into account the Lord's final return to destroy planet earth." And you'd be exactly right. Do ya know why? Well, just read every bit of Mark 13 (and even around it if you wish), then tell me, just from that read alone, how you can come up with anything else. Seriously, do it! Then after you did that, if you're honest, you'd reply...

"Well, there's nothing in Mark's account which forces me to see that Jesus was speaking about His end-of-time coming, but I see it in Luke's and Matthew's accounts." Well, then that not only makes me very sad for Mark's audience who didn't have either of those accounts, but also upset with Mark for misleading them like that, omitting what Jesus said about something so much greater than the mere destruction of a lone city! ... Yes, I'm being facetious, *but facetious with a crucial point here, folks!* Don't ya think that, instead of pitting our presuppositions of Matthew 24 and Luke 21 against Mark 13 (thereby making him appear, *at the very least*, deceptive), we should rather interpret Matthew and Luke in the face of Mark? Besides the immediate context of Mark 13...

What further supports my conviction that Jesus made this no-one-knows-the-day-and-hour statement in reference to His coming against the temple with its city, priesthood, sacrifices, and so on is that, as I'm sure your own reference Bibles indicate, He was calling to the minds of His Jewish audience Zechariah's prophecy of Jerusalem's demise in chapter 14. (Jerusalem was named 11 times in that chapter, by the way!) Jesus was specifically alluding to verse 7a which says, "It will be a unique day known only to the Lord" (ISV, ECB, & CSB); interestingly, at least a couple other versions translated it this way: "It shall be one particular day which shall be known as the Lord's" (cf. LOT & JPS)," meaning that this prophecy would be referring not only to Yahweh alone knowing the day and hour as Jesus said, but also that that specific day would become known as "the Lord's" day ([studybible.info/compare/zechariah14:7](http://studybible.info/compare/zechariah14:7)). Ya know, I wonder if there's a verse somewhere that supports this idea of that day becoming known as "the Lord's day." Oh yeah: Revelation 1:10 comes to mind—you know, the theme verse of the entire book of Revelation which concerns the judgment of which was bookended with the phrases to "shortly take place" and "the time is at hand" (1:1 & 3) and then again to "shortly take place" and "the time is at hand" (22:6 & 10).

Something else very intriguing about the phrase "the day only the Father knows" is that, because it was directly connected to the work of the Sanhedrin to watch for the exact time when the new moon appeared in order to begin the first day of the feast/festival of trumpets in the autumn of each year, *no one but Yahweh could know* when that important day would be on the calendar from year to year; and it was around the time of the feast of trumpets (which was the feast of judgment) that Jerusalem finally met its total dissolution. Due to what I just shared here, rabbis consider the-day-only-the-Father-knows phrase to be a Semitism or Hebraism or Jewish Idiom which brought to mind that special day in the autumn of each year. So have fun researching all of this in relation to the fall feast days, because I don't have time to do that here. By the way, if indeed this phrase was an idiom, then ... think about it ... it wouldn't mean Jesus didn't know the day and hour; rather, minus the year, He was actually giving them even more pointed information about when the time of the end of Judaism would occur, viz. in the autumn.

Another thing to consider is this: Due to this declaration of Jesus, nearly every Christian believes that no one but the Father could or can know the day and hour. But here's the problem: Jesus, who uttered the statement in the present tense, didn't say no one would ever be able to know, did He? In fact, at a later time Jesus told His apostles in John 16:13 that they'd be receiving the Holy Spirit who would do what? Right: guide them into "all truth," even telling them of "things to come." And who, with all this information, sent this Spirit? Right: The Father (Acts 2:33). Furthermore...

Jesus warned His disciples not to fall for those who would proclaim that His coming had drawn near when it actually had not, meaning of course that they were thereby indirectly warned not to say such things, but allow the Spirit to lead them (cf. Luke 21:8). So when Paul in the late 50s wrote that the day was "at hand" (Rom. 13:12), and when Peter wrote in the early 60s that "the end of all things is at hand" (1 Pet. 4:7) and that "the time has come for the judgment" (1 Pet. 4:17), and when John wrote in the mid 60s that "the time is at hand" (Rev. 22:10), we must decide whether they were all false prophets like the ones Jesus warned about or if the end-times really were "at hand" when they wrote those things within a decade or so of the Lord's return in judgment of Old Covenant Israel. So...

With all this information before us, there's no reason that *we today* cannot know the timing of the Lord's return—at the very least the one of which He clearly spoke in Mark 13, i.e. His true "second" coming; otherwise, we're looking for a third one or a second second one.

Let's now move on to the other statement with which people are so very familiar:

**In the NKJV of Second Peter 3:8, the Apostle wrote this: "with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as one day."** So what exactly is someone saying when he cites this axiom? Well, I'd like to just say, "You tell me, then we'll both know," but that of course won't get us anywhere. Will it? ☺ So...

Here's what I've gotten from it when I've heard/read this brought up in the context of the timing of the Lord's return: Such a person appears to be saying that Peter was saying that (since God exists in a realm of timelessness) when He employed terms like "shortly," "soon," "near," "at hand," "about to," or even "this generation," *we simply cannot interpret them to mean what they sound like they mean in our human experience*. Another writer said the following is what he gets from folks when they cite this verse: "Don't you understand that time is meaningless to the Lord so that He can say that His Son can return at any moment with that moment being thousands of years still in the future?" I of course take issue with such folks and that idea for numerous reasons, but I only have time to mention a few.

In regard to the passage itself, what quoters of this verse emphasize is the first part that "a day is as a thousand years." I don't remember one person ever emphasizing anything in regard to the part about "a thousand years is as a day." Wonder why? Perhaps it's because, if this verse were taken as some apocalyptic formula, it would be self-contradicting, not to mention that this latter phrase would negate their belief in a future return of the Lord, placing it rather thousands of years in our past! I.e., if the first phrase opens the door for thousands of years in the future, then the second phrase opens the door for thousands of years in the past. If not, why not? And in relation to this verse being some literal, apocalyptic formula (also in regard to the passage itself), the Apostle Peter did not say that "with the Lord a day equals a thousand years" or vice versa, but that "with the Lord a day is as a thousand years" and vice versa; "as" does not equal "equals." Moving on...

In regard to the immediate context, not only do those who cite this verse lack emphasizing the latter part of the axiom, but they also neglect (perhaps on purpose?) the very next verse in which Peter wrote that "the Lord is not slack concerning His promise [to return]... but is being longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." See...

Verses 8-9 here were written in answer to those who, in verses 3-4, were scoffing at that promised return, saying, "Well, where is He? Things are going along the same as they always have!" So Peter replied that "not only is time not a problem for God (v. 8), but He's also waiting until the last minute, as it were, giving us as much time as He can (v. 9), for Jesus did choose the word 'generation' in regard to His return (Mat. 24:34); and since [as Hebrews 3 teaches] a generation is 40 years, and since it has only been about 35 years so far, you should be holding off on your mocking a few more years!" Besides how Peter replied here, think about this:

Unless these scoffers (who, by the way, existed during Peter's time because verse 4 is in the present tense [cf. Jude 17-18]) knew that Jesus had said He'd return within their generation, why would they be mocking as they were nearly 2000 years ago now? It's reminiscent to me of what was being said a few years before that freaked out the Thessalonian brethren: Paul wrote his second letter to them to calm their fears when, obviously, a different group of people were saying that the Lord had already returned which meant those brethren had missed it, so Paul told them that such had not yet occurred and why it hadn't (2 The. 2:1ff). What's interesting in both these cases is that brethren, whether in the AD 50s or 60s, believed Jesus would come in their lifetime! Again...

In regard to immediate context, besides His dealing with the mockers of verses 3-4, there's also an important point to be seen in verses 1-2 in relation to the axiom so often quoted by modern-day mockers in verse 8. What might that be? Just this: To introduce his remarks here in chapter 3, Peter referred his audience to the first letter he sent them just months before which would remind them of statements like these three in First Peter 4: {1} In verse 5 he wrote of Jesus as—at that very moment—being "ready to judge." {2} In verse 7 he wrote that "the end of all things is at hand." Then {3} in verse 17 he wrote that "the time has come for the judgment to begin." Now, with all that in mind, the question of course which should arise is this: "Why would Peter make those crystal clear statements of imminence a few months before, then turn around in his next letter to them and make a statement that negated everything he had said of the Lord's return in the first letter?" Was the Spirit-led Apostle Peter contradicting himself? If so, were either of his letters Spirit-led letters? If so, which one? OK, moving on again...

Peter's day-as-1000-years-and-vice-versa adage, like so much of New Testament Scripture, is an allusion to something written in Old Testament Scripture. And where would that be? Psalm 90 verse 4. So what's vital about that? Well when (unlike some want people to do) one considers the context of that verse, he discovers that it's ironically found within a context concerning *The Faithfulness of God*; in fact, according to many, the theme of Psalms 90–106 is *The Faithfulness of God*, meaning that Psalm 90 is the very Psalm that kicks off that theme, a theme that agrees perfectly with Peter's the-Lord-is-not-slack-concerning-His-promise statement which directly followed his with-the-Lord-a-day-is-as-a-thousand-years statement. So since Peter wrote his letters to Jewish Christians (1 Pet. 1:1), people who'd very likely recognize the theme of that Psalm, then Peter was telling them that when God (or of course His Son) made a time-related promise, they could "take it to the bank" that it would indeed be fulfilled when promised! OK, one last thing that really bugs me...

When someone offers up this passage with the implication with which they offer it up, what are they saying about God? Unless Peter was a false prophet, someone not Spirit-led to write what he wrote, what else can one think, if it's thought through, but that God was playing with the minds of Peter's audience? I mean, {1} why choose the words Peter wrote in First Peter 4:5, 7, & 17 in relation to the Lord's return if those words don't mean what his human audience would understand them to mean? And {2} why is Second Peter 3:8 only brought up in relation to words like "near," "soon," "shortly," "at hand," and so on when the topic is related to the Lord's return? I.e., why isn't that excuse-verse used in relation to other topics or verses in which those words are found but not in the context of the Lord's return? Think about it, folks! OK, well...

**In Summary Then:** Neither Jesus' statement about only the Father knowing the timing of the Lord's return or Peter's statement about the Father supposedly seeing time in a different manner than we see it (at least when it comes to the subject of the Lord's return) have any validity at all as arguments against the numerous time statements throughout the Bible, especially the New Testament, teaching that the Lord's return occurred nearly 2000 years ago now.