

"NO ONE KNOWS, NOT EVEN THE ANGELS OF HEAVEN, NOR THE SON"

Mark 13:24–32 [Jesus said:] "In those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. ²⁷Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. ²⁸"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. ³²"But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. [NRSV]

It may be surprising to read that not even the Son does know the time of the end, especially since Jesus confirmed in the Temple that He is the Messiah by stating:

John 10:30 "The Father and I are one." [NRSV]

How is it possible for the Son not to know the time of the end, which the Father is stated as knowing, since they are one being?

Has the text been corrupted or are the Gospels just simply nonsensical?

Or: are they telling me a truth different from my metaphysics?

The Apostle Peter helps me to understand:

2 Peter 3:3–10 *knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. ⁴They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they*

were from the beginning of creation." ⁵For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, ⁶and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. ⁷But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. ⁸But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. [ESV]

"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

The Lord is a Living God: He is not a pre-programmed computer with a built-in schedule; He is patient and He has not settled on a fixed timetable of events.

Therefore the Son does not know the "day or hour," because the Father has not yet set a predetermined time for the end —rather He will make a judgment.

Indeed, He is a Living God, Who hears, observes, feels, loves, comforts and judges accordingly. All along the Father is waiting for as many as possible to repent and come to worship him.

Therefore it is foolish to forecast the day: it depends on how the Father will assess the repentance of many.

Then He will bring about the end, when He will judge — from the actions and behavior of the people — that no more repentance will come and then the Son of Man will — as always — do the will of the Father and come “in clouds with great power and glory.” [Mark 13:26]

It is not an exception that God has not set a predetermined timetable for His actions: in fact, as we read in the record, this has been true throughout the time.

For example, the Father had not determined *ab initio* when He was to destroy all people (save Noah and the seven with him) with the Great Flood — nor, in fact, whether He was to do so:

Genesis 6:5–8 *The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. ⁶And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. ⁷So the Lord said, “I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created—people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.” ⁸But Noah found favor in the sight of the Lord. [NRSV]*

Rather, it was the continuing wickedness of humankind, which made the Lord sorry and prompted His judgment and His action; it was not the Father’s plan from the day of creation to do so.

And so it was a dozen generations later when God obliterated Sodom and Gomorrah, not because it was His original plan, rather because He noticed their grievous sin:

Genesis 18:20–21 *Then the Lord said, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous ²¹that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.” [NIV]*

In fact, the Lord — as He was developing His judgment — was ready and willing to

negotiate its terms with Abraham, who pled for mercy:

Genesis 18:23–24, 26 *Then Abraham approached him and said: “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? ²⁶The Lord said, “If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.” [NIV]*

The negotiation continued and Abraham was able to convince God to settle for even much less, because God is — and always was — “not wishing that any should perish.”

Genesis 18:32b *He answered, “For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it.” [NIV]*

However, ten could not be found and

Genesis 19:24–25 *Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven; ²⁵and he overthrew those cities, and all the Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. [NRSV]*

One should not be confused by the possible misunderstanding that therefore God does not know the future.

Of course, the Omniscient God knows all the future: one helpful way for me to understand the apparent dilemma is that a parent often has a good insight (perhaps 80% – 90% accurate) of what the child will do; yet the parent may wait and see what that child does, before taking action or rendering judgment and correction.

So the Lord, Who is the Living God — although fully aware of what we, his children will do — may still be patient (as the Apostle Peter teaches us), may wait and see, before making a decision and taking action, according to His Love and His Wisdom.

Let us then, in our days, abide in the assurance of the Lord’s patience and receive His blessing: let us reflect on His continuing observing, assessing and judging our actions and let us all use the time allowed by the Lord to repent, so that His wish that none should perish be fulfilled.