Section: Doctrine of Christ (Christology)

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**TEACHING NOTES**

**Q66. Where is Jesus now?**

Jesus is alive, and His body is exalted in heaven, where He is preparing a place for His redeemed people and interceding for them in the presence of God the Father.

**Q67. When will Jesus return?**

Jesus will physically return according to the will of God. Until then, we are commanded to be faithful servants and wise stewards.

Come, Lord Jesus!

So far in our recent lessons on Christology, we’ve covered things such as the hypostatic union, Christ’s perfect life, His sacrificial substitutionary death for the elect, and last lesson, His rising from the grave.

Our questions *this* lesson deals with where Jesus is *now*, and when He will return bodily to the earth.

The latter of those can be a topic of much confusion and some have even ventured into harmful, beyond Scripture, speculation. So tonight, our desire is to address these things biblically and encourage you to not be distracted by or caught up in falsehood or speculation on these things.

This should be an interesting and informative lesson.

Let’s jump in. I’ll read our first of two catechism questions...

**Q66. Where is Jesus now?**

Jesus is alive, and His body is exalted in heaven, where He is preparing a place for His redeemed people and interceding for them in the presence of God the Father.

* **at this time, Jesus is exalted in heaven**

Our answer states that, *at this time*, Jesus is exalted in heaven.

Last week Pastor taught on the resurrection of Christ.

So, let’s briefly review Jesus rising from the grave, to ascending up into heaven.

After Jesus rose from the dead, He "presented Himself alive" to the women near the tomb, to His disciples, and to more than 500 others.

Following His resurrection, during forty days, Jesus appeared to many and further taught His disciples about the kingdom of God.

Jesus promised His followers that they would soon receive the Holy Spirit, *in a particular way for a particular purpose*, and He instructed them to remain in Jerusalem until the Spirit had come in this way.

Then Jesus blessed them, and He ascended into heaven.

The events between His resurrection from the grave and the ascension are not our focus tonight, but to set the stage for our content, seeing this timeline unto the ascension in the text is helpful.

Let’s quickly look at a passage in Acts.

**Acts 1:7-11**

**7**[Jesus said to His Apostles], “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. **8**But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” **9**And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. **10**And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, **11**and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

There is a lot we could say about this passage but for the sake of our aim in this lesson, *seeing the ascension of our Lord Jesus into heaven* is all that we’re doing here.

Now that we have Jesus’ ascension established in God’s word, let’s work through our first answer.

In that Acts account we clearly see, as our answer states, that Jesus is alive, and His body is exalted in heaven”.

* **we have a living King**

This is very important, as we focused on last lesson, *we have a living King*.

If Jesus is not alive now, none of us have hope regarding our redemption. **1 Corinthians 15** tells us that, “…if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. …But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead…”

We have a risen and living Savior! And “His body is exalted in heaven”

Now, our answer is written this way to emphasis something important—There is divine majesty here so listen carefully.

When we consider the whole of Scripture, we see some important realities about Jesus’ bodily location *and* ministry after the accession.

Much of this is tied to the divine majesty of the Hypostatic Union we learned about a few weeks ago.

The following truths existing together are unique to Jesus because of the Hypostatic Union.

First, Jesus does have a human body still and He forever will.

And know that His ***body*** is **not** omnipresent, rather it is located (right now) in heaven. He is alive in this body in heaven at this time. We saw Him ascend to heaven in that Acts passage we just read.

***And***, as we have discussed in lessons prior, His divine nature eternally has all of the divine attributes of the Godhead.

This means that Jesus, in His divine nature, is spirit, and sovereign, and omnipresent, and omniscient, and omnipotent, and all-wise, etc.

In this uniqueness of His two natures we can see how ***bodily*** Jesus is in heaven (doing important ministerial roles), and ***He, as spirit,*** is everywhere (doing important ministerial roles). This means, for example, He is with each of us, as He is omnipresent.

His omnipresent ministry is what we see in passages like:

**Romans 8:9**

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

And, Paul says in verse 10 that “Christ is in you” if you are saved.

And we see His omnipresent ministry also in,

**Matthew 28:20** Jesus says,

 “…I am with you always...”

See how great our Lord Jesus is!

In this uniqueness of His two natures we can see how ***bodily*** Jesus is in heaven (doing important ministerial roles), and ***He, as spirit,*** is everywhere (doing important ministerial roles).

* **two of His primary functions in Heaven**

Next our answer focuses on a two of His primary functions in Heaven, it says, “His body is exalted in heaven *where He is preparing a place for His redeemed people and interceding for them in the presence of God the Father*.”

We’re going to cover Christ’s ministerial functions further in some following lessons, so I’m not going to teach them in too much depth here. But let’s see these truths in Scripture.

While still one earth, Christ said in

**John 14:2-3**

“In my Father's house are many rooms.

If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

In this, Jesus is pointing out to them His ascension and Jesus says this to draw His follower’s minds away from seeking a makeshift, temporary, earthly kingdom and instead to seek the better, eternal one to come.

He says this to provide support to them of the hope of glory that trumps all temporary troubles.

This verse also confirms the fullness and sufficiency of room for all His redeemed people. God most assuredly will provide our eternal dwelling place—Prior to His second coming, in heaven, then, ultimately, in the new creation.

In this passage, Christ is saying, “Have confidence, I am going, to prepare, and I will certainly prepare a place for you. This is a truth of which you may be fully assured.”

This is a promise from our Lord. We can find comfort and rest in this promise! How great this is!

We deserve the fire that never ceases in hell, but God redeemed us from that punishment and instead will give us—the saved—room in His holy dwelling!

Then, our first answer says Jesus is, “interceding for them [that is, the saved elect] *in the presence of God the Father*.”

**Colossians 3:1** confirms that Jesus has in fact ascended bodily to the high place of authority and majesty in heaven when it uses this symbolic language: “Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.”

As we learned, God the Father doesn’t have hands (He doesn’t have a body), so “right hand of God” language is anthropomorphic—this statement is teaching something important *symbolically*.

**Romans 8:34** also confirms our answer in saying Jesus is “at the right hand of God” and this verse also tells us that Jesus is now “interceding for us.”

This intercession work of Jesus is so important, and again, we’ll discuss it more in another lesson, but it can be summed up in

**1 John 2:1**, “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. ***But*** if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

This means that Jesus stands as the basis for our salvation and perseverance. Christ’s righteousness is the blanket to us; it has been imputed to us.

We should be repenting and fighting sin diligently, but when we sin, Jesus stands as the one worthy to justify us because *of His person and work*.

Christ intercedes for us—believers won’t be lost in this life or found condemned in judgement, *since* Jesus paid our debt in full and has credited us with His perfect record!

*Take comfort in this believer.* Jesus is assuring you acceptance and safety with God, rather than you getting the separation and wrath you deserve.

Have comfort in this. This should cause the most restful, un-anxious, joyful posture in us.

Your most damning problems have been solved,

your most important need has been met,

your eternal joy in fellowship with God has been secured.

*Have comfort in Christ and His work.*

Jesus is alive, and His body is exalted in heaven, where He is preparing a place for His redeemed people and interceding for them in the presence of God the Father.

Amen.

Hopefully, the truths of this catechism question have helped bring clarity and comfort to you.

Let’s move on to our second catechism question and answer.

**Q67. When will Jesus return?**

Jesus will physically return according to the will of God. Until then, we are commanded to be faithful servants and wise stewards.

Come, Lord Jesus!

Now, many of you are familiar with the speculation and controversy that surrounds the topic of this question.

Maybe some of you have found yourself caught up in some falsehood or speculation around this topic.

Maybe some of you have an ongoing unhealthy participation in speculation or such around this topic.

We hope this lesson will help to inform you biblically how a Christian should think and act in regard to these things.

*This is important to get right.* The consequences of approaching this topic wrongly vary from *distracting, at the least,* to *deadly, at worst*.

Let me give you a few examples.

On the milder end of this, some well-intended believers get caught up in *speculation reading* or *speculation chatter* as to when Jesus will return. In this, it’s distracting them from basic things God has called them to in the here and now.

And on the more severe and damaging end of this, some go so far as to intentionally disobey many commands of God and bank their hearts, minds, and bodies on some erroneous speculation as to the end or Jesus’ return.

This absurd behavior has cost some people many things, from bailing on their jobs….to even their very lives in some cases.

Have you heard of the cases where individuals or groups of people quit their jobs and do other extreme things based on some false belief about Christ’s return? This is usually led by a false teacher.

To this point, I’ll be very frank for a moment: There are people who try to convince others that Jesus is returning *by a certain date*. These people are false teachers and should be avoided **completely.**

We’ll see later that Jesus tells us no human will know in advance of when He will return. So, these people, (for money, or fame, or pride, or whatever reason), are misleading people away from what the Bible teaches by their false teaching. This is despicable. Let us not get caught up in these things!

If anyone here, (one of the pastors or anyone else), claims to know the date of when Jesus is returning, they are no longer qualified to teach the Bible or lead the local flock.

This is serious stuff. People in our day are often attracted to this kind of speculation, but *God’s people* cannot stand for it or fall prey to it.

Look, the evidence of this problem is easy to see. Here are just a few examples of these from the last few decades alone….

-One preacher predicted in 1999 that the Second Coming would probably be within 10 years.

-One so-called pastor predicted the end would occur in year 2000, as did so-called psychic.

-One leader of a group or (so-called) church was so bold to predict the Second Coming of Christ to occur on a specific day, April 6th year 2000.

-A televangelist over the years, predicted many specific years and dates for the second coming of Jesus, but has continued to move his prediction later and later as they have all proved to be false.

-Starting in 2008, one man began teaching that Christ's return would correspond with the September 28, 2015 lunar eclipse. His idea, known as the Blood Moon Prophecy, attracted much attention, mainstream media even, such as the “USA Today.”

-And some of you may be familiar with the man named Harold Camping. He was notable for issuing multiple failed predictions of dates for the End Times. These predictions somehow gained him a global following and millions of dollars of donations. He died in 2013, so ***his*** wolf shenanigans are finished, but surely his following and many more like him are still misleading people by these false, anti-biblical predictions.

If you’ve been caught up in these things, we pray you’ll take up a new course now and find rest in the wise plan of God, rather than disobeying our Lord by being distracted by speculation and predictions of His return.

So, let’s look now at our answer and Scripture.

* **Jesus will physically return**

First, our answer says, “Jesus will physically return...”

This is key. This is a foundational truth we need to know in regard to the questions of end times or Jesus’ return.

Building on our last Q&A, Jesus made it plain to His disciples after His resurrection that *He does have a physical body*. Jesus said in…

**Luke 24:39**

“See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones *as you see that I have*.”

And we saw in Acts that Jesus ascended bodily/physically into heaven.

Jesus remains both fully God and fully human, and He has a human body in heaven right now. We covered this.

So now, we are adding more truth to that to say that Jesus will *physically return* in that *same now-glorified body*.

So, when we talk about the return of Christ, we are talking about when He will physically return, in His body.

* **according to the will of God**

This bodily return of Christ focuses on a specific event that is yet to happen. To that, our answer says this will happen “according to the will of God.”

God has a pre-ordained plan. God has set a time. God knows. And HE HASN’T AND WON’T REVEAL THE DATE TO US.

*-There is not a mystery Bible code to be figured out that tells us the date.*

*-There is not a secret message hidden in the text giving us the date.*

*-There are no current events that can be pointed to to justify a prediction of the return of Christ.*

….Let me say that again, current events happening around the world, in politics, etc can**not** be pointed to *to justify a prediction* of the return of Christ.

…That is one of the most common errors that is made. In addition to the false teachers, some of which we talked about a moment ago, even well-meaning lay Christians for many years have pointed to the happenings in the world, or Middle East or other current world events to use as basis for some kind of circumstantial clue that Christ’s return is *predictable*.

But, to have a prediction or even a distracting assumption based perceived signs in current events is not what Scripture calls us to.

Additionally, let me say this:

Fallen men have always had the sin temptation to make things about ourselves—to be self-focused. So in addition to the Bible clarity we will cover in this lesson I also want to point out that we have a tendency to completely forget or omit that this is a big world and there has been a lot of history—much of which was very difficult.

What I mean by this is; in our problems in the here and now we often think, “These circumstances are so bad. Why is God having me suffer like this?”

Buy, this view is so limited. Not only does Scripture command us not to think this way, but consider also these questions; Does not the suffering of Jews under Hitler seem worse than your circumstances?

What about the sufferings of Africans under the Transatlantic slave trade?...certainly those circumstances are worse than yours.

Or think about the global conflict in WWII, it involved most of the world’s nations, including all of the national superpowers and lead to the death of up to 72 million people.

Or think of the sufferings of the Christians in the Apostolic New Testament time period.

Look, the point is, fallen man has tendencies to be sinfully short sided. We think in terms of our circumstances. And this feeds the temptation for people to assume they are in the “end times”. They say, “Look Matt, look at the Middle East. Look at what China is doing, and Russia. Look at the divorce rates and homosexual sin in our country, look at our sinful government. Look at COVID-19. Look at all these bad things, these things must be spoken about as markers in the Bible.”

Well friend, what about all the equal or worse of things that have happened in prior generations? Some of those people fell to this same self-centered temptation to think the end was predictable then too. They were so sure the current events proved it to be the case.

***What I am saying is, we CANNOT do that.***

What we see in this lesson is that God has already told us we will not predict when Jesus will return…and we cannot let self-focus, assumptions, or human confidence temp us to disobey God’s word.

*Christian, our Lord has said no one knows the time and He has called us to be diligent in focused worship of and service for Him*. We CANNOT get caught up in the guessing game, or the sinful anxiety, or whatever else it causes in various people.

* **passages that specifically discuss the return of Christ**

So…..Let’s get into the text and review **passages that specifically discuss the return of Christ**.

Our main passage for this Q/A is portions of Matthew 24:36-51.

This passage is speaking about the bodily return to Jesus. We’ll deal with it in a few parts. First,

**Matthew 24:36**

**36**“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.”

The point of this teaching is very simple: we WILL NOT KNOW when Jesus will return until it happens.

There is no way for us to have a trustworthy prediction about when Jesus will return.

We will see this as the *clear, consistent, definitive* teaching of the New Testament about the timing of Christ’s return—God is clear; we cannot and will not know in advance when it will be.

The direct statement from Jesus in verse 36 is emphasized in verses 37-39.

**Matthew 24:37-39**

**37**For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. **38**For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, **39**and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Jesus is saying, “remember how the flood caught people by surprise, *so will* my bodily return.”

The point Jesus is making using the flood time period call back is that: **things will seem normal**. This is really important. As I have been telling you tonight, contrary to popular belief, there will not be catastrophic events, gnarly signs, nations falling or in tension, and so on **to inform us of His return in advance**. *Some of these things may be happening, (as they have for centuries mind you)Q,* ***but none of them enable us to know*** *when Jesus will return.*

King Jesus says JUST LIKE in the time of the flood, humanity will be going about normal everyday things such as eating and drinking and marrying. The days will seem normal; there will not be any signs to make us aware of it before it happens. Humanity will be Q “unaware” as to the timing of His coming.

Do you see that? It’s really important, because that’s not what many people believe.

* **we are commanded to be faithful servants and wise stewards.**

Now, Let’s read verses 42 through 51 to see why our answer says,

**While we wait for Jesus to return bodily, “we are commanded to be faithful servants and wise stewards.**”

**Matthew 24:42-51**

**Verse 42**Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. **43**But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. **44**Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. **45**“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? **46**Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. **47**Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. **48**But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ **49**and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, **50**the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know **51**and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This section intertwines didactic statements and symbolic language, as Jesus often does. -The didactic (the clear definitive statements) include commands to stay alert, be ready, be diligent in good works, stewardship, and obedience.

-The symbolic language *reinforces* these commands.

The talk about the thief in the night is to teach us that we cannot and will not know when Jesus will return until it happens, so be ready and alert.

The talk about the servants is to teach us to be diligent in good works: stewardship and obedience.

And Jesus ends this train of thought with the threat of impending judgment and punishment for those created by the Creator who are ***not*** *trusting in Him and living for Him*. A sobering reminder of the weight of all of this.

These are the themes or points we are going to see in our other passages tonight. These are the teachings of Scripture. When it comes to the return of Christ, *these* things are what God wants us to know.

The parallel passage to this is in Mark. Let’s read it too:

**Mark 13:32-37**

**32**“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. **33**Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come.

**34**It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. **35**Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— **36**lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. **37**And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

In this, God has Mark mainly highlight the “stay awake” language. This is figurative language. God is not commanding us to literally not sleep. We know God uses different forms of language in Scripture, “stay awake” is not literal. It’s figurative for what we have said so far.

It means *stay alert, be ready, and be diligent in good works: stewardship and obedience.*

As we have been saying in these catechism lessons, it is so important that we have the right hermeneutical tools to understand Scripture rightly, we need to be able, for example, to know when something is literal or not.

Now the other part of these passages that can confuse people is when Jesus says that not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father knows of the time Jesus will return to earth bodily.

We may be confused by this because we know that Jesus is God, and He has all of the divine attributes of God as the second person of the Trinity. As God, He is omniscient and therefore He knows everything, including the time He will return.

But what we see in this passage is an example of the reality of the two natures of Christ that came to be when He took on flesh at the incarnation. We learned in a recent lesson that because of the incarnation Jesus is both FULLY, TRULY God and FULLY, TRULY man. So then, His statement here about Him not knowing the time is Him speaking from *the perspective of His human nature*. *The point He is making is only God knows*—not any man, not even angels.

This once again affirms the main point that man cannot and will not know in advance when Jesus will return. This point couldn’t be any clearer.

Now, see these things in other portions of the New Testament.

In Acts 1, we saw that as Jesus was about to ascended into Heaven, His followers were asking Him about when things will happen, and He gives, once again, the humbling response, verse 7.

**Acts 1:7**

[Jesus] said to them (His followers), “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.”

1 Thessalonians 5 affirms our points AND offers excellent commands and encouragements. Let’s see this.

**1 Thessalonians 5:1-11**

**1**Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. **2**For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. **3**While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. **4**But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. **5**For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. **6**So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. **7**For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. **8**But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. **9**For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, **10**who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. **11**Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

This is the repeated exhortation to followers of Christ in the New Testament.

We see the same things we saw in Christ’s teaching.

For example, note the part that says, “While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come.” This doesn’t sound like there will be political shakiness, catastrophic events, or gnarly signs *informing us* of the coming, rather the days will *seem* normal. Just as Christ said.

There is also an edifying comfort woven in this 1 Thessalonians passage. We can really see Paul lovingly leading in this. Paul finishes this portion by calling believers to thrive within Christian community, he says to, “encourage one another and build one another up.”

Spend some time later in personal meditation on this passage. It’s rich.

Now, look at another passage. After warning believers that persecution of Christians will happen from unbelievers and after explaining that God is being patient with this creation so that He can gather all His elect, including ones to yet be born in the time of this writing (like you and me!), Paul says this about the return of Christ:

**2 Peter 3:10**

…the day of the Lord will come like a thief…

See, the same emphasis. Once again, this symbolic language about a thief in the night is to teach us that we cannot and will not know when Jesus will return until it happens.

We hope you are seeing the problem with a person trying to guess at when this would be based on certain perceived signs—political happenings, apparent climate change, economic trends, church happenings, et cetera. God says we will not know when until it happens.

Now in all this you may be thinking, “well, I think there are parts of Scripture that talk about signs of the end times, how does that reconcile with we are seeing in these passages.”

With this clear teaching that we cannot know about Jesus’ return in advance, we know that other passages that seem to talk about signs or indications of *something to happen* mean one of two things. The first would be…

1. If any happenings leading to the return of Christ are present, then we won’t be able to even determine what they are nor if they are really telling of *when* His return will take place.

Said plainly, if real indications do exist, then we won’t even know how to understand them nor be able to predict a time based on them.

Or, second:

1. The passages *indicating signs* are about *other events*—not informing humans or angels of the timing of the bodily return of Christ.

To this point for example, many of the signs spoken of in the Scripture were about the fall of Israel and destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 A.D.

It is either or both of these two things…*or else* Scripture is contradicting itself which it does not and cannot do. Scripture cannot and does not contradict itself. Its author is God, who does not err.

See, when Scripture APPEARS to be in contradiction with itself, the problem lies in the reader and his or her lack of understanding, not God’s inerrant, infallible, truthful, complete word. This is very important that you know that. When Scripture APPEARS to be in contradiction with itself, the problem lies in the reader and his or her lack of understanding, not God’s inerrant, infallible, truthful, complete word.

This points us to the humbling truth that there is a long journey to understand biblical things rightly, especially language about future events.

We need growth and bible study tools to understand what passages mean or why something isn’t a contradiction in God’s holy word. This is very important.

And it’s also logical, frankly. I can’t expect to pick up an advanced psychics book and understand it all rightly if I’ve never been truly taught what I need to know and how to understand it. In this way, reading and understanding complex things in the Bible, is much like any other complex topic. We must be humble, not hasty in this.

But it’s also much more than a logical issue. These complex *biblical* things are *spiritual* things. So, we depend on the awesome work of the Holy Spirit to illuminate the Scriptures to us so that we can and do understand rightly. This is one of His wonderful works for us.

And one way God has ordained He do this is during the teaching and preaching of *faithful* Bible teachers.

So, all that to say, we can’t be quick and careless with the Bible. Everyone here has been seeing that in recent seasons.

Look at the sermons; how much depth and clarity is being preached from the Bible.

Look at these MidWeek lessons; how much clarity and detailed teaching is being taught.

We’re hearing your testimony…These things have helped you make sense of things that hadn’t in the past. The sermons and lessons have helped you understand things that seemed confusing or like outright contradictions in the past. You’re seeing just how vast and awesome God is and His word is. You’re tasting what it’s like to gain clarity on *difficult to understand* things.

So that is what I mean when I say, when Scripture APPEARS to be in contradiction with itself, the problem lies in the reader and his or her lack of understanding, not God’s word.

God’s word doesn’t contradict itself or error. And as taught about the translations of the Bible, this applies to the original manuscripts of the Bible and where it has been translated and copied correctly from the originals.

Let’s see more text from 2 Peter 3 and begin to close with some application.

* **application**

Our answer closes with:

“**we are commanded to be faithful servants and wise stewards. Come, Lord Jesus!**”

**2 Peter 3:11-18**

**11**Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, **12**waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! **13**But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

**14**Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. **15**And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, **16**as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. **17**You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. **18**But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Oh, I love this portion. God was so good to us to inspire Scripture. See the encouragement in there. Some of the things Peter is calling believers to

1. Live “lives of holiness and godliness... be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace”
2. Look forward to the “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells”
3. Worship our great God by “count[ing] the patience of our Lord as salvation”
4. To “take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability”
5. And to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Such great and important encouragements in light of this topic. And once again this is consistent with the other teachings of the New Testament. These are all godly things! Worship God, live with unmovable hope in Jesus, look forward to what is to come, be busy in growing in understanding, and be sanctified!

And let us note what is NOT there!

What are not there are commands to be looking around for events in order to guess at when Jesus will return.

What’s NOT there is to be sucked into speculation about end times things.

What is NOT there is to be giving ear to people trying to claim some inside knowledge or end times code.

It’s very simple; we CANNOT become distracted by those kinds of foolish, unbiblical things.

Not only are these things not there, but Peter speaks directly about those things.

First, he says Scripture can be hard to understand.

For example, he points this out with Paul’s writings, “There are some things in them that are hard to understand,” and what does he say some people do with Scripture? He says, “the ignorant and unstable twist [it] to their own destruction.”

And then he gives believers the wise and loving encouragement I’m trying to exhort us with today, he says, “take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.”

This is what I am telling you; don’t give an iota of attention to those making claims about knowing times and dates about future things. Don’t even read silly things like the Harbinger book or the like. Don’t watch slimy TV evangelists, nor the infomercials asking for end-times ministry donations by the nice-looking guy standing in Israel. These things are all tickling ears for ungodly purposes no matter how innocent or well-intentioned they *seem*. We CANNOT get caught up in the guessing game, or the sinful anxiety, or whatever it causes in various people. That is the complete opposite of what God has intended. Instead, Paul commands believers this way…

**Philippians 4:8**

…whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

We must set our minds on truth, not distractions prompting speculation and falsehood.

And to emphasis the sobering reality of the return of Christ let’s look at,

**Matthew 25:31-34, 46** Jesus said…

**31**“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. **32**Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. **33**And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. **34**Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

**46**And these [on the left; the goats] will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous [on the right; the sheep] into eternal life.”

Christians, we know the weight of these things. Eternal things are at stake. We look ahead as the sheep saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ to the eternal fellowship we will have with our great God, the Good Shepherd.

But for those who are not Jesus’ sheep, they are going away into eternal punishment.
This is as real as it gets. Let us enjoy God, grow within community, and love others unto the glory of God and the good of others.

Jesus is coming back one day.

**Hebrews 9:28** tells us…

[Jesus] will appear a second time, not to deal with sin [meaning not to die on a cross again] but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Christian, our Lord has said no one knows the time. And He has called us to diligent in focused worship of and service for Him.

As we have seen, Scripture is clear in how we handle this.

* Know and trust Jesus as Lord and Savior.
* Know Jesus will return bodily.
* Know God has a perfect and wise plan for this.
* Stay diligent in the commands from God.
* Do not be anxious about anything.
* Look forward with anticipation and excitement to the return of Jesus.

Take these points of clarity and live in them. If you need to confess to others about your failings in these things, do that. And then take up a new course. Live within these biblical points and be a blessing to others in it.

Oh, how we hope all of us will live within these points for God’s glory, our good, and the good of others.

As we know, we are saved and kept by God, not anything we do. But a true Christian will grow and will repent from sin, and wants to be diligent working for King Jesus. By God’s grace alone we are redeemed and kept saved, and by God’s alone grace we are also sanctified. In and by His grace; work out your salvation, prove your calling and election to be sure, have hope. Be Christian.

Believer, let us be busy in good works and eagerly awaiting our King. He is coming. Take heart, He is coming! Our hope rests in the great Redeemer, who is the one true God, who does not lie. He is coming, and the fellowship we’ll experience with Him, we can’t even imagine.

Let’s pray.