

invoking “I am” as though he were God (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:4)¹⁶⁶—there is actually some academic debate over the ancient figure of Simon Magus, who tried to purchase the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:5-24), and whether he actually invoked himself to be the “I am.”¹⁶⁷

Not all uses of *egō eimi* or “I am” in the source text of the Apostolic Scriptures imply that an entity is God, or even that an entity is supernatural. This is why it is important that the surrounding details be evaluated, of what an entity speaking or identifying with “I am” involve.

Mark 13:32; Matthew 24:36

“Why Does the Son Not Know the Time of His Return?”

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The statement made by Yeshua the Messiah, in His Olivet Discourse about the time of His return, has generated no small discussion about His nature: “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Matthew 24:36, NIV). That this statement does feature in any analysis as to whether or not Yeshua is the eternal, uncreated Son of God or a created supernatural agent sent by God, is obvious, given the conclusions of those who hold to a low Christology. Commenting on Mark 13:32, one proponent of a low Christology forthrightly concludes, “This statement of Jesus that the Son of God does not know the time of the Parousia rules out any dogma about Jesus being God Himself.”¹⁶⁸ For Matthew 24:36, this same person just states, “Proving beyond all argument that the Son of God cannot be GOD.”¹⁶⁹ The logic offered is that if God is an omnipotent being knowing all things, and that if Yeshua says in Mark 13:32 and Matthew 24:36 that the Son does not know the time of the Second Coming, thus Yeshua cannot be God.

Proponents of a high Christology would first counter such logic, by interjecting the reminder that there are claims made in the Apostolic Writings or New Testament, of Yeshua of Nazareth, which would be considered blasphemy to the God of Israel if Yeshua is not, in fact, integrated into the Divine Identity. Secondly, since the early centuries of emerging Christianity, it has not gone unnoticed that passages such as Mark 13:32 and Matthew 24:36 do need to be reckoned with. An evangelical Christian voice such as Carson, who doubtlessly holds to a high Christology of Yeshua being God, critically observes for Matthew 24:36,

“Jesus’ self-confessed ignorance on this point has generated not a little debate. In fact, it is part of the NT pattern of his humiliation and incarnation (e.g., 20:23; Luke 2:52; Acts 1:7; Phil 2:7). John’s Gospel, the one of the four Gospels most clearly insisting on Jesus’ deity, also insists with equal vigor on Jesus’ dependence on and obedience to his Father—a dependence reaching even to his knowledge of the divine. How NT insistence on Jesus’ deity is to be combined with NT insistence on his ignorance and dependence is a matter of profound importance to the

¹⁶⁶ “[W]ho opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

¹⁶⁷ Cf. D.E. Aune, “Simon Magus,” in *ISBE*, 4:516-517.

¹⁶⁸ Anthony F. Buzzard, trans., *The One God, the Father, One Man Messiah Translation* (Atlanta: Restoration Fellowship, 2014), 149.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 99.

The Nature of Yeshua in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts

church; and attempts to jettison one truth for the sake of preserving the other must be avoided.”¹⁷⁰

Frequently, Yeshua’s statement in Mark 13:32 and Matthew 24:36 about Him not knowing the time of His return, is connected to approaches which recognize the legitimate humanity of the Messiah. In the *Carmen Christi* hymn, it is detailed how Yeshua “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness” (Philippians 2:7, NRSV), and as such it is often deduced that some limitations in terms of Yeshua’s having “existed in the form of God” (Philippians 2:6) were voluntarily taken on in His human Incarnation. In their book *Putting Jesus in His Place*, which forthrightly affirms a high Christology, Bowman and Komoszewski catalogue some of the approaches witnessed in theology which have tried to explain Yeshua not knowing the time of His future return in the Olivet Discourse:

“Christians who affirm the deity of Christ take different approaches to resolving this paradox. Some Christians suggest that Christ gave up omniscience and other infinite attributes of deity in order to become a human being. For example, Kris Udd, in an article on Mark 13:32, suggests that omniscience is a normal, but not an essential, attribute of God. Thus, during his earthly life the Son could have ceased to be omniscient without ceasing to be God. The principal difficulty with this explanation is that it seems to be incompatible with the immutability of God. Furthermore, if Christ could not be omniscient and also be human, then it would seem that, on this view, Christ is *still* not omniscient, since according to the New Testament the risen Christ is human (Luke 24:39; Acts 17:31; 1 Cor. 15:47; 1 Tim. 2:5).

“A second approach is to attribute Jesus’ lack of knowledge strictly to his human nature alone. Jesus is simultaneously omniscient with respect to his divine nature and not omniscient with respect to his human nature. When he says that ‘the Son’ does not know, he uses this divine title merely as a self-designation, and not to mean that what he says applies to himself in his divine nature. This is a possible explanation, but it can be charged with implying that natures know or do not know, whereas knowing and not knowing are properties of persons, not natures. To put it more simply, Jesus did not say, ‘My human nature does not know,’ but rather said that *he* did not know.

“A third approach agrees that distinguishing the two natures is a key to resolving the paradox but suggests a different way of framing the resolution. According to this approach, the divine Son of God knew everything, yet chose in his earthly life not to have that knowledge as part of his conscious, human awareness in regards to such matters as the timing of his future return. Some theologians put it this way: the Son had the knowledge available to him by virtue of his divine nature but chose not to *use* that knowledge in his human life. This explanation allows Christ to know what is in people’s hearts, to know that he will die and then rise from the dead on the third day, and the life, while not knowing things he did not need to know to accomplish his mission. Richard Swinburne, a Christian philosopher, explains it this way: ‘God in becoming incarnate, will not have limited his powers, but he will have taken on a way of operating which is limited and feels limited.’

“The chief difficulty with this approach is that we do not really understand what it would be like to be omniscient and choose to experience a lack of knowledge. Then again, we are hardly likely to understand what it would be like to be God incarnate in the first place.

“However we resolve the difficulty of his lack of knowledge in certain matters during his earthly life, Jesus has no deficiency of knowledge now. The limitations on his knowledge were aspects of his self-imposed act of humbling himself to share in our mortal human nature (Phil. 2:6-7; 2 Cor. 8:9). Now, following his resurrection and ascension, in Christ ‘are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge....For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily’ (Col. 2:3, 9).”¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Carson, in *EXP*, 8:508.

¹⁷¹ Bowman and Komoszewski, pp 120-122.

Far be it from the simple conclusion of Yeshua not knowing in His Olivet Discourse the time of the Second Coming, must prove that He is not God—those who hold to a high Christology, tend to emphasize that as a result of the Son’s human Incarnation and willful submission to the Father (cf. Philippians 2:6-7), the Son only exercises in His ministry and teachings the Divine privileges permitted to Him by the Father. In his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, Wilkins usefully directs,

“While he did not in any sense give up his deity, Jesus voluntarily limited the use of those divine characteristics so that he could experience human life in its entirety (cf. Heb. 4:14-16). It was only at the will of his Father that he could use his divine attributes, if it was the Father’s will for him to do so. He acted primarily in his humanity and was empowered by the Spirit....The independent use of his supernatural knowledge was limited to whether it was the Father’s will for him to use it. In his earthly ministry Jesus came to do the will of his Father in heaven. It was not the Father’s will for him to know the date of his return during his time on earth.”¹⁷²

A survey of the Olivet Discourse should reveal enough signs and phenomena which are to take place, and be in motion, up until the time of the Messiah’s return.¹⁷³ Yeshua stating, “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only” (Matthew 24:36, RSV), does not preclude any one of us from accurately predicting or speculating upon the general season of the Messiah’s return. *The exact time, as stated by Yeshua, was not known to Him as He spoke to His Disciples on the Mount of Olives.* Instead, the admonitions that Yeshua issued, per the contents of Matthew 24-25 following, were designed to direct His followers to demonstrate the proper actions and attitudes, so that they would not be swept up by the deception to befall many. If Yeshua was only permitted to speak words given to Him by the Heavenly Father (cf. John 12:49-50)—but yet Yeshua was One who voluntarily took on humanity in His Incarnation, *and* voluntarily submitted Himself to the humiliation of crucifixion (Philippians 2:8; cf. Mark 14:36; Matthew 26:39; Luke 22:42)—then it stands to reason that Yeshua not knowing the time of His future return is to be taken as Him not being permitted to know about it for the purposes of His Earthly ministry.

Matthew 25:31-34

“The Future Kingdom of the Son of Man”

“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”

The statements of Matthew 25:31-34ff contextually require a Bible reader to consider a wider selection of passages, as they concern both the future restoration of Israel’s Kingdom (cf. Acts 1:6), the Millennium, and the Eternal State. Details involving the Messiah’s return and reign on Earth are detected here (Matthew 25:31), with Yeshua notably referring to Himself with the Daniel 7:9-14 title of the “Son of Man” (discussed previously). While Yeshua will reign on Earth from Jerusalem for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4-7), that the gathering of the

¹⁷² Wilkins, 800.

¹⁷³ Consult the author’s book *When Will the Messiah Return?* for a summary of some significant factors involving the Second Coming and the emergence of the Messianic movement.