

Have we been given the knowledge of the times and seasons
of the Lord's return, or not?

Question:

In Acts 1:7, Jesus says it is not for us to know the times or seasons of His coming. Yet in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2, Paul writes that there is no need to write about the times and seasons because we already know about them. How do we reconcile this? Is there a contradiction?

Answer:

Let's carefully examine these passages.

In Acts 1:6-7 (NIV), the disciples ask Jesus,

"Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"
Jesus replies,
"It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority."

This statement establishes that the exact timing of the Messiah's

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return is under God's sovereign control and is not revealed to human beings. It emphasizes divine sovereignty and the mystery surrounding the "times and seasons" (Greek: *kairoi kai kairioi*), indicating God's perfect timing (cf. Ecclesiastes 3:1).

On the other hand, Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2 (NIV),

"Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night."

At first glance, this might appear contradictory, but it is not. The key is to understand what Paul means by "you know very well."

Paul is not saying they (or we) know the exact day or hour of Christ's return—that remains hidden (Mark 13:32). Instead, Paul refers to their understanding of the general character and nature of Christ's coming: that it will be sudden, unexpected, and without warning, like a thief in the night. This metaphor underscores the need for constant spiritual readiness and

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vigilance (cf. Matthew 24:42-44).

This understanding was taught by Jesus Himself in Matthew 24:40-44 (NIV):

"Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.

Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into.

So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

Paul continues in 1 Thessalonians 5:3:

"While people are saying, 'Peace and safety,' destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape."

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This passage highlights the suddenness and unexpected nature of the Lord's return, reinforcing the urgency of being spiritually prepared at all times.

Theologically, this teaches us several important truths:

2. God's sovereignty: The exact timing of Christ's return is known only to the Father (Acts 1:7; Mark 13:32).
3. The necessity of readiness: Believers are called to live expectantly, avoiding complacency (Matthew 24:42; 1 Thessalonians 5:6).
4. The certainty of the return: Although the timing is unknown, the return of Christ is sure and will happen suddenly (Hebrews 9:28).
5. The warning to the unbelieving world: Those not prepared will face sudden judgment (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

In conclusion, there is no contradiction between Jesus' and Paul's words. Instead, they complement each other by teaching us that while we do not know the exact times or dates, we do know the manner of Christ's return and must be spiritually vigilant.

Be blessed.

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