

George O. Wood Speaks Out on Christ's Return

"But concerning that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray. For you do not know when the time will come" (Mark 13:32–33).

On the Mount of Olives facing Jerusalem, Jesus neared the end of His teaching about the future. Less than 72 hours before His crucifixion, He outlined the course of human history.

We now look back and see the remarkable accuracy of Jesus' prophecy about events that would mark all ages leading up to the end time when He would return. Disciples in all centuries would need this information that the road wouldn't be easy nor their burdens light. They would witness the growth of false religions both inside and outside the church, ethnic and social conflict, disasters in nature, and persecution against them from all sides. In spite of all the travail, Jesus knew that His story would be told throughout the whole earth and that those who endured to the end would be saved.

The news about the course of the age may be gloomy, but the future for Jesus' followers is bright. He lets us know that He will return in great power and glory with all the angels and gather His elect from the ends of the earth.

In His statement, Jesus made a clear distinction between the Father and Himself as the Son. He did not explain the nature of that relationship (that is left to other parts of God's Word), but His statements tell us there is a distinction in the midst of their unity within the Triune God. One piece of knowledge is exclusively known by the Father—the day and hour when Christ returns.

Bible scholars may disagree as to whether Jesus, in His

present exaltation at the right hand of the Father, now knows. But clearly, at the time Jesus made these remarks, He didn't know.

My question is this: If even the angels do not know, and Jesus did not know, why do we have so many "date-setters" even today? You can research and discover that there have been numerous false prophecies in the past centuries where authors and so-called prophets set a date for the return of Christ. Date-setters will always be wrong; you can count on it. What we know for sure is what Jesus told us—what the course of the age would be like.

The Lord encourages and warns us to be prepared at any moment. I think of the young woman in the news recently who was at church and in an adjacent room a man was showing off his gun. It discharged. The bullet pierced the wall and the woman. She did not know the hour or the day.

It is so with us. None of us know our own time—either by death or by Christ's return. You do not know the time when He will come for you.

Jesus' concern is that we stay awake. The temptation is to be hypnotized by the cadence of everyday routine so that we forget He is always at the door. You must therefore be on guard and alert in all moments—when you are tempted to sin, to despair, to think that you have all the time in the world to correct what you have done or left is indeed the day of salvation. Today, you might go home!

George O. Wood is general superintendent of the Assemblies of God. This article is excerpted from Dr. Wood's forthcoming book, *Fearless: How Jesus Changes Everything*, available in September from Vital Resources.

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