

I was a Trinitarian Christian for twenty years, from ages 18 to 37. Like most Christians, that's what my church taught me, and I never questioned it. Then, one day I was reading Jesus' Olivet Discourse, which I knew quite well, and it caused me to become troubled about my belief in the doctrine of the Trinity, but more particularly its teaching that Jesus is God. It was because Jesus said in this discourse concerning the time of his return, "But about that day and/or hour no one knows, neither the angels of/in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Matthew 24.36/Mark 13.32 NRSV).

The Catholic Church had decided officially in 325 that Jesus is "very God of very God," meaning that he is fully God. And according to orthodox Christian theology, which I believed, God is omniscient, knowing everything including the future, so that in order for Jesus to be God he must have known the time of his yet future return. But I now thought that Jesus saying that the Father knows that time but Jesus himself does not know it at least suggests that Jesus cannot be as fully God as the Father is.

I had also been taught "the hypostatic union." The Catholic Church officially decided on it in 451. It means that Jesus possessed both a fully divine nature and a fully human nature. Most traditionalists applied it to the New Testament gospels like a grid. They therefore interpreted whatever Jesus said or did according to one of his supposed two natures, thus either his divine nature or his human nature.

So, I was taught that Jesus said this about his return from the perspective of his human nature. That is, he didn't know in his human nature when he would return, but he did know it in his divine nature; otherwise, he couldn't be fully God. For the first time in my life, I began to question this teaching. Why? I concluded that Jesus proclaiming that he didn't know something when he really did know it made him look like a liar. Plus, I thought that any human being having two natures seems sort of schizophrenic, especially if one of those natures knew something that the other nature didn't know, but more so if these two natures had corresponding wills that could oppose each other, such as in Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane just before his arrest. (I had also been taught kenosis theories as an alternative explanation about how Jesus could say that and still be God, but that gets complicated, and you'll have to get my book to see what I now say about that.)

So, this consternation about Jesus' identity arose within me solely because of my lifelong study of the Bible. It resulted in my undertaking a very in-depth quest for the real Jesus of history. To date, I estimate that I have read about a thousand volumes on Jesus' identity.



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