

# CHAPTER 14 – THE IDEA OF IMMINENCE

Imminence is the Dispensational belief of an “any moment” second coming of Christ or of the rapture. Imminence means “impending” or “ready to take place at any moment”. It is taken to mean that no prophesied event must take place before the rapture of the Church.

Walvoord says, “By common consent imminence means that so far as we know \_\_\_\_\_ will *necessarily* precede<sup>1</sup> the coming of Christ” (Walvoord 1976, 70). Is such a doctrine of Christ’s coming scriptural? It is not! The word *imminence* has no scriptural warrant or \_\_\_\_\_.

First, let it be said that it is not \_\_\_\_\_ to quote clichés that are unbiblical. To repeat the phrase “Jesus could come at any moment” \_\_\_\_\_.

To say the Bible teaches this is true is to fabricate that which the

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<sup>1</sup> come before.

Bible does not say or teach. From the first century of the reign of our Lord (Anno Domini, A.D.), the blessed hope of believers has been \_\_\_\_\_ coupled with \_\_\_\_\_ as we know it. Of late, especially since \_\_\_\_\_, the “hope of Christ’s return” has been stolen from that context and its venue moved to a “\_\_\_\_\_” that could occur at any moment as the hope of “the Church.”

J. Dwight Pentecost, quoting Henry C. Thiessen on the subject of imminency, states, “The Lord had taught them (His disciples) to expect his return \_\_\_\_\_, and so they looked for him to come in their day.” (Pentecost 1978, 203). Where in Scripture did Jesus teach His disciples to look for Him to \_\_\_\_\_? Where in Scripture did His disciples teach that Christ’s return would happen immediately? If they did so, they have missed it by two thousand years. What would this do

to the veracity<sup>2</sup> of Christ and to the truth of the divine inspiration of Scripture? Since divine inspiration cannot err, it is to falsify God's Word to say that it teaches the doctrine of imminence. Is not adding to Scripture putting oneself on equal par with God Himself?

As Christians, we are called to believe that biblical truth backed up by the preponderance of Scripture \_\_\_\_\_ of every doctrine we espouse. What does the Bible teach about the subject of imminence as to Christ's second coming? The Scripture alone must be our guide without supposition. The Bible does not teach that the Early Church—that is, Christ or His apostles—wrote about, believed, or taught imminence or an immediate return of Christ in their day.

## JESUS NEVER TAUGHT IMMINENCE

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus taught that before He could or would return, the gospel (and obedience to it) was to be preached

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<sup>2</sup> veracity n: unwillingness to tell lies.

and taught “\_\_\_\_\_.” Based on that alone, it would not be true to say that Jesus taught the doctrine of imminence.

In Matthew 25:14-29, the Parable of the Talents, why did Jesus talk about a man (Himself) going into a far country and then not returning until “\_\_\_\_\_”? What was a “long time” in the mind of Jesus? Could it be “any moment” if it is “\_\_\_\_\_””? Furthermore, in John 21:18-23, Jesus did not teach that an immediate return from heaven would occur, because He told Peter he (Peter) would die first. So how could Peter have taught and looked for the return of Jesus even in his lifetime? Clearly, \_\_\_\_\_.

T. Myron Webb states, “It is quite evident from the study of Scriptures that the early church was impressed by the possibility of our Lord’s return at any moment” (Webb 1932, 8). However, Webb does \_\_\_\_\_ to support his position.

If Dispensationalism were true, after receiving Christ's teachings, why would His disciples twist His words to mean an imminent return? It would be preposterous to make such a claim.

We must conclude that neither Jesus nor His inspired writers ever taught the doctrine of imminence. All such interpretation must be brought to light by the direct teachings of Christ, or we have a Bible that is self-contradictory. In the world in which we live, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ for the Lord's quick return. That does not mean that God is going to change His mind according to our wishes.

Our test of any Bible doctrine is not how we may feel about it, but what the Scripture says on the subject.

### THE APOSTLES DID NOT TEACH IMMINENCE

Jesus told Peter he would die before the end would come.

Therefore, Peter could not have (nor did he) teach an immediate coming of Christ (John 21:18-19; 2 Pet. 1:13-14). In John 16:2,

Jesus told the apostles they \_\_\_\_\_ before the end would come. As Dispensationalism teaches they did, how could they have taught that the Lord would come during their lifetime?

In Acts 3:19-21, Peter, anointed by the Holy Spirit, said that Jesus could not come back but would have to remain in heaven until \_\_\_\_\_. “Whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (v. 21).

Paul taught in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8 that the coming of Christ (the *parousia*, or rapture), which is the believers gathering together to Him, could not take place until all the events mentioned in verses 3-4 had taken place. Paul included himself in this gathering. He further states that at the time of this coming, Christ would \_\_\_\_\_ with the breath of His mouth. Paul thus never taught a two-stage coming of Christ

that included a secret rapture prior to a tribulation. The Church will be here until all these events have taken place! Paul also knew he would die before the Lord returned (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

The phrase, “the coming of the Lord is at hand” in the Greek is η παρουσία του κυριου ηγγικεν (*e parousia tou kuriou eggiken*), of which a direct translation is “the presence of the Lord is near.” The word *parousia* literally means “presence.” Other scriptures in which *parousia* is used in the same manner include:

- Philippians 2:12: Paul uses *parousia* to describe his own presence among the members of the Philippian church.
- First Corinthians 16:17: *parousia* is used of the presence of Stephanas.
- Second Corinthians 7:6-7: *parousia* is used of the presence of Titus.

All the other references to *parousia* in Scripture are those that

encourage the believer to be ready at all times because Jesus' coming is \_\_\_\_\_. One day He is coming, and \_\_\_\_\_ stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Rom. 14:7-13; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Some say Christ did teach imminence in the book of Revelation. Oh? If He did, He must have changed His mind since the time of the gospels. Is it possible that happened? If so, we have a Bible that is self-contradictory and a Savior that taught two opposite opinions on the same subject. The scripture that is used to support this position is Revelation 22:20: "\_\_\_\_\_."

According to *The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament*, the Greek word used in this verse is ταχύς (*taxos*) with its cognates, which in all the following references means "\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_." Luke 18:8 may be used as the lead in for all the rest, which says, "I tell you that he will avenge

them speedily [*taxos*].” Thayer adds “speedily without delay.”

The rest of the references in which *taxos* is used include Acts 12:7; 22:18; 25:4; Rom. 16:20; Matt. 5:25; 28:7-8; Mark 9:39; 16:8; John 11:29; Rev. 2:16; 3:11; 11:14; Rev. 22:6-7, 12, 20; Jas. 1:19. As to these references, the implication is that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. In other words, Christ’s coming will be as sudden as lightning: “As the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day” (Luke 17:24). It also could be said it will be “in a moment in the twinkling of an eye”—that fast! In no way could the word be taken to mean His coming was imminent.

After these scriptural injunctions, for one to continue to believe in the doctrine of imminence, he or she would have to refute the truths of the scriptures presented and then prove that they mean

just the opposite of the way in which they are here used.

Imminence therefore is an \_\_\_\_\_ and

\_\_\_\_\_, because it makes for a faulty

Bible and destroys the divine inspiration of the scriptures. The

Bible cannot teach two views that are the opposite of each other

and both be held as scripturally tenable.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> tenable adj: based on sound reasoning or evidence; "well-founded suspicions" [synonym: well-founded]