

## **IMMINANCY (JESUS IS COMING SOON!).**

A vital (but neglected) doctrine of the Christian faith (taught by Jesus and affirmed by the apostles) is that the Return of Jesus Christ is **imminent** - that is: **He could come AT ANY TIME.**

The Church is told to look for and live in the light of His imminent Coming to translate us into His Presence. This means He could come. Therefore we are to live in constant expectancy, readiness and hope, watching, waiting and looking for His arrival. This **‘blessed hope’** is designed to motivate us to holy living and evangelism (Titus 2:11-14; 1Thessalonians 3:12,13, 5:23; 1John 3:1-3, Colossians 3:1-4, 1Corinthians 1:7-8, 15:51-58; Jude 24).

**“Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another and so much the more as you see the Day approaching”** (Hebrews 10:24,25).

Our zeal for the Lord should be increasing as we see the Day getting closer. This motivates us to be faithful in Church attendance and service. We should run our Christian race every day conscious that at any time soon, we will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. The focus for our lives should be that any moment, we will be raptured and stand before the Lord to give an account for our life. Believing in the 'any-moment' Rapture motivates us to get ready and to make the maximum use of the short time remaining. It is not a teaching of defeatism and escapism, but creates urgency and zeal to be found holy and busy for the Lord when He returns.

### **The Bible’s teaching on final events is clear:**

1. Jesus will return in power and glory with His saints (Revelation 19) to judge the evil world, especially satan and the antichrist, and set up His Kingdom on earth for 1000 years (Revelation 20). This happens at the end of the Tribulation , a 7-year period of time described in great detail in Revelation 6-19, when evil comes to its

fullness under satan and antichrist, in which God starts to pour out His judgements (thus it is also called ‘the Day of the Lord’).

2. Before Jesus comes *with us*, He comes *for us* to take us unto Himself (John 14:2,3; 1Thessalonians 4:13-17). This is the Rapture - the Coming of Christ for the Church in which He instantly ‘catches up’ all living believers to meet Him in the air and translates them into immortal bodies without experiencing death. At the same time He raises the dead in Christ and we are all gathered together to Him in the air.

3. Some say the Rapture is at the End of the Tribulation, some say it is at the Middle and some say it is before (the Pre-Tribulation Rapture). If we can establish the Imminency of the Lord’s Return for us, then the only possibility is the Pre-Tribulation Rapture If the Rapture was at the end or at mid-Tribulation, then it could not be imminent for it would be at least a few years away, and there would be many signs that must come first. Believing this makes us look for signs rather than the Coming of Christ, which is unbiblical. Someone in the Tribulation could predict exactly when the end will come.

### 1. His Coming is ‘at hand’:

**“The Lord is at hand”** (Philippians 4:4).

**“But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers”** (1Peter 4:7).

**“these things must shortly take place. Behold, I am coming quickly!.... for the time is at hand** (Revelation 22:6,7).

**“Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord...Establish your hearts, for the Coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!”** (James 5:7-9).

**“Do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation (resurrection) is nearer than when we first believed. The night** (the time of being on earth absent from

the personal Presence of ‘the Sun of Righteousness’) **is far spent, the day** (when we will stand in the glory of His Presence) **is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light”** (Romans 13:11).

**2. He is coming quickly** (soon). So, don’t expect any delay.

**"For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry (delay)"** (Hebrews 10:37).

**"It is the last hour”** (1John 2:18).

**"They were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come”** (1Corinthians 10:11).

**"Behold I am coming quickly! (to judge and reward). Hold fast what you have, that no one take your crown”** (Revelation 3:11).

It **‘must shortly take place...for the time is near’** (Revelation 1:1,3)

Jesus' last promise was: **"Behold, I am coming quickly!...Behold, I am coming quickly and My reward is with Me to give every one according to his work...Surely I am coming quickly (soon)"**

(Revelation 22:7,12,20). Jesus is coming soon and we need to be ready for His Return for us, saying to Him in response:

**"Amen. Even so, come (now), Lord Jesus!"** (Revelation 22:7).

**3. No one can know when He will come:** **"But of that day and hour** (of Christ’s Coming to rapture the Church which will also start the Tribulation on earth) **no one knows not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only”** (Matthew 24:36).

**"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming”** (v42). No one knows the time of the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation so we cannot set dates with any certainty.

**"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect”** (v44, also Luke 12:40).

**"Take heed (be alert) watch and pray for you know not what hour your Lord shall come”** (Mark 13:33).

**"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming”** (Matthew 25:13).

See also Revelation 3:3. We do not know the day or hour of the Rapture and so we have to always stay ready.

**4. There will be no specific warning signs:**

**“As the days of Noah were, so also will the Coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the Flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark and did not know until the Flood (Tribulation) came and took them all away, so also will the Coming of the Son of Man be (just before the Rapture happens conditions on earth will be normal, with people not expecting anything special -unlike the time just before Armageddon). Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken (in the Rapture) and the other left (to go through the Tribulation). Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left” (Matthew 24:37-41).**

So, there will be no special signs preceding the Rapture, as there will be before the Second Coming. The Rapture is imminent (it could happen at any time). God has done this so that we get ready and stay ready always. As Noah was removed before the judgments of the Flood suddenly fell on the world, so the Church will be removed before the judgments of the Tribulation suddenly fall upon the whole earth. The sign for the world that the Flood was about to fall was the disappearance of Noah. Likewise the sign for the world that the Tribulation is about to start will be the disappearance of the Church. The Church will be TAKEN by Jesus to be with Him.

**5. God intended all believers to expect Jesus to come in their**

**lifetime.** Even the first Christians lived this way (John 21:20-23). This is why Paul included himself in the ‘we’ who would be changed, rather than as one of the dead in Christ, who would be raised at the time of the Rapture: **“The dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together**

**with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air**”(1Thess 4:16,17)

**“Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (it will happen suddenly, at any time), **at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed**” (1Corinthians 15:51,52). Paul was not wrong to expect this, for in obedience to God he lived in the expectation of the imminent Rapture. This was God’s will for Paul as well as for us. In this way, Jesus has the Church always watching for Him, so as not to be taken by surprise by the Rapture (Rev 3:3).**

### **6. Jesus said He would come as 'a Thief in the night'**

- in a sudden, surprising, unannounced arrival, with no warning signs that must come first.

**“Behold, I am coming as a Thief. Blessed is he who watches”** (Revelation 16:15).

**“The Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night”** (2Peter 3:10, 1Thessalonians 5:1).

**"Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a Thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you" (Rev 3:3).**

Whenever this phrase is used, it refers to the Rapture. It shows it is imminent, it can happen anytime soon."**Know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the Thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect**” (Matthew 24:43,44; Luke 12:39,40).

It will be unexpected, catching the world off guard and unprepared. It will be secret - He will come, do His work and go away unseen by the unbeliever (the master of his house). The world in darkness won't see Him. All they will know is that something has been taken from them - millions of Christians! To the world, the Rapture will look like the coming of a Thief in the night, taking away the

precious things (believers) from the house (the earth). But He is not really a Thief. He is only coming to claim His own (purchased us with His Blood), to snatch us away from the earth and take us back to where we belong.

**7. We are to WATCH for His Coming** - not for the Tribulation or the antichrist! (Luke 12:37-40, 21:34-36, Mark 13:33-37, Revelation 3:3, 16:15, 1Thessalonians 5:6).

**We are to WAIT expectantly for His Coming and the Rapture** (Hebrews 9:28, 1Thessalonians 1:9,10, Philippians 3:20,21, 1Corinthians 1:7,8, Luke 12:35,36, Romans 8:23, James 5:7).

**We LOOK for His Coming, our Blessed Hope** (Titus 2:13, Luke 12:46, 21:28, Matthew 24:50, 2Peter 3:12, Jude 21).

Summary so far: The Return of Jesus Christ is **imminent** - that is: He could come **AT ANY TIME for His Church**. Therefore we are to live in constant readiness and hope, watching, waiting and looking for His Coming, rather than looking for and expecting certain things to happen first, whether in Israel, the nations or the Church (some believe the Church has to be spotless and glorious before the Rapture!). This 'blessed hope' is designed to motivate us to holy living and evangelism. The only belief concerning the timing of the Rapture that is consistent with the imminency of the Lord's Return is the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. There are many scriptures that show the Church is to be looking for His imminent arrival:

**"The Lord is at hand"** (Philippians 4:4).

**"The end of all things is at hand"** (1Peter 4:7).

**"The Coming of the Lord is at hand. The Judge is standing at the door!"** (James 5:7-9).

**"The Day (when we will stand in the glory of His Presence) is at hand"** (Romans 13:11).

**"For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry"** (Hebrews 10:37).

**“It is the last Hour”** (1John 2:18).

**“the ends of the ages have come (upon us)”** (1Corinthians 10:11).

It **‘must shortly take place...for the Time is near’** (Revelation 1:1,3)

**“I am coming quickly!”** (Revelation 3:11).

**“It must shortly take place. I am coming quickly, the Time is at hand, I am coming quickly, surely I am coming soon”** (Revelation 22:6,7,12,20).

**“But of that Day and hour no one knows”** (Matthew 24:36)

**“Watch therefore, for you do not know what Hour your Lord is coming”** (v42). **“Therefore be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an Hour you do not expect”** (v44, see also Luke 12:40).

**“Take heed (be alert) watch and pray for you know not what Hour your Lord shall come”** (Mark 13:33).

**“Watch therefore, for you know neither the Day nor the Hour in which the Son of Man is coming”** (Matthew 25:13).

There will be no specific warning signs (Matthew 24:37-41).

Jesus said He would come as 'a Thief in the Night' - a sudden, surprising, unannounced arrival with no warning signs that must come first (Revelation 3:3,16:15, 2Peter 3:10, Matthew 24:43,44; Luke 12:39,40).

1Thessalonians 5:1-11 is a key passage on this. Notice that the context (4:13-18) is the Rapture. Note the contrast between ‘they’ (the world) and ‘you’ (believers) in these verses:

**“Concerning the times and seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.**

**For you know perfectly that the Day of the Lord (the Tribulation) so comes (begins) as a Thief in the Night”** (v1,2).

Thus the Rapture initiates the Tribulation. From the world’s viewpoint the Coming of the Lord in the Rapture is like a Thief in the Night with the Lord secretly and suddenly taking away the believers. The world in darkness will be taken by surprise, by the sudden

disappearance of many people and it will be plunged into the Tribulation: “**For when they (the world) say, “Peace and safety!”** (there will be no special warnings, for conditions on earth will be normal) **then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labour pains on a pregnant woman** (the start of the Tribulation, c.f. Matthew 24:8). **And they (the world) shall not escape** (the Tribulation)” (v3). In the Rapture Jesus only comes to the air to remove the Church. He does not yet appear on earth. So, for those remaining on earth, the Night will continue and get darker.

But true Christians (who are in the light, alert and ready) have a different destiny: “**But you, brethren, are not in darkness...**” Although the present time on earth is described as ‘night’ - for we don’t yet see Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, and it will only be Day on earth when He returns and reigns for 1,000 years- yet believers are not in darkness, because our lamps (spirits) burn with the oil of the Spirit (spiritually we are in the light).

“**..so that this Day (the Rapture and Tribulation) **should overtake you as a Thief. You are all sons of Light and sons of the Day. We are not of the Night nor of Darkness”** (v4,5).**

We do not belong to the night (dark), but the day (light), so when the Light (Jesus) comes we will rise to be with Him. We do not belong to the Night of the dark Tribulation, but to the Light of Christ’s glorious Presence. Paul contrasts the destinies of believers and unbelievers when He returns. It will be a different experience for us: not be as a Thief in the Night, but as a Rapture in the Light. Thus for us it does not get darker but brighter. We step into the full Light of Day.

For us, it is the time for our salvation that we have been waiting for and expecting. So, we must make sure we are alert and ready for the Lord’s Coming: “**Therefore let us not sleep, as others, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those**

**who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the Day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation (the Rapture)” (v6-8).**

Rather than fearing the Tribulation, we wear ‘**a helmet**’ over our thoughts: ‘**the hope of salvation**’. Our expectation is not the Tribulation, but we wait for the salvation that comes in the Rapture. This **future salvation is our deliverance from the wrath of the Tribulation and the transformation of our body** at the Rapture: “**For God did not appoint us to wrath** (this can only mean that He will deliver us from the Tribulation), **but to obtain salvation** (deliverance from wrath and the salvation of the body in the Rapture) **through** (the Coming of) **our Lord Jesus Christ.**” He now confirms this 'salvation' is the Rapture: “**who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing**” (v9-11). The teaching of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is a comfort for believers (v11, c.f. 1Thessalonians 4:18). God will deliver believers from Tribulation wrath.

Luke 12:35,36: “**Let your waist be girded** (with the belt of truth, the word of God) **and your lamps** (spirits) **burning** (with the oil of the Spirit)... **be like men who WAIT for their master, for His Return from the Wedding, that when He comes and knocks they may open to Him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Master, when He comes, will find WATCHING.**”

**1. We are to WATCH for His Coming** - not for the Tribulation or the antichrist! : “**But take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and cares of this life, so that Day (the Tribulation) come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth** (don't be like those in Noah's time who ignored the warning and got destroyed in the flood). **WATCH therefore** (get

ready, be alert that Jesus is coming soon and live accordingly) **and PRAY always** (don't be spiritually asleep and prayerless) **that you may be counted worthy** (ready) **to escape** (in the Rapture) **all these things that shall come to pass** (in the Tribulation), **and to stand** (resurrected) **before the Son of man**" (in Heaven - by means of the Rapture) - Luke 21:34-36. WATCH and discern the signs of the times (know that we live in the last generation). This will keep us spiritually alert and praying, staying ready for the Lord's Return.

**"Take heed** (be alert) **WATCH and pray for you know not what hour your Lord shall come**" (Mark 13:33). See also Luke 12:37-40, Mark 13:33-37, Revelation 3:3, 16:15, 1Thessalonians 5:6.

**2. We are to WAIT expectantly for His Coming and the Rapture** (not for the antichrist). So we must be always ready for at any moment we might be caught up to meet the Lord in the air!

We are to eagerly wait and look for His Appearing at the Rapture:

**"Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly WAIT for Him, He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation"** (Hebrews 9:28).

Our expectation is not the wrath of the Tribulation but Christ:

**"How you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to WAIT for His Son (to come) from heaven, whom He raised from the dead (we await the Rapture), even Jesus who delivers (not delivered) us from the wrath (Tribulation) to come (by a resurrection)"** (1Thessalonians 1:9,10).

**"Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly WAIT for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ (the Rapture) who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body"** (Philippians 3:20,21).

**"Eagerly WAITING for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ"** (1Corinthians 1:7,8).

See also Luke 12:35,36, Romans 8:23, James 5:7.

### **3. We are to LOOK for His Coming, our Blessed Hope.**

**“We should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, LOOKING for the Blessed Hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).**

To the world the Rapture will be like a Thief in the Night, removing the Church, but to us the Rapture is the coming and appearing of our Bridegroom for His Bride (our Blessed Hope), taking us into the glorious light of His Presence forever. So we are to live eagerly awaiting and preparing for His Return. We have the blessed hope of the Coming of Christ and the Rapture, rather than the blasted hope of the Tribulation and the antichrist. The Church is to look for the Lord returning as her Bridegroom to take her home. So the Church is told to look for the Lord Himself, not for any signs that must come first (1Thessalonians 5:6-10). If the Church was going through the Tribulation, we would not have a blessed hope of Christ, but would be looking in fear for the anti-Christ. Thus Christians are to look for their 'Blessed Hope' - the appearing of Jesus in the Rapture. We are to look for the Rapture not the Tribulation.

See also Luke 12:46, 21:28, Matthew 24:50, 2Peter 3:12, Jude 21.

**Our focus (our WATCHING, WAITING and LOOKING) is to be the Coming of the Christ, not of the antichrist!**