

# **IMMINENCE**

## ***A Misunderstood Doctrine***

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**he idea of the imminent return of Christ — or the “Doctrine of Imminency” — is often used to imply that the Rapture happens seven years *prior* to the Second Coming of our Lord. While I *do* believe that Christ’s return *has been imminent* in every generation of Christians since the time of Paul, I do *not* believe it has anything to do with the *timing of the Rapture*. In this study, I will explain why I hold this conviction.

The question of *when* the Rapture occurs is not an unimportant one (I use the double negative for emphasis). If I were Satan and loved the spilling of the blood of the Saints, then one of the *greatest lies* that I could propagate might be that *no one needs to be concerned about preparing* for the End Times because “we won’t be here.”

The unprepared will *likely be martyred*, and this is why Jesus said to the elect (notice he did not say it to the Jews, specifically, but to “his elect”), “*And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.*” (Mark 13:16)

Though this is important to me as a Pastor, because I am *responsible* for the well-being of my “flock,” it is *not*, with me, a point of breaking of fellowship with those who disagree — and I mean that sincerely, even with as passionate as I am about my eschatological convictions!

At the same time, however, if I teach that *we need to be prepared* because we will still be here, and I am wrong and we *are* Raptured *before* the Tribulation, then I will be the first to shout, “*Hallelujah, I was wrong!*”

However, *if I am right*, and other Pastors tell *their* flock that they won’t be here, possibly resulting in many of them being martyred because they were incorrect, they may well stand before the judgment seat of Christ for that inaccuracy which might cost the lives of some of that Pastor’s flock, which of course are actually Jesus’ sheep.

I have little to lose, yet at the same time I *esteem truth* more than anything else at this point in my life; therefore, I do not wish

to be wrong, and will do everything I can to find the truth, using the [10 Rules of Bible Interpretation](#) strictly.

### A MISUNDERSTANDING OF “IMMINENCE”

**I**f by “imminence” we mean that Paul felt the Rapture and Second Coming could occur *in his lifetime* — and in fact, that this was *the great “hope”* of every generation of Christians since that time — then I certainly agree. They all felt that Jesus *could* return in their lifetime! I remember my grandmother saying, “*I’ll be here at the Rapture.*” I remember Bro. Lester Roloff saying, “*I am not going on an airplane ride, I’m going on the plain air ride!*” This is the great hope of every Christian in every generation, without a doubt.

However, if what we mean by it is that this *requires* the Rapture to happen seven years *prior* to the Second Coming, then I would *disagree heartily and emphatically*, and I believe you will see why as you happily skip through this light bit of joyful reading.

I do agree that imminence would be the kind of “proof” that pre-tribulation Rapture proponents would use. This is because they have *no specific scripture* which speaks of a *separation of years* between the Rapture and Second Coming, as if there were *two* comings of Christ — one “secret and invisible” to the world, and one “not secret.” (In fact, there are many *very clear* scriptures which contradict such a view.)

Since they have no scripture, they have to attempt to “prove their case” by inference. For example, they may use the fact of imminence to infer that the Rapture *must happen* at a different time prior to the actual Coming, because otherwise it could not be imminent due to the signs which must happen *before* the Second Coming. You may hear arguments like, “*There are no signs for the Rapture.*” This in itself is *also false*. In fact, the greatest sign of all must happen *before* the Rapture as we shall see in clear Scripture in both the O.T. and N.T. below — namely, the *first Resurrection* at the *end* of the Church Age.

Some play games with this and attempt to prove the Resurrection happens in “several stages,” but this is a *theological*

*contrivance*, not a Biblical fact, for it is *nowhere* taught or inferred in Scripture.

Logically, if it can be shown that there is a viable case in which the Rapture and Second Coming could be considered “imminent,” even if they occurred at the same time, then this would *eliminate* imminence as a “proof” of a pre-tribulation Rapture.

Therefore, allow me to show how imminence abides just as well with a Second Coming-Rapture scenario as with a Rapture-seven years-Second Coming chronology.

### **THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE 2ND COMING, ACCORDING TO DANIEL, JESUS & PAUL**

**F**irst let’s look at several passages where Jesus Christ Himself gave *His* chronology of the Second Coming and the Rapture, and also, as we look at these, let’s notice several things mentioned by Him that *must* happen *before* the Rapture and Second Coming.

Additionally, we must ask the question, “*If these things must happen first, does this mean that the Second Coming and Rapture cannot also be imminent?*”

Let’s look at Christ’s chronology, and also the things and events that He lists which *absolutely must happen before* the Second Coming, and I believe also before the Rapture.

If our approach here is correct, then the *many things* which must happen apparently *do not prevent* these events from being imminent. In other words, it must be possible for *all* these things to happen in the lifetime of any one person’s generation, no matter when his/her generation occurs (i.e. whether in the 1st Century or right now), and therefore a post-tribulation Rapture *would not negate* the Doctrine of Imminency.

I offer this as proof that this is the case:

So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, *even* at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.  
(Matthew 24:33–34)

Christ Himself said that the person who lives in the generation which *sees the signs* which we will look at below, will still be alive when the *entire prophecy* is fulfilled.

So, in this case, the Second Coming, the Rapture, and *all the signs which precede them*, are *imminent* to any person whether in the 1st Century or the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Whichever century — or decade for that matter — is the one in which the Lord returns, people living in *that* decade will find His coming *imminent*, and any decade in which these events might have happened would have also found these events imminent. Therefore, imminence *cannot* prove when the Rapture or the Second Coming will happen, or prove anything concerning their configuration. This would defy all logic, and in fact would become fallacious, with my understanding of classical logic. If we throw out logic, then nothing can be proven and there can never be agreement. If we use logic, and the [\*10 Rules of Bible Interpretation\*](#), we will *eventually* all agree!

But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains: (Mark 13:14–21)

Let's stop here and look at the passage in Daniel which Jesus refers to in His message:

And after the league *made* with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people. He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do *that* which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: *yea*, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time. (Daniel 11:23–24)

This speaks of the Antichrist and the “*league*” he makes with the nations in order to deceitfully gain the power to rule the world.

And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily *sacrifice*, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate. And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do *exploits*. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, *many* days. (Daniel 11:31–33)

This speaks of a time *after* the “*abomination of desolation*” (the Antichrist offering a pig on the altar of the Jewish temple, which happens 3 ½ years into the tribulation period — *see Dan. 12:11*) and after that we still see “*people that do know their God*” being strong and doing exploits.

So, God’s people are still on the earth midway through the tribulation and beyond. They have some strength, but then many are also killed by the sword, by flame, by captivity, and by spoil for many days.

This does not say or imply these are *only* Jews, but *God’s people*, people of the Abrahamic Covenant, which the book of Galatians, written by the great Apostle Paul — *Apostle to the Gentiles* — says includes the Church, both Jew and Gentile.

And *some* of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make *them* white, *even* to the time of the end: because *it is* yet for a time appointed. (Daniel 11:35)

We see here that part of the purpose of the tribulation period is to *purge the Church*, and *make her white*. The book of Revelation says the same thing; she shall present herself chaste to the groom someday.

My opinion is that this is the *only* way the modern, lukewarm Church could ever *become* chaste; that is, to be *tried* by the tribulation period.

Daniel continues to speak of the reign of the Antichrist:

And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. (Daniel 11:36-38)

Then, in the immediate context of all this, we see after the tribulation has begun, it grows *worse and worse* until it is worse than any other time of trouble that has ever been on the face of the earth:

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation *even* to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. (Daniel 12:1-3)

Here, we see the same time that Jesus says, “*And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened,*” (Matt. 24:22) so apparently the elect are still on the earth.

We see here that at this time God's people are delivered *after* the worst tribulation of all history; God's people are delivered (i.e. *Raptured*, in my opinion) at the same time as the Great Resurrection which Daniel speaks of where "*many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake*" and we also see the separation of the sheep and the goats.

We also see "soul-winning" going on at this same time! This is why some Jews and Gentiles will have heard the gospel and then when they see Jesus coming in the sky, as the lightening from the East to the West, *many will receive Him* as their personal Lord and Savior, having missed the Rapture by a few moments or days, and will go alive into the Kingdom Age where they will serve Him faithfully for 1,000 years. These are the people who *populate* the Kingdom.

At the end of the passage, we find that many are *purified* and *made white* and *tried* (so they are still here at the time of the desolation, and then 3 ½ years go by, and it says they are *still* here and are, in fact, "blessed" if they wait and remain until 45 days after the seven year tribulation period is over).

I believe this is the time when the Judgment Seat of Christ takes place followed immediately by the marriage party of the Lamb.

Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, *there shall be* a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed *is* he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. But go thou thy way till the end *be*: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days. (Daniel 12:10–13)

We cannot leave this passage without pointing out that it is clear when the *first Resurrection* takes place. It happens *after* the time of



trouble, which is the *second* 3 ½ years of the whole seven year period.

The Apostle Paul makes it abundantly clear that the Rapture *cannot* take place *before* this Resurrection. This is the kind of explicit proof that the pre-tribulation believers lack (they only have implicit “proof”).

Take a look at this (with emphasis added):

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, **that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.** For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and **the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air:** and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18)

Paul was comforting some Christians who had been told by false prophets that the Rapture had already occurred. They feared their deceased loved ones had *missed* the Rapture. Paul comforted them with the truth, as he said, in answer to the false claims, that the Lord Himself had said, “*For this we say unto you by the **word of the Lord** (i.e. Jesus had taught this to Paul during his three years in the wilderness), that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord **shall not prevent** them which are asleep.*”

“*Prevent*” comes from the Greek word **phthanō**, which means to be *beforehand*, i.e. *precede*.

So, it says, “*We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not be raised **before** (i.e. **shall not precede**) them which are asleep.*”

This comforted those who had been falsely taught that the Rapture had already happened and their loved ones missed it. Paul proved that Christ taught that they *must* in fact be raised first, *then* the Rapture could happen for those of us who *remained* after the Resurrection!

If this verb were not enough to prove it, Paul says it again for emphasis:

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the **dead in Christ shall rise first**: Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17)

For me personally (and frankly), I cannot see how any believer of the inerrancy of the Word of God could miss that this clearly says (not implies, but *says*) “*The dead in Christ shall rise **first**, **then** (GR **ēpēita** *thereafter*:—after that [afterward], then...) we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds* (i.e. they are *already* in the clouds, and we are *then* caught up together with them) to meet the Lord in the air...”

Is this not the Rapture? If so, when does it *explicitly* happen? No amount of *implicit* argumentation should be allowed to undo this simple, clear language, in my opinion.

So, Paul’s chronology of the Rapture (after the first resurrection, and *at* the Second Coming) agrees with Daniel’s, and we shall see here below that these both agree with Christ’s (as Paul had already said that Christ taught this to *him* in the wilderness training he received directly from Christ).

Now, Christ referred to Daniel, then went on to say that *after* the abomination of desolation which Daniel spoke of midway through the seven years, this will happen:

But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains: And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter *therein*, to take any thing out of his house: And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. For *in* those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days. (Mark 13:14–20)

So, to briefly summarize what we've covered up to this point, Daniel and Paul place the first Resurrection at the *end of the age* (not seven years *prior* to it) and the Rapture *after* the Resurrection — so, *also* at the *end of the age* (not seven years or even 3 ½ years prior to it) — and now, Jesus says that *His* people, who are alive on the earth *after* the 3 ½ years when they see the pig offered on the Jewish altar, need to ***run for the hills***, because the *worst tribulation of all time* is about to happen.

It does say “*them that be in Judaea*,” which makes sense because this is the *center* of the storm; however, we know from other scripture that this is a *world-wide tribulation*, so we can gather that *all* of God's people should *avoid cities* and *head to the hills*. Let's look at a parallel passage out of Matthew:

Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here *is* Christ, or there; believe *it* not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold,

*he is* in the secret chambers; believe *it* not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.  
(Matthew 24:23–27)

Jesus says clearly that in the End Times there will be *false prophets* who claim Christ has *already* come, before He actually appears at the Second Coming. In other words, they teach a “secret coming” before the *actual* coming. Does this not sound familiar? A “secret coming” (i.e. the “Rapture,” as taught by the pre-tribulation believers) seven years *before* the Second Coming is *the* major tenet of, what I like to call, “hyper-Dispensationalism.”

But Jesus says do *not* listen to those who teach He’s come secretly, for when He does come it will be *clear to everyone*, it will *not* happen in secret, but “*as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*”

Do you not find it incredible that if there *were* a secret coming seven years before His *very public* arrival, Christ Himself would have left this information *out* in *His own* chronology of all the things which would happen when his Apostles asked Him to explain it?

In fact, He does *not* leave the Rapture out; He simply does not place it seven years *before* the tribulation — He simply, clearly and *explicitly* places it *after* the tribulation.

The event which happens immediately *after* this grand event, which all would agree is the Second Coming, is described by Christ as the following:

For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. (Matthew 24:28)

Now, I grew up in the country, so I understand this allegory. When there is a dead animal, the vultures (eagles) gather to it like magnets, *seemingly out of nowhere*; they come by the tens and twenties, and flock to that carcass. This is nature! This is the object

lesson — the physical lesson that teaches the *spiritual truth* of the Rapture.

The Rapture happens, according to Jesus, *after* the coming as the lightening from the east to the west, and it is ***as if He***, Christ, ***is the carcass***, and ***we are the vultures***, coming (as if out of nowhere), and flocking *all to the same place* — to the presence of Christ.

This is a strange allegory, I admit, but allegory it is, and a perfect one at that!

If this is not proof enough, though taught as a parable, certainly the elect should have “ears that hear,” Christ goes on:

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (Matthew 24:29-30)

This goes back over the coming “as lightening from the east to the west,” and gives more detail as in the manner of the Hebrews (which is a style of writing used again and again in the book of Revelation). He says that *after* the tribulation (not before it) the “*sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light* (I believe due to the terrible dust clouds in the atmosphere as a result of the nuclear damage to the earth and the damage caused directly by the power of God Himself), *and the stars* (meteors) *shall fall from heaven* (which would damage the earth and send up great clouds of dust darkening the sun and moon): ***and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven:***” In other words, *Christ returns*.

Again, don’t you find it interesting that He never spoke of an *earlier*, “secret” return seven years prior to this? *If* that happens, Christ never spoke of it!

And as He appears, “*all the tribes of the earth mourn* (because another purpose of the tribulation is the punishment of the wicked), *and they shall all see the Son of man coming in the clouds with power and great glory*” (i.e. it is *not* a “secret, invisible coming” which is nowhere *explicitly* spoken of in Scripture).

So, the Second Coming takes place, and look what is next in Christ’s very own chronology of the end times:

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer *is* nigh: (Matthew 24:31-32)

We see here the “*sound of a trumpet,*” and the angels of God gathering together his elect from the four winds (corners) of the earth, and from one end of heaven to the other. Is this not the Rapture?

It sounds very similar to another passage where Paul teaches the Rapture (he only explicitly mentions it a couple of times):

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trump**: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:51–53)

It happens first, *after the sound of a trump* (as Jesus said He would “send his angels with **a great sound of a trumpet**, and they shall gather together his elect...”). And it happens second, *after* the dead are raised (as Daniel said)!

If we look back at the Mark 13 passage, we see that this sending of the Angels to gather God’s elect is not only from the ends of heaven, but also from the four corners of the earth — in other

words, many of His elect are *still on the earth* during and after the end of the seven years, and are *then* Raptured:

And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: (Mark 13.26-28)

The word “gather” is *ĕpisunagō*, meaning to *collect upon* (from 1909 and 4863) — **Epi**, upon + **sunagō**, to *lead together*; in other words, to *collect* or *convene*; spec. a great assembly!

I also find this interesting: In Ephesians we find a particular use of the word “*redemption*” and it actually refers to the Rapture, when we meet Christ, and are ultimately “saved” (in the fullest sense).

Some theologians call it “*the redemption of the body.*” This is what Paul called the “change” in the air:

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance **until the redemption of the purchased possession**, unto the praise of his glory.  
(Ephesians 1:11–14)

This is a familiar teaching that after we *believe* in Christ (because we had been predestinated according to God’s purpose and will, to believe, so that in the end his *grace* would be praised and glorified), after we *trust*, which we did after we *heard* (he gave

us “ears to hear”), we are *saved* and *sealed* by the Holy Spirit, Who comes to dwell *within* our bodies. Our bodies become the temple of the living God!

The passage tells us how long this indwelling takes place (which is a large part of the proof of our eternal security). It says we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, “*until the redemption of the purchased possession...*”

So, this word “*redemption*” is used in some contexts to mean the Rapture, or “*the redemption of the body.*”

We find this same word, and I believe the same *use* of the word, in Luke 21. As we look at it, note that this is also in the *same context* of the Apostles asking Christ to explain the end time, for this is a parallel passage with the Matthew and Mark passages we’ve already looked at.

We see the same signs of the sun and moon, and so forth, and the same “*sign of the Son of man coming in the cloud with power and great glory*”; in other words, *not* a secret coming which is never mentioned by Christ anywhere in the Bible, but a *powerful public coming*:

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. (Luke 21:25–27)

Now, look at what Christ says to his Children to do *at this very time*, at the Second Coming:

And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. (Luke 21:28)



First he says that when these signs begin to come to pass (e.g. the darkening of the sun and moon, which happen at the *end* of the tribulation), “*lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.*” What redemption? The redemption *of the body* which Paul taught about — this is the Rapture, when we are *changed in the air* after the first Resurrection!

Next, He assures us that the generation that sees *any* of these signs will *see them all*, and see the Second Coming and Rapture — this is the Doctrine of Imminency *properly* used.

Then, He says that while His coming is “*as a thief in the night*” to the lost, it is *not* that way to His own, for they have *signs to watch for*, as a tree budding giving evidence that summer is near:

And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. (Luke 21:29-33)

Now, look at this amazing instruction which is given to those Saints *still alive* on the planet at the end of the seven years:

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and *so* that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. (Luke 21:34-36)

Christ gives instruction to Christians *not* to be carnal in the End Times, lest they, like the wicked, have the end “*come on them as a*

*snare.*” He exhorts Christians not to be carnal, but to be *praying* and *watching* so that they may *escape* all these things that shall come to pass, and stand before the Son of man.

Now, this can only mean one of two things: Either it means that Christians alive at the end of the tribulation should pray and do good works, because *only consecrated Christians* will be found worthy to be Raptured, *or* it means they should pray and watch and study the Word, so that they will know not to stay in the cities, but to flee to the mountains and *escape all the things* that will happen to the *carnal* Christians and the “*goats*” who do not listen and take heed!

“*Counted worthy*” comes from the Greek *kataxioo* (2661), to deem entirely deserving, (ac-) count worthy. Could this possibly mean that we *must be consecrated* to make the Rapture? So many pre-tribulation Rapture believers use this out of context to try to argue that God promises we will escape the tribulation; but if this is true, only the consecrated Christians are promised this — only those who are worthy!

No one — at least, no one of any *stature* that I have read — believes this. So, if it does *not* refer to the Rapture, then it must be speaking of the fact that those who believed a lie and *thought* they would be Raptured and would not be here, and who were not *prepared*, and those who are *carnal*, will not be *worthy* to escape the terrible things; but those who *are* worthy, because they were *not asleep*, and were *studying*, and doing things to prepare because they had “ears to hear” Christ’s warnings, *they* were counted worthy to escape the slaughter because they were in the *right place at the right time*, and certainly not in the wrong places, such as in the cities where the Antichrist’s people will gather the easiest-to-find Saints first and martyr them.

Is the Rapture based upon the worthiness of an individual Christian? Again, no one of stature has ever believed that!

The word “*escape*” is itself interesting, first from the viewpoint of the parsing of the verb. It is in the aorist ***active***, which means this is something the Saint *does to himself* and *for* himself — in other words, he escapes by *doing the right things*.

Where we find true discussions of the Rapture, they are in the *passive* because obviously we cannot Rapture ourselves — we must *be* Raptured.

Here are just a couple of examples of this:

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, (1 Corinthians 15:51)

“*Shall be changed*” is future *passive* indicative.

Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

“*Shall be caught up*” is future *passive* indicative.

So, the Rapture is *passive*, but the “*escape*” of the saints, who are in the tribulation *before* the Rapture occurs, is not an escape *of* the tribulation, but *through* the tribulation and something they *do themselves* (i.e. *active*, not *passive*).

Second, from the point of view of the very definition of the word “*escape*” here, from the Greek *ekpheugo* (1628), meaning to flee out, escape, or flee.

It does not mean to be Raptured but to *flee*! Yet, pre-tribulation Rapture believers (or “hyper-Dispensationalists”) who have *no explicit evidence*, use this word “*escape*” to imply that it is the Rapture, when the word in Greek *cannot mean that*, and it is in the *active* which means *they do it themselves*, they flee. No one would argue that one can *cause himself* to be Raptured.

Therefore, this does not mean to escape *from* the tribulation in the sense of the Rapture, but to escape *through* the tribulation, in the sense of fleeing to the mountains, because you heard the clear word of God which said, “*Don’t even go back in your house to grab your coat, but flee!*”

There will be those who *escape* the persecution of the tribulation — those who take heed to themselves so that the day does not come upon them unawares — those who *pray*, and are

*counted worthy* to escape the worst part, and ultimately be Raptured when the Lord returns at the Great Resurrection at the *very end* of the seven year tribulation period.

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to *him* for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? (Matthew 24:1–3)

The question that started Christ's entire discourse was "*tell us of the end of the world.*"

The word world is from the Greek *aiōn*, an *age*; spec. (Jewish) a Messianic period (present or future).

Therefore, Christ was teaching them what would happen at the *end of the Church Age*, which in itself proves that those who teach the Church ends seven years before the Second Coming are incorrect, for the Second Coming happens *at the end of the "age"* and the Rapture happens "*after the tribulation of those days*" according to the clear, explicit words of our Savior, and therefore the Church "age" lasts until the very end!

The passages listed above in the Gospels list many things that *must* happen *before* the Second Coming and Rapture, and Paul's letters discuss these things as well, which harmonize perfectly with Jesus' teachings and chronology.

Things like the building of the Temple, the offering of the pig on the altar, the Great Apostasy, the rise of the Antichrist, the turning of the sun and moon into darkness, the falling of meteors to the earth, earthquakes, pestilences, torture of some of the saints and the *killing* of many who are caught and were not found worthy to escape, and the first Resurrection — all these things, and more, are given as *signs* which must happen before the Second Coming, and

if the Rapture happens after the Resurrection and after the tribulation, and *at* the Second Coming, then all these things happen *before* the Rapture as well.

## IN CONCLUSION — IMMINENCE DEFINED

**C**hrist said that those of us who *see* the first of these signs will be here for the *entire* fulfillment of them, and will see the Second Coming and the Rapture of the Church.

Therefore, Christ ended the “problem of imminence,” or the misunderstanding thereof, for He said that any generation, no matter whether it lives in the 1st Century, or the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, may see *all* these things come to pass in his lifetime — therefore, Christ’s coming *is* imminent to each generation and *has always been* the *great hope* of each generation of Christians for the past 2,000 years.

Only with hindsight can we see that these events were *impossible* for earlier generations, for the signs never happened then. But those living in those generations *knew* they *could* have all happened in their lifetime, for Christ said so; therefore, to them, His return was rightly considered to be *imminent*. And to us it is imminent as well!

None of this implies a pre-tribulation Rapture, nor has anything to do with that idea whatsoever, if rightly understood.

Honestly, I have not seen one single argument of implicit “proof” of a pre-tribulation Rapture that does *not* dissolve quickly if the [10 Rules of Bible Interpretation](#) are applied to them.

Our late-great Sunday School teacher at Park Meadows Church, Bro. Bill Nichols, saw one “proof text” after another dissolve as he taught verse-by-verse through the Book of Revelation twice before he went to Heaven.

We shall continue to search until we *know the truth in unity!* Until then, we can have unity anyway, because we have *love* which is the most important symptom of our salvation!

We shall continue this study for the rest of our lives, as our very lives may depend on it — but more importantly, because we will be *blessed* for doing so.