

A RESPONSE
TO
PRETRIBULATION IMMINENCE THEOLOGY

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PART 1

What Is Imminence and Why this Critique Matters

What Is Imminence?

No prophesied events must intervene before the return of Christ for the church.

John Nelson Darby: “No events, no earthly circumstances, intervene or modify the direct summons [to be raptured]. . . . [T]here is no event, I repeat, between us and [being raptured to] heaven.”

Charles C. Ryrie: “An imminent event is one that is always ready to take place. Pretribs recognize that something *may* happen before an imminent event occurs, but they do not insist that anything *must* take place before it happens; otherwise, it would not be imminent” (emphasis his).

John MacArthur: “There are no other events that must occur on the prophetic calendar before Christ comes to meet us in the air. He could come at any moment.”

Thomas Ice: “[I]mmminency means that the rapture could take place at any moment. While other events *may* take place before the rapture, no event *must* precede it. If prior events are required before the rapture, then the rapture could not be described as imminent” (emphasis his).

Mark Hitchcock: “the strongest and probably the simplest reason [for pretribulationism] is what is often called imminence.”

John Walvoord: “For the most part, scriptural evidence for imminence today is equivalent to proof of the pretribulation viewpoint.” “For all practical purposes, abandonment of the pretribulational return of Christ is tantamount to abandonment of the hope of His imminent return.”

Why Does it Matter?

Because the most severe warnings in the New Testament for the Church concerns what will happen before Jesus's return.

John MacArthur: “The hope of Christ’s imminent return is therefore the *hinge* on which a proper understanding of sanctification turns” (emphasis mine).

PART 2

3 Types of Imminence Arguments

1. Ecclesiastical
2. Proof Textual
3. Psychological

1. ECCLESIASTICAL

Traditional Pretribulation Timeline 70th Week of Daniel



Pentecost: "Since [the church] had no part in the first sixty-nine weeks, which are related only to God's program for Israel, it can have no part in the seventieth week, which is again related to God's program for Israel after the mystery program for the church has been concluded."

Ryrie: "If the church had no part in the first sixty-nine weeks of Daniel's prophecy, how can it be a part of the future seventieth week?"

- It is illogical, a non-sequitur
- Argument from silence
- God DOES work with Israel and the Church at the same time

God Worked With Both Israel and the Church at the Same Time *in the Past*

- The New Covenant (Jer 31:31–34)
- Pouring Out of the Spirit (Joel 2:28–31)
- God Judged Israel in AD 70 (Luke 19:43–44)

God Works With Both Israel and the Church at the Same Time *in the Present*

- Making Israel Jealous and Saving a Remnant (Rom 10:19—11:15, 25)
- God Regathering Israel to a Homeland “Dry Bones” (Ezek 37:1–14)

God Will Work With Both Israel and the Church at the Same Time *in the Future*

- Revelation 7:1–17
- Revelation 12:1–18
- Revelation 21:12–14

2. PROOF TEXTUAL

Circular Nature to Pretrib Proof Texts

- The assumption of imminence
- You must ask yourselves *every time whether a passage* meets their pretrib definition of imminence.

Wayne Brindley's Criteria for Imminence

1. "The passage speaks of Christ's return as at any moment"
2. "The passage speaks of Christ's return as 'near,' without stating any signs that must precede His coming"

James 5:8–9

“You also be patient and strengthen your hearts, for the Lord’s return is **near**. Do not grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be judged. See, **the judge stands before the gates.**”

James 5:7–9

(7) So be patient, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's return [*parousia*]. Think of how the farmer **waits** for the precious fruit of the ground and is **patient for it until it receives the early and late rains.** (8) You also be patient and strengthen your hearts, for the Lord's return [*parousia*] is near. (9) Do not grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be judged. See, the judge stands before the gates!

Philippians 3:20: But our citizenship is in heaven—and we also **await** [*apekdechomai*] a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil 3:20)

1 Thess 5:6 So then we must not sleep as the rest, but must **stay alert** [*grēgoreō*] and sober

3. PSYCHOLOGICAL

“Intervening Events Before the Rapture Diminishes My Blessed Hope”

- Experimentally Flawed
- Biblically Flawed

“I am looking for Jesus Christ,
not the Antichrist”

- Cutesy but does not reflect Biblical Reality
- False dichotomy

CONCLUSION