

THE IMMINENT PRETRIBULATIONAL RETURN OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

The church is never given a sign or told to look for signs, or for the Antichrist for that matter. It is the Jews and Israel that are told to look for signs. In the New Testament, the word “sign” is used 53 different times. The word “sign” is NEVER used of a Gentile. Those same statements can be made of its 80 occurrences in the Old Testament. In every place it is used in the New Testament it is used either by a Jew and/or for a Jew. *First Corinthians 1:22* says: “For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom”. The Jews were shown, and will be shown, signs and wonders that they might believe. The word “sign” is used three times in *Matthew 24*, twice in *Mark 13*, and three times in *Luke 21*. The inclusion of signs in these three chapters is yet another mark that identifies them with the Jews and Israel. The appearance of signs in these chapters is yet another identifying characteristic of The Revelation Of Jesus Christ (Second Coming). These three chapters have nothing to do with the Rapture. The phrase “signs and wonders” occurs 20 times in our King James Bibles; 11 times in the Old Testament and 9 times in the New Testament. The phrase is NEVER used of a Gentile. The phrase “miracles and wonders and signs” is used once in our Bibles of the Jews in *Acts 2:22* which says:

²² Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: *Acts 2:22*

The phrase “wonders and signs” is used in our Bibles twice and you guessed it: it is only used of the Jews and that is in the book of Acts where the apostles continue to preach the Gospel to the Jews having it authenticated to the Jews through miracles and wonders and signs. Every event that was recorded in *Acts 2* on the Day of Pentecost was given as a sign to the Jews. That is what Peter was saying when he quoted *Joel 2:28-32*. The sign of *Joel 2:28-32* will also be given as a sign to JEWS in THE Tribulation during the day of the Lord. The sun being darkened and the moon being turned to blood will be given as a sign to the JEWS during THE Tribulation. That is the whole point of *Matthew 24:3* and *Mark 13:4* when the apostles asked what the SIGN would be of His coming. The Lord Jesus Christ stated that the sun and the moon being darkened will be given as a sign to the Jews of his coming. The Lord Jesus Christ gave one sign after another in *Matthew 24*, *Mark 13*, and *Luke 21*. *Luke 21* gives many more signs than do *Matthew 24* and *Mark 13*. The “signs and lying wonders” of *2 Thessalonians 2:9* do not apply to the church either. They look forward to the miracles and wonders that are performed by Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet in *Revelation 13*. All the miracles and wonders performed by Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet in *Revelation 13* will be designed to DECEIVE THE JEWISH PEOPLE in fulfillment of *2 Thessalonians 2:1-12* which shows the Antichrist appearing in the TEMPLE OF GOD, claiming to be God. *Second Thessalonians 2:3-4* and *2 Thessalonians 2:9* says of him:

³ Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; ⁴ Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so

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that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. 2
Thessalonians 2:3-4

⁹Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and
lying wonders, 2 *Thessalonians 2:9*

The TEMPLE OF GOD is not a church age structure. The Temple of God is a Jewish structure. Furthermore, the book of Revelation is characterized by signs and wonders and miracles. There are two references given to signs from God and five references given to the deceptive signs and wonders and miracles of the Satanic Trinity. The many judgments and natural calamities that occur in the book of Revelation are a fulfillment of the signs and wonders identified by the Lord Jesus Christ in the so-called Olivet Discourse.

The appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ at the Rapture will come as a thief in the night because the day of the Lord is said to come as a thief. The Rapture is the event that kicks off the day of the Lord and the day of Christ. If the day of the Lord cometh as a thief, so does the Rapture that occurs immediately before it. You do not see any signs connected to the START of the day of the Lord because the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. There are no signs and no tribulation within the context of the two passages of Scripture that all agree are connected with the Rapture. Those two passages are *1 Thessalonians 4:13-18* and *1 Corinthians 15:51-58*. While *John 14:1-3* is not a Rapture passage per se, it does look forward to the Rapture. In *John 14:1-3* there is no mention of any event that must take place before the Lord Jesus Christ would come to receive the apostles unto Himself. Since no death is mentioned in this passage, it leaves the impression that the Lord Jesus Christ could return for them at any moment before they died. There is also no tribulation, no signs, and no events mentioned in the immediate context. The posttribulationists are looking for a sign just as the Jewish people and Israel are. The Lord Jesus Christ said of those looking for a sign in *Matthew 12:38-39*:

³⁸ Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. ³⁹ But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: *Matthew 12:38-39*

We can just hear the posttribulationists now:

³Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, ⁴And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. 2 *Peter 3:3-4*

It is clear from the context of *2 Peter 3:3-4*, that Peter had taught these folks that the Lord Jesus Christ would be coming back before judgment fell upon the earth. Otherwise, why would he have

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used the phrase “where is the promise of his coming” if these people had not been taught a pre judgment return of the Lord Jesus Christ? Pray tell, where did this promise come from??

We say yet again the church is never given a sign or told to look for signs. Church age believers are told to live as if the Lord Jesus Christ could return at any time. They are told to be looking in expectation of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ at any moment. *First John 2:28* implies an any moment appearance when it states:

²⁸ And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. *1 John 2:28*

This passage implies that if we are not abiding in him, we could be surprised by his appearing and be ashamed before him at his coming. If we are not looking for him, then how can we be abiding in Him? That is where the doctrine of Imminence comes in.

The Lord Jesus Christ knew that the natural inclination of the human flesh is to become lazy, apathetic, neglectful, and weak. Many times in our carnal nature we are not motivated to do that which would honour the Lord Jesus Christ unless there is some promise of reward or some threat of punishment. Though we as Christians should do that which is right because we love the Lord Jesus Christ, the fact is that we are constantly fighting a losing battle with the flesh so that the good that we would do we do not and the evil which we desire not to do we do anyhow. That is why the Lord Jesus Christ said in *Matthew 26:41*:

⁴¹ Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. *Matthew 26:41*

We must be constantly watching and praying and waging war with the flesh. Even when our spirit is willing, many times we lose the battle with the flesh. If we are not careful we will develop an attitude of “What’s the use?” if we have not been given the motivation to fight the good fight of faith. Or, God forbid, that we would develop the attitude of “where is the promise of his coming”. That is where the doctrine of imminency comes in. The doctrine of imminency is the bulwark that the Lord Jesus Christ built into the Scriptures to help us combat our weak carnal natures. If we know that the Lord Jesus Christ could appear at any moment, it motivates us to do that which he has commanded lest we be ashamed at His coming. The doctrine of imminency applies to Church age saints and to THE Tribulation saints. Human nature does not change when we leave the Church age and go into THE Tribulation. That is why the doctrine of imminency is taught for both Church age saints and Tribulation saints. Church age believers are taught to look for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ in *Philippians 3:20-21*, *Titus 2:11-14*, and *2 Peter 3:10-14*. These verses say:

²⁰ For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: ²¹ Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. *Philippians 3:20-21*

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¹¹ For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, ¹² Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; ¹³ Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. *Titus 2:11-14*

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. ¹¹ Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, ¹² Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? ¹³ Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. ¹⁴ Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. *2 Peter 3:10-14*

If we are looking for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, then we are expecting Him to appear at any moment. The BLESSED HOPE is described as the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. If we are looking for the blessed hope, then we are looking for Him to appear at any moment. Peter again reminds us that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night. Therefore, it can come upon the world at any moment. It is an imminent event. The chronology established in *1 Thessalonians 4*, *1 Thessalonians 5*, and *2 Thessalonians 2* prove that the Rapture inaugurates the day of the Lord. Since the Rapture STARTS the day of the Lord, it can occur at any moment. One important question in this discussion is why are we told to be looking for him if some sign or event must come to pass before he appears? *Titus 2:12*, *2 Peter 3:11*, and *1 John 2:28* admonishes us to be living holy lives and abiding in Him in anticipation of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ that we might not be ashamed at His appearing. What is the blessed hope in looking for the Antichrist and THE Tribulation.

Church age saints are taught to wait on the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ in *Romans 8:22-25*, *1 Corinthians 1:7* and *1 Thessalonians 1:9-10*. These verses state:

²² For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. ²³ And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. ²⁴ For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? ²⁵ But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. *Romans 8:22-25*

⁷ So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: *1 Corinthians*

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1:7

⁹ For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; ¹⁰ And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. *1 Thessalonians 1:9-10*

Though *Romans 8:22-25* is not a rapture passage per se, it in part describes the end result of the Rapture and that is the redemption of our bodies which is the completion of our salvation. There is no Rapture because within the context of *Romans 8:22-25* we do not see a resurrection, a translation, and a catching up, but we do see the redemption of the body. It is an obvious reference to the Rapture. According to *1 Thessalonians 1:9-10*, in them mind of God, we have already been delivered from the wrath to come. That means that Church age saints will not go through THE Tribulation since we are not appointed to wrath and have been delivered from wrath. In these three passages, what would be the point of waiting in anticipation of the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ if we know that there must be intervening signs and events before He can return? Do you think that those in THE Tribulation will make any distinction between tribulation and the wrath of the Lamb and the wrath of God?

Church age saints are taught to watch in *Luke 12:35-48*, *1 Thessalonians 5:6*, and *Revelation 3:2-3*. These verses read:

³⁵ Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; ³⁶ And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. ³⁷ Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. ³⁸ And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. ³⁹ And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. ⁴⁰ Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. ⁴¹ Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? ⁴² And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? ⁴³ Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. ⁴⁴ Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. ⁴⁵ But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; ⁴⁶ The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. ⁴⁷ And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did

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according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.⁴⁸ But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. *Luke 12:35-48*

⁶ Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. *1 Thessalonians 5:6*

² Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. ³ Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. *Revelation 3:2-3*

Perhaps *Luke 12:35-48* presents the clearest picture of what the spiritual posture and spiritual attitude of a believer ought to be when they are truly anticipating the any moment return of their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. A person that is girt about the loins with their lights burning is not a person that is waiting for some intervening sign or event. They are looking for THE EVENT: the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are not looking for the Antichrist. They are not looking for signs. In other words, their bags are packed and ready to go. The Lord Jesus Christ plainly states in *Luke 12* that there is a reward for that one who is eagerly watching and waiting for His return. That reward is: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that **love his appearing**. While we are waiting for his appearance we are to watch and be sober. *Revelation 3:3* says that if we are not watching, He will come upon us in an hour that we do not know. What *Revelation 3:3* shows us is the prospect of an any moment return. Again we would ask, what would be the point of waiting in anticipation of the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ if we know that there must be intervening signs and events before He can return? In *Luke 12:45-46*, there is a very stern warning to those that would neglect to look for the Master's return.

Tribulation saints are taught to watch in *Matthew 24:42-43*, *Mark 13:33-37*, *Luke 21:36*, and *Revelation 16:15*. These verses state:

⁴² Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. ⁴³ But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. *Matthew 24:42-43*

³³ Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. ³⁴ For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. ³⁵ Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at

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midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: ³⁶ Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. ³⁷ And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch. *Mark 13:33-37*

³⁶ 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 21:36*

¹⁵ Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. *Revelation 16:15*

A careful reading of *Matthew 24*, *Mark 13*, and *Luke 21* will reveal numerous signs, wonders, natural disasters, and judgments associated with The Revelation Of Jesus Christ (the “Second Coming”). These signs and wonders will include false Christs; wars and rumours of wars; nation rising up against nation; famines; pestilences; earthquakes; false prophets; the appearance of the abomination of desolation in the Temple; false signs and false wonders (*2 Thessalonians 2:9*, *Revelation 13:13-15*); persecutions; fearful sights and great wonders from heaven; the sea and the waves roaring; signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars; mens hearts failing them for fear; and so forth. None of these signs and wonders are for the benefit of the church. Nor are they directed to the Church. You will NOT find a single sign associated with any passage that everyone agrees is a Rapture passage. Though addressed to the church at Thessalonica, *2 Thessalonians 2:1-12* is to be interpreted in a Jewish context. It is about a false Jewish Messiah, the Antichrist, appearing in a rebuilt Jewish Temple and claiming to be God (shades of *Isaiah 14:12-15* and *2 Thessalonians 2:4*). Furthermore, *2 Thessalonians 2:11* brings *Isaiah 66:1-4* into the context of *2 Thessalonians*. Note also the reference to the Temple in *2 Thessalonians 2*. We have documented many reasons why *Matthew 24*, *Mark 13*, and *Luke 21* is in a strictly Jewish context. Yet another reason it is in a Jewish context is that a rebuilt Temple has nothing to do with the Church. The Temple is strictly a Jewish structure and a Jewish institution. For the abomination of desolation to appear in the holy place the Temple must be rebuilt. The King James Bible calls it The Most Holy Place; not the holy of holies of the English perversions of the Bible. You will not find the church in *Matthew 24:42-43*, *Mark 13:33-37*, *Luke 21:36*, and *Revelation 16:15*. Neither will you find any inference that the church is the subject of the Olivet Discourse. The desperate posttribulationists will try to pull the Jewish elect out of their context in the Olivet Discourse and make the elect all believers. That may be expedient for posttribulation doctrine, but it wrests the Scriptures out of their natural context.

The posttribulationists cannot show one verse of Scripture between Revelation chapter 4 and chapter 20 that mentions or describes the Rapture of the Church saints. There is a Rapture in the book of Revelation, but it is not the Church saints. It is the two witnesses of *Revelation 11*. Many posttribulationists argue that the Rapture of church saints takes place at the opening of the six seal in *Revelation 6:12*. That is eisegesis. There are two big problems with that approach. Number one is that no Rapture is mentioned anywhere in the passage. Number two is that the Church is not mentioned anywhere in the passage. Now, the posttribulationists are so quick to criticize the pretribulationists for using an argument from silence when the pretribulationists state that the church

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is not found anywhere in the book of Revelation after chapter 3 until *Revelation 19*. Yet, the posttribulationists are quick to add two words to *Revelation 6* where that passage is SILENT on those words. To state the obvious fact that the church is not to be found in a particular passage is a whole lot different than adding the words Rapture and Church to *Revelation 6*. Isn't that closely akin to "adding to the Word of God"? It is one thing to use the details within a particular passage that describe one of the characteristics of a particular entity to state that that entity appears in that passage as is the case for the church being put into the context of *Revelation 19* because the Bride of Christ (the Lamb) appears there. It is yet another thing to put the words "Rapture" and "Church" into *Revelation 6* when NONE of the details that would describe these two words appear anywhere in *Revelation 6*. That again is eisegesis. In other words, they have allowed their doctrine to read their preconceived notions into a passage whose details do not support their doctrine. The result is the slaughter of the literal interpretation of the Scriptures on the altar of doctrinal expediency. That is called spiritualization and is exactly why there are so many wild and diverse interpretations of the book of Revelation by posttribulationists.

There are other passages of Scripture that do not use the words look, wait, or watch that nonetheless present the idea that the Lord Jesus Christ could come at any moment. These include *James 5:8-9*, *1 John 3:1-3*, and *Revelation 3:10-11*. *James 5:8-9* declares:

⁸ Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. ⁹
Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. *James 5:8-9*

What this passage proves is that James was teaching those he ministered to that the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ was near. He told them that the JUDGE, the Lord Jesus Christ, was standing at the door. What that says is that James was expecting the Judge to open the door at any moment. This brings to mind *2 Timothy 3:8* where it states:

⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. *2 Timothy 4:8*

The context of *James 5:8-9* indicates that James expects very little, if any, time to elapse before the Judge opens the door. On top of that, there is no mention of any intervening signs, events, or tribulation in either of these passages. The next passage we consider is *1 John 3:1-3* which reads:

¹ Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. ² Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. ³ And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. *1 John 3:1-3*

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This speaks to holy living. If you have the hope and the expectancy of an any moment return of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is a purifying hope. The greater the expectancy of an imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ the stronger will be the desire and motivation to witness, to serve, and to live holy lives that we might not be ashamed at His appearing. Looking for the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ will bring us comfort according *1 Thessalonians 4:13, 18*. Looking for the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ will foster holiness according to *Colossians 3:4,5; Philipians 3:18-21; Titus 2:12,13; 2 Peter 3:13; Luke 21:34-36; Romans 13:11-13*. Looking for the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ will motivate us to soul winning according to *1 Thessalonians 2:19* and *2 Timothy 4:1-3*. Looking for the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ will inspire us to faithfulness and duty in harmony with *Hebrews 10:25; Mark 13:33; 1 Thessalonians 3:12,13*; and so forth. And finally, looking for the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ will help us to be steadfast as directed in *John 14:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:7,8; James 5:7, 8; 1 Peter 1:7,13; 1 Peter 4:13; 1 John 2:28*; and *Revelation 3:11*. The next passage that we will consider is *Revelation 3:10-11* where we read:

¹⁰Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. ¹¹Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. *Revelation 3:10-11*

Some pretribulationists try to put the Rapture in *Revelation 4:1-2*, but that will not work because John's body is not taken up. John is taken up in the SPIRIT. We do not need a loose interpretation of *Revelation 4:1-2* to support a pretribulational Rapture in the book of Revelation when *Revelation 3:10-11* will do that which the Lord Jesus Christ sent it to do. The temptation described in *Revelation 3:10* refers to a specific trial that shall come upon the WHOLE WORLD. That is why the word "hour" is used. It does not refer to the general trials that come upon EVERY individual and EVERY church in EVERY generation. It refers to a SPECIFIC trial and that trial is THE Tribulation. What is of critical importance to the doctrine of imminency in *Revelation 3:10-11* is the use of the phrase "Behold I come quickly". This church is exhorted to hold onto that which it has because the Lord Jesus Christ will come quickly. The implication is that he will appear without notice. In other words, they are to be looking for his any moment return.

Even in *1 Thessalonians 5*, Paul was again warning the church that the day of the Lord could catch them by surprise. The admonishment to the church at Thessalonica was to watch even though they had not entered into the day of the Lord as they had been falsely told. It is obvious that Paul had already taught the doctrines concerning the Rapture and the day of the Lord to the church at Thessalonica by his statements in *1 Thessalonians 5:1-2* and *2 Thessalonians 2:15* which state:

¹ But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. ² For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. *1 Thessalonians 5:1-2*

¹⁵ Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught,

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whether by word, or our epistle. *2 Thessalonians 2:15*

The reason they were taught to watch is that the Rapture and the day of the Lord could come upon them as a thief. The reason that both events could come upon them as a thief is that they STARTED simultaneously. Since the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, the day of the Lord could be upon us at any moment. Paul's admonishment to the church at Thessalonica is that they ought not get caught by surprise when the Rapture occurs because they had been taught to be expecting it at any moment — that is what coming as a thief means. Though it may not happen at any moment it could and you better be ready for it if you do not want to be ashamed at His appearance. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!