

Understanding the Doctrine of Immanency

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

Doctrine of Immanency - one common understanding

1. There are no unique or required circumstances required of world events that characterized the times of Christ's return.
2. The resurrection and rapture are "signless" and will be unexpected
3. No clearly prophesied event must transpire before Christ returns or before the resurrection and the rapture.

What are the scriptural origins of this teaching?

*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone . . . Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming . . . Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. **Matthew 24:36-44, NASB***

*For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. **Matthew 24:27, NASB***

*Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour. **Matthew 25:14, NASB***

Notice Scripture explicitly says the following

1. No one knows the DAY or HOUR Christ will return
2. When Christ returns, He will come suddenly and globally, in an instant, like the flash of lightning.
3. Only some people will be taken to depart with Him; all of them will be caught unaware. Some will be "left behind".

But Scripture teaches more about the times of Christ's return. Understanding these other teachings is critical to not misunderstanding Christ's return.

1. **Some ages better fit the conditions that will be like the conditions when Christ returns. Understanding these conditions better prepares us to know what the times will be like when Christ returns.**

*For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. **Matthew 24:37-39, NASB***

*Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. . . Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. **Genesis 6:5, 11, NASB***

Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly

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way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him. These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage. **Jude 14-16, NASB**

- The world will be totally preoccupied with worldly matters -- eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, building, planning, marrying, giving in marriage.
- They will be fleshly and arrogant, seeking pleasure and self-satisfaction. Their morality will be sensuousness. Their ethic will be “the end justifies the means”.
- They will **not** be spiritually sensitive or receptive. They will have moved beyond the reach of the gospel’s influence -- they will be reprobate. (Recall that Noah patiently preached to his unrighteous generation, who ignored his message of salvation for decades. **1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5**)
- They will hate the people of God. In fact, they will seek the destruction of Christ Church.

But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none; and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess; and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away. **1 Corinthians 7:29-31, NASB**

- Paul believed world events **ALMOST** met the conditions for Christ’s return. For this reason, Paul gave extraordinary advice to believers (*i.e.* avoid marriage, *etc.*) in his generation, because he believed “*the form of this world is passing away*” soon (but not yet). What about the life and times of Paul caused him to believe this?
 - ✓ The ancient Roman world was totally preoccupied with worldly matters. It was fleshly, sensuous, and idolatrous. It was cruel and violent.
 - ✓ The ancient world was pagan and idolatrous. Except for Israel, God was forgotten.
 - ✓ Believers were undergoing intense persecution and martyrdom.
 - ✓ The world superpower was ruled by one man who claimed to be God. He demanded worship. Those who refused were executed.
 - ✓ It was an age of supernatural manifestations from the spiritual world -- both demonic and godly

2. There are prophetic milestones that must precede Christ’s return, although we do not know precisely the DAY or HOUR of His return after these milestones have been reached.

Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. **Matthew 24:20-22, NASB**

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- The Abomination of Desolation is the unveiling of the Antichrist, who sits in the Jewish Temple, claiming to be God and demanding to be worshipped. This did not happen in Paul's day.
- Scripture says the Antichrist will persecute and martyr anyone who does not worship him as God. The Roman emperor was doing this in Paul's day.
- This will result in great tribulation or trouble for the "elect" -- the saints -- that would have resulted in their eradication, except those days are "cut short".
- Christ referred to prophecy penned by Daniel. There are two references in **Daniel** to the Abomination of Desolation.
 - ✓ In **Daniel 11**, the prophet predicts the Greek ruler Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) will foreshadow the final Antichrist, but desecrating the Jewish Temple and claiming to be God in 167 B.C.
 - ✓ In **Daniel 12**, the prophet predicts another "abomination of desolation" that is clearly set in the end-times. This is the event that Jesus refers to in **Matthew 24**.

Read **Daniel 12** in its entirety. When you do so, you will notice several things about the time the precedes the Resurrection and Rapture and Christ's return.

- It will be a time of the greatest distress the world has ever seen. Israel will require the divine protection of their Archangel, Michael, to avoid destruction because of this great tribulation (**verse 1**).
- The Resurrection and the Rapture will take place after this Great Tribulation (**verse 2**).
- Three and a half years ("times, time, and half a time") will elapse from the time the Abomination of Desolation takes place until Israel is completely powerless (**verse 7**). In her helpless estate, the remnant of Israel will accept Jesus as their Messiah and be saved (**verse 10** --also, see **Romans 11:25-29**). Note that 3.5 years, as prophetic scriptures reckons it, is 1260 days (42 months X 30 days). Thus, Christ will return to earth with all His holy ones (**1 Thessalonians 4:4**) to claim the repentant remnant of Israel 1260 days after the Abomination of Desolation!
- Exactly 30 days after Christ's return to earth (1290 days after the Abomination of Desolation), Antichrist's power will finally be destroyed Christ, which takes place during the 30 days following the last 3.5 years (**verse 11**)
- The Millennial Kingdom reign of Christ with His saints begins 45 days after the destruction of Antichrist's power, or 1335 days after the Abomination of Desolation (1290 days + 45 days = 1335 days, **verse 12**)
- Thus, the day of Christ's return for Israel is exactly specified, but the **DAY** and **HOUR** of the Resurrection and Rapture, which must precede Christ's return, is **NOT** known, and takes place sometime during the previous 1260 days.

*Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, **for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a***

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deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-6, 8-12, NASB

- Notice that although Paul believed he lived times that were similar to the time Christ would return, he knew that there were at least **two** requisite prophetic conditions that had to be met.
 - ✓ Antichrist must be revealed when he sits in God's Temple, claiming to be God and demanding worship.
 - ✓ Apostasy must come, which is a wholesale abandonment of truth and faith by all those who really don't love Jesus. The "apostates" will love pleasure more than God.
- Paul understood that even their wicked world and persecution would have to get worse -- it had to become a Great Tribulation, spoken of Jesus, and Antichrist must be revealed.

*Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. **But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day.** We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as 1bothers do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-10, NASB*

- We should not expect the Resurrection and Rapture until Antichrist is revealed and begins the Great Tribulation against the saints.
- Just as when Lot was delivered safely from Sodom and just as Noah was set safely in the Ark as the rains began, so God's wrath on the world will not take place until the saints are safely Raptured from Great Tribulation. Then Judgment comes. Then Christ comes.
- We will not know the **DAY** or **HOUR** of the Resurrection and Rapture, even in the midst of our Great Tribulation. And everyone is only one breath from the Lord!
- Christ will return **WITH** all HIs "holy one" -- both saints and angels -- 1260 days after the Abomination of Desolation, a date that is specific and fixed. But a wicked, ungodly world will not believe that day is coming or know it is almost upon them. For them, it will come "like a thief in the night."
- **Thus the Doctrine of Immanency may be modified to say**
 - ✓ The saints will know the times in which they live (see **Matthew 24:32, 22**). Jesus could come to Rapture His Church from Great Persecution at any time AFTER the Abomination of Desolation. Of this, we will know neither the DAY, nor the HOUR, so we must be ready! **Any teaching that claims the Church will be Raptured BEFORE the Great Tribulation does not seem to fit with Scripture.**
 - ✓ The world will not know when Jesus is coming back with us for judgment. They will be caught unaware, like a thief in the night.
 - ✓ Every saint must be ready always, for we are only one breath away from the Lord!