

Pretribulational Imminence: Is it Biblical?

Definition:
Pretribulational Imminence:

The rapture is imminent; it can happen at any moment—without any preceding signs.

“From the very earliest days of the church, the apostles and first-generation Christians nurtured an earnest expectation and fervent hope that Christ might suddenly return at any time to gather His church to heaven.”

—John MacArthur

Signs and Events that Disprove an Imminent Rapture:



**Completing the Great Commission
demanded a delay:**

**“This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached
in the whole world as a testimony to all the
nations, and then the end will come.”**

(Matthew 24:14)

**“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying,
‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and
on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all
the nations, baptizing them in the name of the
Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching
them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo,
I am with you always, even to the end of the
age.”**

(Matthew 28:18–20)

“He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.””

(Acts 1:7–8)

The Lord's words spoken to Paul, about events that would happen in his life demanded a delay.

“But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, 'Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.'”

(Acts 23:11)

“For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar;’

(Acts 27:23–24)

**The death of Peter in old age required
many years of delay:**

“Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.” Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God.”

(John 21:18–19)

“knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.”

(2 Peter 1:14)

**Israel had to be repatriated by the
Jewish people:**

“After many days you (Gog) will be summoned; in the latter years you will come into the land that is restored from the sword, whose inhabitants have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel which had been a continual waste; but its people were brought out from the nations, and they are living securely, all of them... who are at rest, that live securely, all of them living without walls and having no bars or gates, to capture spoil and to seize plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places which are now inhabited, and against the people who are gathered from the nations, who have acquired cattle and goods, who live at the center of the world.”

(Ezekiel 38:1–12)

**“Yes, in those days and at that time,
when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem,
I will gather all the nations and bring them to the
Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into
judgment with them, because of my people, my
inheritance Israel. The nations have scattered the
Israelites in foreign countries and divided up my
land.”**

(Joel 3:1–2)

**The destruction of Jerusalem and the
exile of the Jews into all the nations
must occur first.**

“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled. Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people

(Luke 21:20–28)

“...and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled... Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

(Luke 21:20–28)

Most clearly of all, Paul's explicitly taught that: (1) The apostasy and (2) The coming of the man of lawlessness must occur first.

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...”

(2 Thessalonians 2:1–3)

Other events that still have to take place before Jesus can return:

- **The Antichrist must enter into the covenant with many.**
- **Sacrifices must be restored in the Temple in Jerusalem.**
- **The abomination that causes desolation.**
- **The great tribulation.**

Such statements are simply false:

“From the very earliest days of the church, the apostles and first-generation Christians nurtured an earnest expectation and fervent hope that Christ might suddenly return at any time to gather His church to heaven.”

—John MacArthur

**If the Bible does not teach imminence,
then what does it teach?**

Urgency and Readiness

The Bible does call us all to eagerly await, to urgency expect, and to be ready for the return of Jesus.

That said, it is also rational. It assumes that the birth pains come before the birth.

If someone says, “This baby could come any moment now” of course they understand that the birth pains come first!

The New Testament and the early Church together call us to be ready for the Lord's return. This means:

(1) Being prepared to face the great tests and tribulations (the birth pains) that precede His coming.

(2) To make sure we are in the faith so as to escape the vengeance and judgment upon unbelievers that occurs when He returns.

**"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith.
Examine yourselves."**
(2 Corinthians 13:5)

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”

(1 Thessalonians 5:1–4)

Pretrib Imminency Proof Texts:

**Do they teach urgency and readiness
or imminency?**

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”

(Philippians 3:20–21)

**“Do this, knowing the time, that it is
already the hour for you to awaken from
sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us
than when we believed. The night is
almost gone, and the day is near.
Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of
darkness and put on the armor of light.”**

(Romans 13:11–12)

**“The end of all things is near;
therefore, be of sound judgment and
sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.”**
(1 Peter 4:7)

**“You also be patient. 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 5:8–9)

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

All these texts promote urgency and readiness, but not imminency.

Conclusion:

Imminence is unbiblical

- **There are clear events that still must happen before Jesus can return.**
- **Passages used to support imminency, simply do no such thing.**
- **The Bible affirms urgency, eager expectation, and readiness, but also reasonably assumes birth pains come before the birth.**