

VII. The Concept of Imminency In Prophecy

Earlier, in the treatment of the Olivet Discourse, the fourth section was entitled "Exhortations in view of Christ's imminent coming". What does "Imminency" mean in general? And what does it mean in connection with Christ's Second Coming?

(In passing, note the difference in spelling and meaning between "Imminent", immanent", and eminent". The word "immanent" is defined by Webster's *New World Dictionary* as meaning "1. living, remaining, or operating within; inherent; 2. Theol. present throughout the universe; said of God; distinguished from transcendent." The word "eminent" is defined in the same dictionary as meaning "1. rising above other things or places; high; lofty; 2. projecting; prominent; protruding; 3. standing high by comparison with others, as in rank or achievement; renowned; exalted; distinguished; 4. outstanding; remarkable; noteworthy.")

Webster's *Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* defines "imminency" as "ready to take place", "hanging threateningly over one's head", "impending", "manifesting signs that keep one in suspense". It says that "Imminent emphasizes the shortness of time before happening."

Webster's *New World Dictionary* defines "imminent" as "likely to happen without delay; impending; threatening; said of danger, evil misfortune."

A. Definitions of Imminency in eschatological Writings

Robert H. Gundry in *The Church and the Tribulation* states:

By common consent imminence means that so far as we know no predicted event will necessarily precede the coming of Christ. The concept incorporates three essential elements: (1) suddenness, (2) unexpectedness or incalculability, (3) a possibility of occurrence at any moment.

J. Barton Payne in *The Imminent Appearing of Christ* asserts that:

Imminency does not mean that Christ's coming must be soon But His day could be soon, "close at hand in its incidence". Does this mean then that it could be as soon as to happen right away, at any time? This is the thought associated with imminency, "ready to befall or overtake one."

Gerald B. Stanton in Kept From the Hour writes:

Many Christians affirm that the coming of Christ is imminent, which does not mean that this glad event must be immediate, but rather that it is overhanging, that it may occur at any moment. The word imminent, if used of an evil event, might be rendered impending, for it is always threatening to come to pass. An imminent event is one that hangs suspended, possibly for an indefinite period of time, but